



The Ephemeral Nature of Life: A Comparative Study of Life's Transience in Romantic Poetry and Wilfy Rebimbus

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Wilfy Rebimbus, a 20th-century Konkani lyric poet, is renowned for his diverse exploration of themes such as nature, social issues, family values, and human values in his copious lyrical poems. Through his poetry, he seeks to encapsulate these issues and provide guidance, solutions, and warnings, akin to the approach of romantic poets.

The Romantic poets, active primarily in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, encouraged a deep appreciation for individual emotion, nature, imagination, and personal freedom. They reacted against the rationalism and formalism of the Enlightenment and emphasized subjective experiences, spontaneous feelings, and creativity over reasoning and stereotypical thinking. Poets like William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats exemplified these ideals through their poetry, emphasizing an introspective and passionate engagement with the world.

Wilfy Rebimbus, in his poetry, treated the romantic themes embodying the essence of Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Tennyson. His poetic voice resonates with those of the Romantic poets, particularly in his exploration of the transient nature of life. Like the Romantics, Wilfy's poetry delves deep into the ephemeral quality of human existence.

The Romantic era of poetry is abundant with musings on the fleeting nature of life. The poets of this period were acutely aware of the transience of human existence, and they often reflected on how life, with all its splendour, is but a temporary moment in the grand scheme of the universe. Through metaphors such as the sunset and the bubble, Romantic poets encapsulate the fragility of life and the vanity that often accompanies human endeavours. This essay critically examines some of the poems of romantic poets and especially of Wilfy Rebimbus that delve

into the temporariness of life. The analysis reveals how these works convey the futility of worldly concerns as one crosses "the bar" into the unknown realm of death.

The metaphor of sunset in Romantic poetry often symbolizes the end of life. The setting sun reflects the waning moments of existence, suggesting the inevitable conclusion of all earthly journeys. One notable poem that explores this metaphor is William Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood." While this ode primarily celebrates the persistence of the soul after death, Wordsworth touches upon the fading glory of life, comparing it to the sunset in its transitory brilliance:

"The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth."
(Lines 182-190)

In these lines, the sunset, rainbow, and other natural phenomena evoke a fleeting beauty, which, like human life, is temporary. The sense of nostalgia for something lost permeates the poem, symbolizing the inevitable fading of life's vibrancy, as time presses forward. The speaker, though recognizing the natural beauty that surrounds him, laments that something crucial has "passed away" — the glory that once existed in youthful innocence and vitality, has now eclipsed as the sunset of life looms nearer.



In his poem "Saanz Zalire" (It's Evening Now), WilfyRebimbu employs the metaphor of the sunset. He portrays evening as the twilight of life, symbolizing the period just before death. In this poem, he advises people to prepare themselves for the journey into another life, as the sun of life has now set.

"It's evening, it's evening
Get up you man and set out from this world
You have moved around with pride four days and nights
Today the sun has set without your knowledge".
(Kogul Gayta, p.17) (Translation mine).

Wilfy, like Wordsworth, emphasizes the fleeting nature of life. He believes that man is a guest on this earth for only a few days, and once the sun sets, he must embark on his journey to another life. WilfyRebimbu shares the same perspective as that of the Romantic poets, asserting that life on this earth is temporary. The sun will set without man's knowledge, and he must be prepared to move to another world when his life on this earth ends.

Further, he says;
"Four days into this world
To me and you
God has sent in human form.
We didn't bring anything when we came,
Nor will we take anything when we leave
Life will be empty one day
You won't even get a moment
When you stop breathing
Don't look back, it's of no use."

Wilfy's perspective on life and the inevitability of death is quite pragmatic. He believes that our time on earth is a brief journey, and we enter and leave the world empty-handed. Wilfy emphasizes that there's no point regretting at the end of life, as no additional moments will be granted once our life has come to an end. This philosophy is reminiscent of the Romantic poets' efforts to inspire people to live a life filled with divinity and preserve the sanctity of life.

Another Romantic poet, John Keats, uses the sunset metaphor in "To Autumn," although the poem is typically interpreted as a celebration of the

autumnal harvest. However, the lines convey a deeper awareness of the inexorable march of time.

"The soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies." (Lines 25-29)

Keats paints a serene and melancholic image of sunset, drawing attention to the "soft-dying day." The ephemeral beauty of the autumn evening mirrors the temporality of human life. Just as the day gives way to night, life eventually yields to death. The dying light of the sun parallels the waning vitality of old age, underscoring the natural order of decay that governs all existence. Keats, often tormented by the knowledge of his own impending death, imbues this scene with a poignant sense of mortality.

WilfyRebimbu finds that every sunset serves as a poignant reminder of the fleeting nature of life, as it transitions into another realm. Through his evocative poetry, he endeavours to urge people to remain vigilant and mindful of the brevity of existence. In his poem "Char Disancho Sounsar" (World is of Four Days), he poignantly portrays the transience of human arrogance, which ultimately gives way to the inevitability of mortality.

"World is of four days, jumps in pride
If the creator wishes, it will disappear with a puff
A lot of chaos here with pomp and pride
God observes everything letting one end of the rope lose."
(Kogul Gayta. P. 37) (Translation mine)

Romantic poets were deeply influenced by the awareness that human life, with all its achievements, is ultimately vain and ephemeral. One powerful metaphor used to convey this idea is the bubble on water, which, like human life, exists momentarily before bursting and vanishing without a trace. This metaphor finds resonance in Percy Bysshe Shelley's "Adonais," an elegy on the sad demise of John Keats. Shelley poignantly captures the fragility of life through the image of bubbles:



"Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. — Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!" (Lines 462-466)

Here, life is compared to a glass dome, fragile and easily shattered by death. The "white radiance of Eternity" contrasts with the temporary, stained existence that human beings experience. Shelley suggests that the true value of life lies beyond this fragile dome, in the eternal realm that can only be reached through death. Life's vanity is laid bare as in the case of all human endeavours—no matter how magnificent—are ultimately "trampled" by the relentless march of time and death.

Henry Vaughan is another poet who uses the metaphor of a bubble on water in his poem "They Are All Gone into the World of Light." Like Shelly, Vaughan in this poem, reflects on the ephemeral nature of human existence. He writes:

"I see them walking in an air of glory,
Whose light doth trample on my days:
My days, which are at best but dull and hoary,
Mere glimmering and decays." (Lines 13-16)

Here, the poet acknowledges that life, even at its best, is dull and transient, subject to decay. The image of "glimmering" evokes the bubble, shining briefly before disappearing, a fitting metaphor for the fleeting nature of human existence. Vaughan laments that life, with all its struggles and achievements, amounts to nothing once one crosses into the "world of light," the realm of the afterlife. In this sense, everything stored or valued in this world loses its significance as he enters the eternal.

Wilfy Rebimbus uses the metaphor of a bubble in his lyrical poem "Saanz Zalire" that powerfully captures the fleeting nature of life.

"Human life
Is a bubble on water
No one can predict when it bursts
Whatever you have stored, you can't take it with you
Nothing remains other than good or bad you have earned."

(Kogul Gayta, PP 17-18) (Translation Mine),

Like a bubble, our existence is fragile and temporary, a brief journey that can end at any moment. The bubble floats effortlessly, sparkling with momentary beauty, yet it bursts unexpectedly, leaving nothing behind. This impermanence reminds us that pride, pomp, and worldly grandeur are ultimately futile. No amount of material wealth or status can alter the transient course of life.

Just as we enter the world with nothing, we leave it the same way—empty-handed. The bubble, though delicate and seemingly full of life, encapsulates the idea that clinging to pride or arrogance is in vain. Life's fragility teaches humility, urging us to recognize that our time here is brief, and the pursuit of superficial gains holds no lasting value. Embracing life's fleeting nature encourages a focus on meaning, kindness, and simplicity, as we navigate this short journey.

The idea that worldly achievements hold no value once one crosses into the realm of death is a common theme in Romantic poetry. Alfred, Lord Tennyson powerfully captures this notion in his poem "Crossing the Bar." The bar, symbolizing the boundary between life and death, becomes a metaphor for the transition to the afterlife:

"Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark." (Lines 9-12)

Tennyson's speaker anticipates the journey from life to death with calm acceptance. The imagery of twilight and the evening bell suggests the approaching end of life, while the reference to "the dark" signals the unknown territory beyond death. The speaker hopes for a peaceful transition, unburdened by the attachments and concerns of the material world. This sentiment reinforces the idea that everything we strive for in life—wealth, fame, or status—becomes irrelevant once we cross the bar into the next world.

Wilfy Rebimbus shares a thematic resonance with Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar." Yet he approaches the subject with a distinct tone of advice and warning. While Tennyson's work focuses on the inevitability of death with a calm, almost peaceful acceptance of



fate, Rebimbus' reflections carry a more evaluative and ethical dimension, urging us to reflect on the quality of life lived before crossing the ultimate threshold of death.

“We have come here for a short period
Let's make life sweet
We came to the cradle weeping
Go to the grave smiling
Leave back good thoughts and good deeds
Rest of it bury it in the grave.”

Tennyson's metaphor of crossing the bar symbolizes the passage from life to death, embracing it as a natural transition, free from fear or anxiety. He expresses a desire for this crossing to be serene, hoping to meet his “Pilot” (a metaphor for God) face to face, underscoring the hopeful and tranquil nature of the journey. There is no sense of judgment or moral reflection in Tennyson's tone, only a quiet anticipation of what comes after life, with trust in the divine.

In contrast, Rebimbus emphasizes the moral implications of life on earth, warning that the way one lives will impact the peace one finds when crossing that bar. He advises making life “sweet,” suggesting that our fleeting existence should be marked by goodness and good deeds. Rebimbus' tone carries the weight of consequence, implying that the bar-crossing is not just a serene transition, but also a reflection of how one has lived. His message is to leave behind the good, to rest in the coffin with a smile rather than with regret.

The juxtaposition between Tennyson's acceptance and Rebimbus' warning provides a layered understanding of death: one, an inevitable, peaceful journey; the other, a reminder to live meaningfully, since the “crossing” signifies not only the end but a moral summation of life. Thus, Rebimbus echoes the Romantic view but adds a profound ethical lens to it.

WilfyRebimbus, while sharing the Romantic preoccupation with the transitory nature of life, diverges from the typical Romantic poets by adopting a didactic and moralistic tone. Like Keats, Vaughan, and Tennyson, Rebimbus reflects on life's fleetingness through metaphors such as the bubble and crossing the bar. However, where poets like Keats in “To Autumn” and Vaughan in “They Are All Gone into the World of Light” present a

meditative resignation to life's impermanence, Rebimbus introduces a more directive tone, emphasizing the importance of living a life filled with goodness and good deeds.

While Romantic poets often dwell on the ephemeral beauty of life and the inevitability of death with a sense of melancholy or philosophical reflection, Rebimbus offers a practical approach. He urges people to focus on ethical living, recognizing that while life is temporary, the impact of one's deeds is lasting. His counsel to “rest in the coffin smiling” reinforces a belief in moral responsibility, contrasting with the more aestheticized detachment seen in Romantic poetry.

Ultimately, Rebimbus and the Romantics converge on the idea that earthly concerns are futile, and true meaning lies beyond this life. However, Rebimbus emphasizes active virtue in life, framing death as not just an end but a reflection of how we lived.

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