

TO THE CUCKOO by William Wordsworth

The poet laureate who launched the romantic age in Britain with themes of nature in his poetry, William Wordsworth's *To the Cuckoo* is a classic example of his style of poetry. Consisting of 8 quatrains, this poem is directly addressed to the cuckoo bird. The poet's tone throughout the poem is reverential and nostalgic. *To the cuckoo* begins in a very conventional manner, with the poet welcoming the bird, calling him a "blithe new-comer", hence projecting an image of a carefree, merry bird who is disconnected from the restraints of the human materialistic life, and who revels in his freedom. The poet is happy on seeing the bird, but calls the bird "wandering voice" as he has only heard his voice, but never seen the cuckoo in person.

The poet then begins narrating how he came across the cuckoo's song, while he was lying on the grass. He recognizes the bird by his distinguishable twofold cry which echoes across hills and valleys, submerging the poet in his voice. In the third stanza the poet confesses how the bird's songs about flowers and valleys actually transport him to his childhood days and acts as a catalyst in bringing back memories of his past. Then the poet moves on to clearly state that in actuality he has never seen the bird, but has only heard his voice. The cuckoo remains a mystery to the poet. Continuing with the nostalgic tones, the poet narrates how in his school days he used to desperately search for the cuckoo in every possible haunt, be it bushes or trees or the sky. The cuckoo's melody enthralled the poet and awakened within him a desire to find the source of this enchantment.

Wordsworth used to wander aimlessly in search of the cuckoo because he wanted to see his object of devotion with his own eyes. In this stanza itself the poet declares his love for the cuckoo and gives the reader an insight as to what the bird truly meant to him and how he still hopes and yearns to see the bird. Even though a lot of time has passed since his boyhood, he hasn't given up and believes that he will succeed in locating his cuckoo bird. The poet travels back to the present with the seventh stanza as he informs the cuckoo bird that he still listens to his voice while lying down on the grass. Using the cuckoo's voice as a porthole, the poet travels back to the golden days of his childhood. Referring to his childhood as golden, the poet explains how precious his past memories are to him. In the final stanza the poet states the two contradictory pictures of the earth, as a place filled with restrictions of materialistic life and as a place that is brimming with mystical wonders of nature. Such a versatile place is fit for the cuckoo's dwelling as it too is mysterious, having such a voice, yet hidden from the poet's view. Wordsworth's *To the cuckoo* is an ode to the mysterious nature of the cuckoo bird, and at the same time it celebrates the beauty of nature. Wordsworth lives up to his reputation of being a romantic poet as he refers to the days of his childhood as "golden" and "visionary". Directly addressed to the cuckoo, this poem has undertones of a reference to time as like the bird, its presence can be felt, but it is intangible and beyond the periphery of human vision.

The Liar by Mulk Raj Anand

In *The Liar* by Mulk Raj Anand we have the theme of storytelling, friendship, innocence, respect and jealousy. Labhu has the ability to take the mundane and turn it into an adventurous tale. Something that intrigues the narrator. However it is noticeable that sometimes Labhu's tales are so fanciful that the narrator does not believe them and as such terminates his friendship with Labhu. It is as though the narrator does not wish to be taken as a fool. Which may be important as it is possible that Anand is suggesting that when it comes to storytelling not every listener of a tale will believe the storyteller. Should they feel as though the storyteller is exaggerating a story to the point that the story becomes unrealistic and there is no doubting that Labhu's stories are fantastical in their nature and quite unbelievable. Then the listener will not listen to the story. Though it is noticeable that on occasions Labhu is able to keep the narrator enthralled. Which for a storyteller would be their primary goal. To keep either the listener or reader captivated by what they are being told.

How strong the bond or friendship is between the narrator and Labhu can be seen by the fact that they forget their disagreement when Labhu returns from his hunting trip. If anything the narrator is genuinely concerned about Labhu's well-being. The fact that Labhu is not well might also be important as through his illness he is able to produce another fantastical tale which keeps the narrator mesmerized. The reader sensing that the narrator is holding on to every word that Labhu is telling him. The fact that the narrator is still young might also be significant as there is a sense that he is still innocent of the world and as such believes a lot of what Labhu tells him. Also the narrator's mother does not mind the narrator listening to Labhu even though Labhu is of a lower caste. Which may suggest that in many ways there are some like the narrator's mother who see the advantages of Labhu telling his stories. It might also be possible that the narrator's mother has respect for Labhu. He is able to hold an audience. A difficult thing for most people to do.

There is also a sense that others, including the narrator's father, are jealous of Labhu. Something that is noticeable by the fact that they ridicule Labhu's hunting abilities. It is as though people are attempting to put Labhu down. While he himself has done nothing to them. There is no doubting that Labhu is using hyperbole when he is telling his stories to the narrator and others. However so intriguing and imaginative are his stories some people may feel inadequate about their own abilities to tell a story. Though the narrator's mother respects Labhu. Others might not and may simply be judging him on his caste and not allowing for their imagination to be awakened. Where some people may believe a story and be entertained as the narrator is. Others will strive to find holes in a story and criticise the storyteller for what they might perceive to be irregularities in the story. The title of the story is also interesting as there is no doubting that Labhu is a liar. That is if he is to be taken literally. Which he shouldn't be.

If anything Labhu has a vivid imagination and a willingness to share his imagination with others not so much to boost his own self-worth but to entertain and enchant those who listen to his stories. In reality every storyteller could be called a liar for every story may be a lie. It is what a person can take from a story which is important and the narrator takes a lot of happiness from listening to Labhu tell his stories. It might also be significant that Labhu shows a degree of honesty in the final line of the story when he asks the narrator has he heard the story before. This might be considered to be ironic considering that others believe Labhu to be a liar. However throughout the story Labhu has told no lies but has used his imagination to entertain others. He has helped those who have listened to him to escape from life for a brief moment and enter a magical world. A world in which anything is possible and there are no limitations. A place that any child would like to live in. It is only in reality that children (and others) are limited by their circumstances. If anything Labhu manages to create worlds that captivate the listener. Even if he may be prone to exaggeration. Though sometimes a story needs to be exaggerated in order for it to grab the attention and imagination of the listener.