“To Helen” by Edgar Allan Poe

“To Helen” II group:

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“To Hellen” by Edgar Allan Poe

The poem

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To Helen

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicèan barks of yore
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!
To Helen

Introduction

"To Helen" is the first of two poems to carry that name written by Edgar Allan Poe. The 15-line poem was written in honor of Jane Stanard, the mother of a childhood friend. It was first published in 1831 collection Poems of Edgar A. Poe. It was then reprinted in 1836 in the Southern Literary Messenger.

Allusions

Poe, in referring to Helen, may be alluding to the Greek goddess of light or Helen of Troy who is considered to be the most beautiful woman who ever lived, though there is not enough information given to determine for certain. He also makes a reference to Psyche, a beautiful princess who became the lover of Cupid. The "agate lamp" refers to the time when Psyche discovered the true identity of Cupid.
Analysis of “to Hellen”

1. Type of Poetry: **Dramatical Poetry**, because we think the writer makes this poem to the reader can imagination about character in this poem.

2. Theme: **admiring the beautiful woman**

3. Rhythm: We think the meter all line in this poem is “**Iambic Tetrameter**”

4. Stanzic form: Septet (**a stanza of five lines**)

5. Rhyme: Stanza1: **a b a b b**
   Stanza2: **c d c d c**
   Stanza3: **e f f e f**

6. Alliteration:
   - Stanza1: The weary way-worn wanderer bore: **Alliteration of “W” sound**
   - Stanza2: Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
     Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
     To the glory that was Greece,
     And the grandeur that was Rome.: **Alliteration of “T,H, and G” sound**
   - Stanza3: How statue-like I see thee stand,
     The agate lamp within thy hand!: **Alliteration of “S and T” sound**

7. Figurative Language: **Simile**: Helen, thy beauty is to me
   **Like** those Nicèan barks of yore
   : It means Helen is beautiful same as the ship from nicean
Stanza 1

• Lines 1-2

Helen, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore

1. Helen is very beautiful on preception of Poe
2. First off, Poe is not referring to a real woman named Helen, but to a woman named Jane Stanard, the mother of one of his childhood friends. Poe would later claim that she was his first love. Or he see her is the figure of the mother.

1. Barks" is an old word that means "boats" or "ships"
2. Nicaean was ancient city on the west coast of Turkey.

So, Poe compares Helen's beauty to some old ships from Nicaea.
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary way-worn wanderer bore to his own native shore.

1. Those barks "gently" carried ("bore") a "weary, way-worn wanderer" back home ("native shore").
2. He means that her beauty is like a ship that transports a tired, worn-out guy home.
3. And Helen's beauty metaphorically takes him there. It makes him feel safe, back where he belongs.

So, the ship is transportation of poe when wandered alone, and poe fell boring. He find the harbor when he get feelling about his familly or his love from “helen”.
Biography and Historical approach:

- In ancient Greek mythology, "Helen" was the most beautiful woman in the world. She was so beautiful, in fact, that a guy from across the sea named Paris kidnapped her and took her back to Troy.

  So poe in this poem compare about jane with helen in this greek mythology

- The other possible reference for Poe's cryptic comment is the famous Greek hero named Odysseus (a.k.a. Ulysses). He fought in the Trojan War, which is roughly in the same area as Nicaea.

  So the word about sea, ship and sailing it mean poe compare with this story
Biography and Historical approach:

- When he was young, Poe was an accomplished Latinist (meaning he was really good at Latin). One Latin poet that Poe almost certainly read was a guy named Catullus (kuh-tull-us). At some point in his life, Catullus spent some time around the area of Nicaea. When he sailed home, he probably sailed in a ship made of wood ("barks") from the area.

: so because poe has a favorite master he write the sotry of this master in this poem
Stanza 2

• **Lines 7-10**

_Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,_

_Thy Naiad airs have brought me home_

_To the glory that was Greece,_

_And the grandeur that was Rome._

• In Greek mythology, naiad were nymphs associated with fresh bodies of water.
  • Naiads were usually beautiful, very closely connected to particular spots, and even sometimes very dangerous.
  • "Airs" most likely means "attitude" or "expression." "Naiad airs," then, means that Helen resembles a divine, beautiful, and potentially dangerous creature.

in the nineteenth century, many people felt that ancient Greece and Rome were pretty much the most awesome places ever. The opinion was they had the best literature, the best ideas, the best architecture, the best… you get the idea. And this Helen reminds the speaker of the best that ever was (Greece and Rome). In other words, she's a total "classic,"

1. It means the characteristic of helen, type of her hair, form of his face…
2. Or it means about greek and roman mythology…
3. Poe's use of the word "hyacinth" in a poem with tons of references to mythology makes us think of death, sadness, and blood…
Biography and Historical approach:

- We should also point out that the hyacinth is also an important flower in Greek and Roman mythology: Apollo (the Greek god of music, poetry, and the sun) was in love with a young girl named Hyacinth.

  : so meaning about hyacinth is the girl loving with apollo and all story about them. But the other meaning if we compare with this plant, poe will explain the physic and hair color of hellen(jane) comparing with this plant about the color, the size or the other caracter in this plant

- In Greek mythology, they were nymphs (female nature deities, but not gods) associated with fresh bodies of water (streams, brooks, fountains, wells, springs, that sort of thing).

  : this meaning about poe comparing hellen(jane) with the beautiful nymphs with the fresh and holy skin, etc
Stanza 3

• Lines 11-12

Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,

• Saying "Lo" is like saying OMG when you all of a sudden see something astonishing.
• The speaker is floored by Helen's beauty as he sees her standing in the "window niche"
• Helen is standing "statue-like," which means both that she resembles a work of art and that she is not moving at all.

So this means poe was shock when he see beauty of hellen, when she standing in the window-niche
Stanza 3

• Lines 13-15

The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah! Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

Agate lamp is a lamp with a type of rock, usually one that contains a lot of colors. Psyche is an important figure in Greek mythology. Story about cupid and psyche. When they falling in love they stay in heaven or holy land.

So, by calling Helen "Psyche," poe essentially compares himself to a little Cupid. And hellen compares with the pysche. It means love with the beautiful women and the youngers boy.
Biography and Historical approach:

- Venus (a.k.a. Aphrodite, goddess of love) got mad at the most beautiful mortal woman in the world, Psyche. As it turns out, Psyche was so unbelievably hot that everybody just sort of forgot about Venus which made her (Venus) really upset. In order to punish Psyche, Venus sent her son Cupid to shoot an arrow at Psyche and make her fall in love with something really ugly. He went down to carry out his mother's sinister plan, but when he saw Psyche he was so taken with her beauty that he accidentally poked himself with the arrow and fell in love with her. Eventually, Cupid and Psyche got a place together (Venus was not happy about this at all, so they tried to keep it a secret). Cupid told Psyche that she couldn't ever look at him, and so all of their interactions took place in the dark. This was for Psyche's safety. Still, Psyche got curious, and one night took an agate lamp (in some versions) and shined a light on little Cupid. She also accidentally burned him with some oil from the lamp and it took him forever to heal (even though he's all immortal and such).
So we can get conclusion, poe will explain that this story same with poe story. Poe is cupid and hellen(jane) is psyche. Cupid is a younger boy same as when poe fourteen years old, and pysche is a beautiful women same as the figure of helen(jane). And poe (cupid) was love with her. But sometime they have many problem with them love. If in the story of cupid, cupid is a god but pysche is a mortal. In the poe story, poe is a child but helen(jane) is a adult women with one child (friend of poe). And they have many obstacle to keep them love.
Mythology Symbol

- Line 1: The name Helen is a symbol of extreme beauty.
- Lines 4-5: The speaker compares himself to "the weary, way-worn wanderer." This could be a reference to Odysseus (a.k.a. Ulysses), a symbol of suffering and perseverance.
- Line 7: The speaker uses "hyacinth" as an adjective, but in a poem full of mythology we are reminded of the story of Apollo and Hyacinth. The word makes us think of death and sadness, but also of beauty and rebirth.
- Line 8: Helen has "Naiad airs." Fancy! This means her expressions or attitudes resemble those of a Naiad.
- Lines 13-15: The speaker now refers to the myth of Cupid and Psyche, a symbol of love between unequal figures (god and mortal) if there ever was one.
Thank you