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Course

Date

Grief in Auden's "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone" and Randall's "Ballad of Birmingham."

Relationships are part and parcel of our daily lives. Family relationships, in particular, have a more significant impact due to the bonds we share. The strength of these bonds is seen when one loses a loved one. The pain that comes with loss is so overwhelming that many people experience severe mental issues in the short run. Many people experience anger, shock, despair, and disbelief after loss. In others, the grieving experience is characterized by significant denial. Auden's "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone" critically illustrates the experience of losing a loved one. Similarly, Dudley Randall's poem "Ballad of Birmingham" highlights an African American mother's experiences after her daughter's death during a bombing incident in 1963. Both poets use different literal devices to express the theme of grief and the loss of loved ones.

In "Ballad of Birmingham," death is a significant theme attributed to the racial violence perpetrated by white supremacists. As much as the girl's mother tries to protect her, she cannot. The art of convincing her to attend church since it's safe does not yield much, as harsh reality dawns on her when her daughter is killed during the bombing. Randall illustrates the mother's pain, shock, and temporary peace when the mother hears the explosion. The moment is tense, and the mood of sadness reigns throughout as she rushes to the church while calling out her child. Randall asserts, "For when she heard the explosion, her eyes grew wet and wild ." (line 26)

The profound emotions expressed by the woman illustrate the dangers of racial violence and discrimination.

Auden's poem illustrates the effect of death on our lives and the grief and pessimism that accompanies the loss of a loved one. Similar to what Randall asserts in "Ballad of Birmingham," Auden highlights the hopelessness and long-run pessimism that the bereaved experience. The poem is written in a melancholy tone and has a gloomy mood. For instance, the poet asserts, "For nothing now can ever come to any good" (Auden line 16). The theme of grief is evident throughout the poem, from the first stanza to the last. Notably, the first line highlights the persona's inability to be comforted due to the overwhelming grief. One can see the denial based on the persona's request for impossible comfort measures such as "Stop all the clocks." Stopping the clocks, in this case, means stopping time which is not possible. Besides, by using clocks, the poet alludes to the ephemeral nature of life and the cruelty of death.

The immense agony experienced by the speaker is further demonstrated by the command that all distractions are eliminated, such as "dogs barking," "the pianos," and the telephone. The speaker feels that everyone needs to mourn with him as he states, "bring out the coffin, let the mourners come" (Auden, line 4). In the second stanza, the poet further highlights the severity of the situation and expects the whole public to mourn. The impact of the loss, the speaker believes, is too overwhelming for one individual to handle. For instance, the poet feels that everyone should be involved in line 5 when she asserts, "Let airplanes circle moaning overhead, scribbling on the sky the message He is Dead" (Auden, line 5). The speaker further adds that the policemen should put on black cotton gloves as a sign of mourning.

Both Auden and Randall use figurative language extensively to highlight the theme of grief throughout the poem. In both poems, imagery is used significantly to illustrate the impact

of loss and death. In *Ballad of Birmingham*, Randall uses imagery significantly. For instance, the poet's description of the march in Birmingham's streets creates an image. Besides, after the explosion, the poem uses imagery to illustrate the tension in the mother. The speaker states, "She raced through the streets of Birmingham" (Randall line 27). Symbolism is also used significantly when the girl's mother refers to the white supremacist as fierce and wild dogs (Randall line 6). The church is also symbolized as a place of safety, but it is catastrophic. Besides, the white gloves and shoes worn by the girl symbolize the girl's innocence, which contributes more to the poem's sad mood since she ends up dying in a bombing incident.

Auden also uses metaphors significantly to illustrate how life can lack purpose due to the death of loved ones. Hyperbolic metaphors are used to symbolize hopelessness and the inability to replace a loved one. The speaker asserts, "Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood," highlighting the anguish and disheartenment that the bereaved have to go through (Auden, line 15). There is a probability that this intense melancholy might result in depression. Besides, the author also uses metaphors when he asserts that "The stars are not wanted now: Put out every one]," indicating how meaningless life is (Auden, line 13-14). Hyperbolic metaphors are used throughout the poem to highlight the intensity and capture the effects of death on people's lives. The last line in the poem depicts the tragic loss and the state of gloominess and despair.

Just like Randall, Auden employs symbolism extensively to illustrate the theme of death and grief. The clocks are significant since they represent time. By asserting, "Stop all the clocks," the speaker is trying to ask that time is stopped, inferring he wants everything to come to a halt. Moreover, pianos symbolize happiness and celebration, yet at this very moment, they are unneeded since a death has occurred. The black cotton gloves represent immense despair and sorrow; notably, black represents mourning or death (Auden line 8).

Auden's "Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone" and Randall's "Ballad of Birmingham" have a common theme that of grief and loss. Both authors effectively use literal techniques such as metaphor, symbolism, allusion, and hyperboles to highlight the impact of death and the grief that comes with it. The poems critically highlight the pessimism nature that bereaved people express and the immense agony accompanying their grief.

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Works Cited

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