Scarce fresher is the mountain sod
Where the tired angler lies, stretched out,
And, eased of basket and of rod,
20 Counts his day's spoil, the spotted trout.

In the huge world, which roars hard° by, *close*
Be others happy if they can!
But in my helpless cradle I
Was breathed on by the rural Pan.[3]

25 I, on men's impious uproar hurled,
Think often, as I hear them rave,
That peace has left the upper world
And now keeps only in the grave.

Yet here is peace forever new!
30 When I who watch them am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass!
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
35 The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine,
40 Man did not make, and cannot mar.

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give!
Calm, calm me more! nor let me die
Before I have begun to live.

1852

The Scholar Gypsy The story of a seventeenth-century student who left Oxford and joined a band of gypsies had made a strong impression on Arnold. In the poem he wistfully imagines that the spirit of this scholar is still to be encountered in the Cumner countryside near Oxford, having achieved immortality by a serene pursuit of the secret of human existence. Like Keats's nightingale, the scholar has escaped "the weariness, the fever, and the fret" of modern life.

At the outset the poet addresses a shepherd who has been helping him in his search for traces of the scholar. The shepherd is addressed as *you.* After line 61, with the shift to *thou* and *thy,* the person addressed is the scholar, and the poet thereafter sometimes uses the pronoun *we* to indicate he is speaking for all humanity of later generations.

3. In Greek mythology the god of woods and pastures.

About the setting Arnold wrote to his brother Tom on May 15, 1857: "You alone of my brothers are associated with that life at Oxford, the *freest* and most delightful part, perhaps, of my life, when with you and Clough and Walrond I shook off all the bonds and formalities of the place, and enjoyed the spring of life and that unforgotten Oxfordshire and Berkshire country. Do you remember a poem of mine called 'The Scholar Gipsy'? It was meant to fix the remembrance of those delightful wanderings of ours in the Cumner Hills."

The passage from Joseph Glanvill's *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1661) that inspired the poem was included by Arnold as a note:

> There was very lately a lad in the University of Oxford, who was by his poverty forced to leave his studies there; and at last to join himself to a company of vagabond gypsies. Among these extravagant people, by the insinuating subtilty of his carriage, he quickly got so much of their love and esteem as that they discovered to him their mystery. After he had been a pretty while exercised in the trade, there chanced to ride by a couple of scholars, who had formerly been of his acquaintance. They quickly spied out their old friend among the gypsies; and he gave them an account of the necessity which drove him to that kind of life, and told them that the people he went with were not such imposters as they were taken for, but that they had a traditional kind of learning among them, and could do wonders by the power of imagination, their fancy binding that of others: that himself had learned much of their art, and when he had compassed the whole secret, he intended, he said, to leave their company, and give the world an account of what he had learned.

The Scholar Gypsy

Go, for they call you, shepherd, from the hill;
Go, shepherd, and untie the wattled cotes![1]
No longer leave thy wistful flock unfed,
Nor let thy bawling fellows rack their throats,
5 Nor the cropped herbage shoot another head.
But when the fields are still,
And the tired men and dogs all gone to rest,
And only the white sheep are sometimes seen
Cross and recross the strips of moon-blanched green,
10 Come, shepherd, and again begin the quest!

Here, where the reaper was at work of late—
In this high field's dark corner, where he leaves
His coat, his basket, and his earthen cruse,[2]
And in the sun all morning binds the sheaves,
15 Then here, at noon, comes back his stores to use—
Here will I sit and wait,
While to my ear from uplands far away
The bleating of the folded° flocks is borne, *penned up*
With distant cries of reapers in the corn[3]—
20 All the live murmur of a summer's day.

1. Sheepfolds woven from sticks.
2. Pot or jug for carrying his drink.
3. Grain or wheat.

Screened is this nook o'er the high, half-reaped field,
And here till sundown, shepherd! will I be.
Through the thick corn the scarlet poppies peep,
And round green roots and yellowing stalks I see
25 Pale pink convolvulus in tendrils creep;
And air-swept lindens yield
Their scent, and rustle down their perfumed showers
Of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid,
And bower me from the August sun with shade;
30 And the eye travels down to Oxford's towers.

And near me on the grass lies Glanvill's book—
Come, let me read the oft-read tale again!
The story of the Oxford scholar poor,
Of pregnant parts[4] and quick inventive brain,
35 Who, tired of knocking at preferment's door,
One summer morn forsook
His friends, and went to learn the gypsy lore,
And roamed the world with that wild brotherhood,
And came, as most men deemed, to little good,
40 But came to Oxford and his friends no more.

But once, years after, in the country lanes,
Two scholars, whom at college erst° he knew, *long ago*
Met him, and of his way of life inquired;
Whereat he answered, that the gypsy crew,
45 His mates, had arts to rule as they desired
The workings of men's brains,
And they can bind them to what thoughts they will.
"And I," he said, "the secret of their art,
When fully learned, will to the world impart;
50 But it needs heaven-sent moments for this skill."

This said, he left them, and returned no more.—
But rumors hung about the countryside,
That the lost Scholar long was seen to stray,
Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
55 In hat of antique shape, and cloak of grey,
The same the gypsies wore.
Shepherds had met him on the Hurst[5] in spring;
At some lone alehouse in the Berkshire moors,
On the warm ingle-bench, the smock-frocked boors[6]
60 Had found him seated at their entering,

But, 'mid their drink and clatter, he would fly.
And I myself seem half to know thy looks,
And put the shepherds, wanderer! on thy trace;
And boys who in lone wheatfields scare the rooks[7]

4. Of rich conception, many ideas.
5. A hill near Oxford. All the place-names in the poem (except those in the final two stanzas) refer to the countryside near Oxford.
6. Rustics. "Ingle-bench": fireside bench.
7. Crows.

65 I ask if thou hast passed their quiet place;
Or in my boat I lie
Moored to the cool bank in the summer heats,
'Mid wide grass meadows which the sunshine fills,
And watch the warm, green-muffled Cumner hills,
70 And wonder if thou haunt'st their shy retreats.

For most, I know, thou lov'st retired ground!
Thee at the ferry Oxford riders blithe,
Returning home on summer nights, have met
Crossing the stripling Thames at Bab-lock-hithe,[8]
75 Trailing in the cool stream thy fingers wet,
As the punt's rope chops round;[9]
And leaning backward in a pensive dream,
And fostering in thy lap a heap of flowers
Plucked in shy fields and distant Wychwood bowers,
80 And thine eyes resting on the moonlit stream.

And then they land, and thou art seen no more!—
Maidens, who from the distant hamlets come
To dance around the Fyfield elm in May,
Oft through the darkening fields have seen thee roam,
85 Or cross a stile into the public way.
Oft thou hast given them store
Of flowers—the frail-leafed, white anemone,
Dark bluebells drenched with dews of summer eves,
And purple orchises with spotted leaves—
90 But none hath words she can report of thee.

And, above Godstow Bridge, when hay time's here
In June, and many a scythe in sunshine flames,
Men who through those wide fields of breezy grass
Where black-winged swallows haunt the glittering Thames,
95 To bathe in the abandoned lasher[1] pass,
Have often passed thee near
Sitting upon the river bank o'ergrown;
Marked thine outlandish garb, thy figure spare,
Thy dark vague eyes, and soft abstracted air—
100 But, when they came from bathing, thou wast gone!

At some lone homestead in the Cumner hills,
Where at her open door the housewife darns,
Thou hast been seen, or hanging on a gate
To watch the threshers in the mossy barns.
105 Children, who early range these slopes and late
For cresses from the rills,

8. Or Bablock Hythe (a *hithe* or *hythe* is a landing place on a river). "The stripling Thames": the narrow upper reaches of the river before it broadens out to its full width.
9. The scholar's flat-bottomed boat ("punt") is tied up by a rope at the riverbank near the ferry crossing like the speaker's boat (in the previous stanza), which was "moored to the cool bank." The motion of the boat as it is stirred by the current of the river causes the chopping sound of the rope in the water.
1. Water that spills over a dam or weir.

Have known thee eying, all an April day,
The springing pastures and the feeding kine;° *cattle*
And marked thee, when the stars come out and shine,
110 Through the long dewy grass move slow away.

In autumn, on the skirts of Bagley Wood—
Where most the gypsies by the turf-edged way
Pitch their smoked tents, and every bush you see
With scarlet patches tagged and shreds of grey,
115 Above the forest ground called Thessaly—
The blackbird, picking food,
Sees thee, nor stops his meal, nor fears at all;
So often has he known thee past him stray,
Rapt, twirling in thy hand a withered spray,
120 And waiting for the spark from heaven to fall.

And once, in winter, on the causeway chill
Where home through flooded fields foot-travelers go,
Have I not passed thee on the wooden bridge,
Wrapped in thy cloak and battling with the snow,
125 Thy face tow'rd Hinksey and its wintry ridge?
And thou hast climbed the hill,
And gained the white brow of the Cumner range;
Turned once to watch, while thick the snowflakes fall,
The line of festal light in Christ Church hall[2]—
130 Then sought thy straw in some sequestered grange.° *farmhouse*

But what—I dream! Two hundred years are flown
Since first thy story ran through Oxford halls,
And the grave Glanvill did the tale inscribe
That thou wert wandered from the studious walls
135 To learn strange arts, and join a gypsy tribe;
And thou from earth art gone
Long since, and in some quiet churchyard laid—
Some country nook, where o'er thy unknown grave
Tall grasses and white flowering nettles wave,
140 Under a dark, red-fruited yew tree's shade.

—No, no, thou hast not felt the lapse of hours!
For what wears out the life of mortal men?
'Tis that from change to change their being rolls;
'Tis that repeated shocks, again, again,
145 Exhaust the energy of strongest souls
And numb the elastic powers.
Till having used our nerves with bliss and teen,° *vexation*
And tired upon a thousand schemes our wit,
To the just-pausing Genius[3] we remit
150 Our worn-out life, and are—what we have been.

2. The dining hall of this Oxford college.
3. Perhaps the spirit of the universe, which pauses briefly to receive back the life given to us. (In Roman mythology a *genius* was an attendant spirit.)

Thou hast not lived, why should'st thou perish, so?
Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire;
Else wert thou long since numbered with the dead!
Else hadst thou spent, like other men, thy fire!
155 The generations of thy peers are fled,
And we ourselves shall go;
But thou possessest an immortal lot,
And we imagine thee exempt from age
And living as thou liv'st on Glanvill's page,
160 Because thou hadst—what we, alas! have not.

For early didst thou leave the world, with powers
Fresh, undiverted to the world without,
Firm to their mark, not spent on other things;
Free from the sick fatigue, the languid doubt,
165 Which much to have tried, in much been baffled, brings.
O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuate idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half[4] lives a hundred different lives;
170 Who wait like thee, but not, like thee, in hope.

Thou waitest for the spark from heaven! and we,
Light half-believers of our casual creeds,
Who never deeply felt, nor clearly willed,
Whose insight never has borne fruit in deeds,
175 Whose vague resolves never have been fulfilled;
For whom each year we see
Breeds new beginnings, disappointments new;
Who hesitate and falter life away,
And lose tomorrow the ground won today—
180 Ah! do not we, wanderer! await it too?

Yes, we await it!—but it still delays,
And then we suffer! and amongst us one,[5]
Who most has suffered, takes dejectedly
His seat upon the intellectual throne;
185 And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare of wretched days;
Tells us his misery's birth and growth and signs,
And how the dying spark of hope was fed,
And how the breast was soothed, and how the head,
190 And all his hourly varied anodynes.

This for our wisest! and we others pine,
And wish the long unhappy dream would end,
And waive all claim to bliss, and try to bear;
With close-lipped patience for our only friend,

4. An adverb modifying "lives."
5. Probably Goethe, although possibly referring to Tennyson, whose *In Memoriam* had appeared in 1850.

195 Sad patience, too near neighbor to despair—
But none has hope like thine!
Thou through the fields and through the woods dost stray,
Roaming the countryside, a truant boy,
Nursing thy project in unclouded joy,
200 And every doubt long blown by time away.

O born in days when wits were fresh and clear,
And life ran gaily as the sparkling Thames;
Before this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
205 Its heads o'ertaxed, its palsied hearts, was rife—
Fly hence, our contact fear!
Still fly, plunge deeper in the bowering wood!
Averse, as Dido did with gesture stern
From her false friend's approach in Hades turn,[6]
210 Wave us away, and keep thy solitude!

Still nursing the unconquerable hope,
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through,
By night, the silvered branches of the glade—
215 Far on the forest skirts, where none pursue.
On some mild pastoral slope
Emerge, and resting on the moonlit pales
Freshen thy flowers as in former years
With dew, or listen with enchanted ears,
220 From the dark dingles,° to the nightingales! *small deep valleys*

But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,
Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
225 Like us distracted, and like us unblest.
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
230 Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.

Then fly our greetings, fly our speech and smiles!
—As some grave Tyrian trader, from the sea,
Descried at sunrise an emerging prow
Lifting the cool-haired creepers stealthily,
235 The fringes of a southward-facing brow
Among the Aegean isles;
And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
Freighted with amber grapes, and Chian wine,

6. Dido committed suicide after her lover, Aeneas, deserted her. When he later encountered her in Hades, she silently turned away from him (see Virgil's *Aeneid*, book 6).

Green, bursting figs, and tunnies° steeped in brine— *tuna fish*
240 And knew the intruders on his ancient home,

The young lighthearted masters of the waves—
And snatched his rudder, and shook out more sail;
And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the gale,
245 Betwixt the Syrtes[7] and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves
Outside the western straits; and unbent sails
There, where down cloudy cliffs, through sheets of foam,
Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians[8] come;
250 And on the beach undid his corded bales.[9]

1853

Dover Beach

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
5 Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
10 Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

15 Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought

7. Shoals off the coast of North Africa.
8. Dark inhabitants of Spain and Portugal—perhaps associated with gypsies.
9. The elaborate simile of the final two stanzas has been variously interpreted. The trader from Tyre (a Phoenician city, on the coast of what is now Lebanon) is disconcerted to see a new business rival, "the merry Grecian coaster," emerging from one of his habitual trading ports in the Greek islands. Like the Scholar Gypsy, when similarly intruded on by hearty extroverts, he resolves to flee and seek a less competitive sphere of life.
The reference (line 249) to the Iberians as "*shy* traffickers" (traders) is explained by Kenneth Allott as having been derived from Herodotus's *History* (4.196). Herodotus describes a distinctive method of selling goods established by merchants from Carthage who used to sail through the Strait of Gibraltar to trade with the inhabitants of the coast of West Africa. The Carthaginians would leave bales of their merchandise on display along the beaches and, without having seen their prospective customers, would return to their ships. The shy natives would then come down from their inland hiding places and set gold beside the bales they wished to buy. When the natives withdrew in their turn, the Carthaginians would return to the beach and decide whether payments were adequate, a process repeated until agreement was reached. On the Atlantic coasts this method of bargaining persisted into the 19th century. As William Beloe, a translator of the ancient Greek historian, noted in 1844: "In this manner they transact their exchange without seeing one another, or without the least instance of dishonesty . . . on either side." For the solitary Tyrian trader such a procedure, with its avoidance of "contact" (line 221), would have been especially appropriate.

“The Scholar Gypsy”

by Matthew Arnold

pastoral elegy

A serious formal poem in which a poet grieves the loss of a dead friend.

Composed in an elevated, dignified style, pastoral elegy, as its name implies, combines the forms and traditions of elegy with those of pastoral.

In this type of elegy, the poet-mourner figures himself and the individual mourned as shepherds who have lived their lives in a simple, rural setting, tending their flocks.

The Scholar Gypsy

The subject of Arnold's elegy is a legendary, poor Oxford University student of the 17th century who has abandoned his studies to learn the occult ways of the nomadic gypsy people.

The Scholar-Gypsy is portrayed not as dead but as existing in an immortal twilight of the Romantic imagination.

The Scholar Gypsy

As the years become centuries, the increasingly mysterious scholar-gypsy continues his quest, a solitary figure always seen at a distance, carefully avoiding any contact with the corruption of modern civilization.

The Scholar Gypsy

The poem tends to fall into two separate but related parts.

The first part, the first 13 stanzas, deals primarily with the quest of the poet for the scholar;

the second part deals with the quest of the scholar (and of Arnold) for the spark from heaven, the mystical moment of insight.

Stanza 5

The Scholar-Gypsy seeks a power of imagination capable of creating and not simply reflecting reality.

The Scholar-Gypsy is a revolutionary who seeks to improve the world not through the industrial innovations of Victorian materialism but through a spiritual purification.

Stanza 8

After the encounter with his former fellow students, the scholar-gypsy becomes a ghostly figure.

He is occasionally sighted, but as one draws close he disappears, becoming, as the years pass, more an enduring illusion than a tangible reality.

Gradually, only those who inhabit the country see the scholar-gypsy.

Stanza 14

The poem's major break comes with the line "But what—I dream!"

His imaginative reverie broken, the speaker at first acknowledges in accordance with 19th-century realism that the Scholar-Gypsy must be long since dead.

Stanza 16

It is worthy of note that the only italicized words in the whole poem are in line 152, “Thou hadst *one* aim, *one* business, *one* desire”—emphasizing the poet’s desire for singleness of purpose.

Stanza 17

Arnold's speaker declares that the Scholar-Gypsy lives on and has achieved his quest for immortality because he has remained untainted by contact with the spiritual desolation of the modern world:

"O life unlike to ours! / Who fluctuate idly without term or scope."

Stanza 21

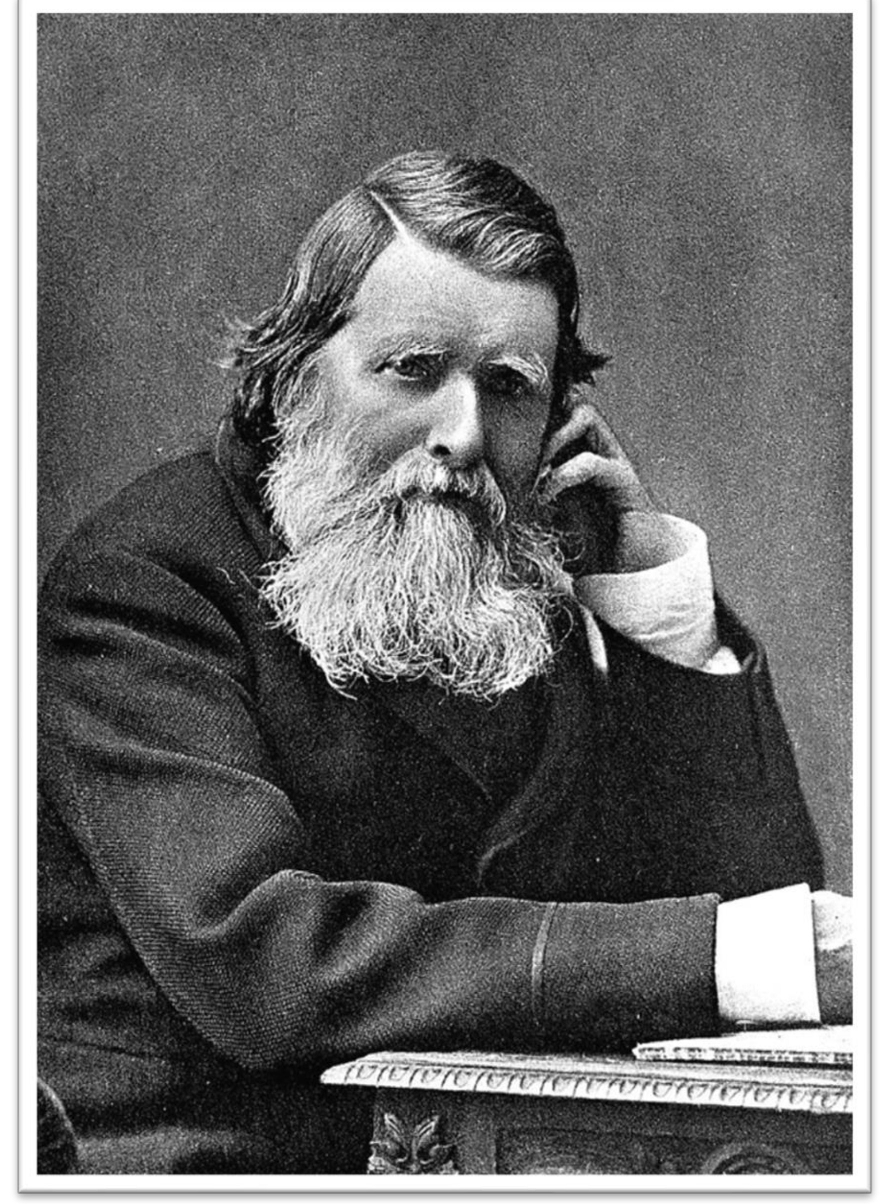
In self-disgust, Arnold’s speaker urges the Scholar-Gypsy to maintain his immortal spirit of imagination, which can only be accomplished by fleeing contact with the modern world, which is “feverish” and infected with “mental strife.”

Sources

- Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 3rd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. (Slide 2)
- "The Scholar-Gipsy – Summary" eNotes Publishing Ed. eNotes Editorial. eNotes.com, Inc. eNotes.com 14 Nov, 2019 http://www.enotes.com/topics/scholar-gipsy#summary-summary-865058 (Slides 3-12)

Modern Painters

John Ruskin (1819 – 1900)



Modern Painters: Summary

- Ruskin asserts that great art is more than technique; the idea that the painter or writer is trying to convey is exceedingly important.
- Ruskin sets forth his concept of the **pathetic fallacy**: a condition in which a literary image that is not realistic in its depiction of its subject matter produces a strong emotion in the reader.

Modern Painters: Themes

- The idea that the writer or artist attempts to convey is more important than perfect technique.
- Literary images must be truthful in some essential sense.

Modern Painters: “The Slave Ship”

Turner’s painting, “The Slave Ship,” perfectly illustrates Ruskin’s point because its evocation of fiery turbulence “condemn[s]” the “guilty ship” and so reveals the “purest truth.”

Pathetic Fallacy

A term coined by Victorian art critic John Ruskin in *Modern Painters* (v.3, 1856) to describe the attribution of human traits and emotions to inanimate nature.

Ruskin considered such attribution a sign of artistic weakness, an “error … which the mind admits when affected strongly by emotion.”

Source: *The Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms*

Pathetic Fallacy

Citing the lines "They rowed her in across the rolling foam — / The cruel, crawling foam" from Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1850) as an example, he noted that "The foam is not cruel, neither does it crawl. The state of mind which attributes to it these characters of a living creature is one in which the reason is unhinged by grief."

While subsequent critics have generally used the term neutrally, modern poets have tended to avoid the device.

Source: *The Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms*

Pathetic Fallacy

The pathetic fallacy is a limited form of **personification**, a figure of speech that bestows human characteristics upon anything nonhuman.

Source: *The Bedford Glossary of Literary Terms*

Modern Painters: Pathetic Fallacy

In the section on the pathetic fallacy, Ruskin is again concerned with the concept of truth.

Here Ruskin tells us that our perception of "the ordinary, proper, and true appearances of things" can be distorted "when we are under the influence of emotion, or contemplative fancy," as happens when we come across a poetic image that ascribes human qualities or emotions to inanimate objects.

Modern Painters: Pathetic Fallacy

While Ruskin acknowledges that we can receive pleasure from fanciful similes and metaphors having a less than firm footing in reality and even admits that some of our favorite poetry might feature this "willful fancy," he nonetheless claims that we allow for such fancies in this case because we know that poetry is a special form that is created to produce a passionate response.

Modern Painters: Pathetic Fallacy

The finest poets, however, such as Dante, “do not often admit to this kind of falseness”; only the “second order of poets” indulge immoderately in such practices.

Source

- *Teaching with The Norton Anthology of English Literature*: A Guide for Instructors, 9th ed., W. W. Norton & Company, 2012. (Slides 2-4, 9-11)
- Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, 3rd ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. (Slides 6-8)