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Theory, Style and Poetics**

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QUESTION 1: POETRY

Every relationship is different and people leave for different reasons. Relationships take time, effort and communication and sometimes you end up disappointed as seen in the poem titled 'Worthless' by Sasha Maharaj (Maharaj, Sasha. 2016. "Worthless." http://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/worthless_777833). Here she is making a point about relationships and how she felt coming out of one that did not end too well and made her feel worthless. I will first give a brief analysis of the poem's features and then analyse the poem and show how through the use of poetic devices, diction, syntax and other language functions the writer was able to accomplish this.

The poem consists of 4 stanzas, with 16 lines, each of which have 4 lines each, this is known as a quatrain (ENG2602.Tutorial letter 101/3/2017: 27). The poem has a broken rhyme scheme in that the rhyme pattern only starts in stanza 2 with 'head', 'dead' (lines 5 and 6) and ends on line 10 in stanza 3 with 'way' (line 9) and 'say' (line 10). The poem is narrative as it tells the story of the speaker's relationship and the journey the speaker experienced when her and her partner's relationship ended. Further to that the poem is a free verse as it does not have a regular meter or rhyme. The speaker also uses the first person consistently throughout the poem, the word 'I' in lines 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14 is reflective of this, which shows that the poem is written in the first person.

The English living dictionary defines worthless as 'of a person having no good values or deserving contempt' (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/worthless>). The title of the poem 'Worthless' automatically brings about negative feelings and the speaker uses the words 'broken' (line 1), 'damage' (line 2) and 'dead' to keep this feeling in the poem. The speaker also uses the same words 'broken' (line 1), 'damage' (line 2) and 'dead' to show her feeling of worthlessness after the relationship ended. We know that the title is not ambiguous as she did not feel that the relationship was worthless, as she says in line 10 'there's so much more I needed to say' and line 14 'All I know, my best, I have tried'. This shows that the speaker tried to salvage the relationship. The speaker shows through the title 'Worthless' the negative impact the relationship had on her emotionally 'I'm broken inside' (line 1) and that there was 'anger' (line 7) and 'hate' (line 7). The poem is written from a female perspective and we know this as in line 11 the speaker refers to a 'he'. To

this end the writer has effectively used the title to convey her message of how unhealthy relationships can make you feel and how traumatic it can be when it does not work out even when you have tried 'immensely' (line 12).

When a poem has the usual rhyme scheme, 'which is the repetition of similar sounds which occurs at the end of two or more lines' (April, L: 14), it allows you to relax whilst reading and the flow of the poem becomes 'musical' (Dambe, S, Dr. et al. 2013: 12) or easy. With this poem, the unevenness of the rhyme scheme makes you take note of what the speaker is saying. Even though there is no end rhyme scheme, there is a continuation in thought pattern. In stanza one, the uneven word ends are, 'feel' (line 1), 'breathe' (line 2), 'pieces' (line 3) and 'deceased' (line 4). You are able to deduce through the words of 'feel' (line 1) and 'breathe' in line 2 that this is how the relationship felt at the beginning. She confirms this in line 4 with 'My once strong heart' showing that it was beating 50 miles an hour with love or lust. Relationships have different stages and these words reflect stage 1. The lust and romance stage (The Modern Man. n.d. <https://www.themodernman.com/blog/the-5-stages-of-a-relationship.html>). The end words of 'pieces' (line 3) shows that the relationship was starting to break down and by line 4 that it had no more life in it 'deceased' (line 4). The speaker shows you through the rhyme structure of 'head' (line 5) and 'dead' (line 6) that here the stage the relationship had reached. When a person's head is dead it brings up the picture of not being able to think of what else to say, rationalise or convince your partner to reconcile with you. This is the stage of the power struggle (The Modern Man. n.d. <https://www.themodernman.com/blog/the-5-stages-of-a-relationship.html>). You see that the relationship has soured by the use of the word's 'hate' (line 7) and that by line 8 the love was gone 'dissipate'. You are also able to tell that the relationship was going for a while in line 5 'I keep recalling the messages' and in 'dissipate' that the love did not just die overnight. It gradually disappeared. With the use of the words 'way' (line 9) and 'say' (line 10) here it can be deduced that this was were they tried to reconcile the relationship and that the speaker 'me' (line 11) and 'immensely' (line 12) was the only one trying. With the last stanza you can see that the speaker has fought her battle mentally 'inside' (line 13) and 'tried' (line 14) and with the last words of 'worthless' (line 15) and 'notices' (line 16) that she has not won. As she is still left feeling the same way 'Worthless'. Through the use

of this uneven rhyme scheme, the poet has reflected very well the journey and stages her relationship has taken. Further more the speaker uses the theme of despair 'my once strong heart is now deceased' (line 4) and regret 'I never wanted it to end this way' (line 9) to portray just how you can feel when a relationship does not work out.

The speaker uses many schemes to convey her message of imagery and her heightened sense of emotions. Her repetition of the words 'inside' in lines 1 and 13 show that what she was feeling was an internal issue, it was deeply emotional. The speakers repetition of the word 'wanted' in line 9 and 10 also shows that it was not her desire for the relationship to end. Through the use of the words 'broken' (line 1), 'ripped' (line 3), 'torn' (line 3) and 'deceased' (line 4), we see just how profound the speakers emotions were. The first alliteration that you come across is in line 2, the d's in 'damage', 'done' and b's 'barely', 'breathe'. These letters could portray the speakers heart beat and her level of anxiousness. In the alliteration of the m's in line 6, 'making', 'me' and in line 10 'much', 'more', when you combine them together the m-m-m-m sound gives your lips the feel of ones lips quivering, almost as if the speaker is on the verge of tears and trying very hard to hold it back. Through the use of the synonyms of 'ripped' (line 3), 'torn' (line 3) and 'apart' (line 3) and 'pieces' (line 3), it shows how anguished she was about the ending of her relationship. The use of an inversion, which is the inverted order of words in a sentence in line 14 'All I know, my best, I have tried' once again shows her resolve, that there is no more that she could have possibly done or said to salvage the relationship. The speaker also uses ellipsis in the last line. 'Ellipses is usually used for a pause, hesitation or an unfinished thought' (ENG2602.Tutorial letter 101/3/2017: 29). In this case I would say the writer used it to make us either ponder over the fact that no one is noticing her fall apart or she could be using it as a dramatic effect for us to think she's hesitating to express more. The speaker shows through these words that relationships affect us emotionally and that even though there are things we may not desire to happen, we do not always have control of the situation or how the other person will feel.

With the syntax and diction, the speaker has managed to emphasis her ordeal. The speakers choice of verbs add to the mood of the poem, 'feel' (line 1), 'damage' (line 2), 'breathe' (line 2), 'recalling' (line 3), 'wish' (line 6), 'filled' (line 7), 'must' (line 8), 'dissipate'

(line 9), 'wanted' (lines 9 and 10), 'say' (line 10), 'had' (line 11) 'falling' (line 16) and 'Notices' (line 11). These words show the force of which each action was taken or each emotion felt. Even the speaker's choice of adjectives 'broken' (line 1), 'ripped' (line 2), 'apart' (line 2), 'torn' (line 3), 'deceased' (line 4), 'dead' (line 13), 'tried' (line 14), 'worthless' (line 15) and 'apart' (line 16), they convey the speaker's attitude in that she was sad and heartbroken. Even though 'strong' is an adjective I argue that this word reflects her strength at the beginning of the relationship 'my once strong heart' (line 4), so it does not portray sadness or being heartbroken. The speaker makes a continued reference to 'I' (lines 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 14). She initially uses the 'I' in the correct grammatical way, this reflects her boldness or owning of her pain within those statements. In stanza 4, her 'I' changes to 'i'. The speaker begins the stanza in regret 'I never wanted it to end this way' (line 9), so here, the change of 'I's' could symbolise her shyness or reservedness she felt when dealing with her partner. The whole of stanza 3 shows through the lack of punctuation 'theres' (line 10) and the use of small letters at the beginning and within sentences 'i' (line 10 and 11), 'but' (line 11), shows how she felt when approaching the subject of her partner. She is acknowledging her role in the relationship and accepting its end. The speaker's point about relationships here is very relevant in that you should not take your partner for granted 'but i guess he had just had enough of me' (line 11) and that you can only do so much to your partner before they themselves feel that they have had enough.

The use of a hyperbole, which is 'the use of exaggeration for effect or emphasis' (ENG2602.Tutorial letter 101/3/2017: 28), was achieved in line 3 'torn to pieces' as it allows you to picture just how intense her emotional state was or the anguish she felt about the relationship ending. The use of a paradox, concepts or ideas that are contradictory to one another, yet, when placed together hold significant value on several levels, as used in line 13, 'So here I am alive, yet dead inside'. Whilst the speaker says she is alive, on a deeper level she is revealing how detached she feels emotionally, that she has nothing to look forward to. So in essence she is defeated and is just going through the motions of life with no real purpose. Here the speaker is again showing that this was no ordinary relationship ending but that it was heart wrenching with her word choice expresses strong emotions.

In conclusion, I contend that the speaker was successful in allowing the reader to understand her anguish and heart wrenching emotions about her relationship ending, including her acceptance and role with the use of the various literary devices.

Resources

April, Lynne. n.d. *Elements of Poetry and The Literary Time Line*. ENG1501. Pages 12, 14.

Dambe, S. Janari, B. Maithufi, S. et al. 2013. Only Study Guide for ENG2603, Colonial and Post-colonial; African Literature. Pretoria. University of South Africa. Page 12.

ENG2602. *Genres in Literature and Language: Theory, Style and Poetics*. Tutorial letter 101/3/2017. Pages 27- 29

English Oxford Living Dictionaries. n.d. Viewed 30 August 2017 from:

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dissipate>

English Oxford Living Dictionaries. n.d. Viewed 30 August 2017 from:

<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/worthless>

English Wiki Spaces. n.d. Viewed 29 August 2017 from: [https://hhs-english-](https://hhs-english-iv.wikispaces.com/file/view/Rhetorical+Devices.pdf)

[iv.wikispaces.com/file/view/Rhetorical+Devices.pdf](https://hhs-english-iv.wikispaces.com/file/view/Rhetorical+Devices.pdf)

Maharaj, Sasha. 2016. "Worthless." Viewed 28 August 2017 from: _

http://www.poetrysoup.com/poem/worthless_777833

The Modern Man. n.d. Viewed 3 September 2017 from:

<https://www.themodernman.com/blog/the-5-stages-of-a-relationship.html>

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

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ASSIGNMENT TOPIC: GENRE'S IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE: THEORY,
STYLE AND POETICS

ASSIGNMENT NUMBER: 886625

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http://www.unisa.ac.za/contents/colleges/col_grad_studies/docs/Policy_copyright_infringement_plagiarism_16November2005.pdf

Signature: ANTOINETTE JOLENE KHOMO
Date: 5 September 2017