ORGANIZATION 6

Analysis: Lit - Yeats.Order of Chaos

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY:

Overall, this paper has strong organization that moves the reader through the text, and a masterful command of transitions. However, there are no true examples of unconventional organizational decisions that add to the substantiation of ideas. Therefore, this paper can not score an 8.

CRITERION 1: STRUCTURE

This paper employs a sophisticated compare/contrast structure throughout each paragraph, in that it analyzes Shelley, then Yeats through the previous analysis of Shelley, and then contrasts the two together in the latter half of the paper.

By this reviewer's eye, the paragraphs have the following topics:

1. Introduction
2. Alliteration in "Ozamandias"
3. Vertical symmetry in "Ozamandias"
4. Rhyme Scheme in "Ozamandias"
5. Rhythm in "Ozamandias"
6. Horizontal asymmetry in "The Second Coming"
7. Tone in "The Second Coming"
8. Alliteration in "The Second Coming"
9. Sonnet structure in "The Second Coming"
10. Conclusion

This organization is intentional and builds the argument in a clear and nuanced way. (Related analysis is also in the section on assertions.) For example, the paragraph on alliteration in "The Second Coming" builds on the analysis of alliteration in "Ozamandias," buffing what is perhaps a slightly less convincing analysis by contrasting the different uses throughout:

> This soft alliteration [...], just as in "Ozamandias," emphasizes the size and scope of the desert by blurring the boundaries between syllables. Yet the soft alliteration serves an entirely different purpose here: by emphasizing the size of the desert, Yeats gives the reader as vague a notion of where the beast is as possible [...]

The writer has clearly chosen to divide the paper into two major section, one on each of the poems. This is not a lazy choice, but rather one that gives the writer flexibility to center each paragraph around *the meaning* of a specific language use, rather than create one large paragraph on one language use in both poems. Doing the latter would potentially lose the punch of the "so what" (the meaning) of each assertion. However, the writer still weaves in contrast effectively as shown in the example above; this shows an intentional (and logical) sequence of paragraphs on the author's part.

The introduction draws the reader in simply by its immediate command on the principle argument of the paper; the conclusion gives the reader a satisfying sense of closure by its expansion on the proof of the poet's fears through history:

> Ironically, though written almost exactly one hundred years apart, both poets ultimately prove correct. The vague form of ultimate order in Yeats' vision sharpens over the decade after "The Second Coming" is published: as fears of communism spreads through Europe, the people of Italy and Germany ultimately turn to Fascist leaders Mussolini and Hitler to halt the slide of society towards chaos.

Such an extension belongs exactly in a conclusion; it is not central to the argument of the paper, but provides an additional insight that wraps up the argument neatly and leaves the reader with a satisfying sense of wonder.

CRITERION 2: FLOW

Smooth transitions pepper the paper. Each paragraph's central conclusion supports the larger thesis, and details in the second half of the essay offer transitions that refer to parallels or contrasts in the first half. For one example, when the author analyzes the alliteration in "The Second Coming," he refers to the alliteration in the first poem: "Yeats **too** uses soft alliteration to describe the desert in his poem, but **unlike Shelley** he uses it to emphasize not the power of the desert, **but rather** the uncertainty surrounding his vision."

Essay: Lit - Yeats.Order of Chaos

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NOTE: Annotations are not by Achievement First

The Order of Chaos

In "Ozamandias" and "The Second Coming" Percy Shelly and William Yeats seek to illuminate and define the world around them by exploring the struggle between order and chaos, yet both ultimately come to very different conclusions. On the one hand, Shelley asserts that the efforts of man to exercise power and control must ultimately surrender to the limitless expanse of space and time. It is this consistent supremacy of the infinite over the mortal that represents the most supreme form of order, and man's futile efforts to transcend mortality through his achievements conversely represent chaos. In this way, the struggle between order and chaos is one between mortality and immortality. Yeats, on the other hand, [at first] defines the clash of order and chaos in far less abstract terms: the forces of order explicitly represent the moderates and conservatives of Yeats' day, while the forces of chaos stand for the left wing radicals and socialists newly emboldened by the success of the Russian Revolution. From this imminent collapse Yeats can see one vague and blurry outline of possible salvation: a counter-revolution of objectivity and empiricism designed to restore order. Yet not only do Shelley and Yeats reach very different conclusions, but there is also almost no overlap in the ways both poets use poetic form and artistry to communicate meaning.

One of the most notable elements in "Ozymandias" is the use of hard and soft alliteration to imply the dominance of the immortal desert over the mortal achievements of mankind. There are only two hard alliterations in the sonnet: Shelley employs the first one as he describes the statue: "sneer of cold command" (5). Even without the alliteration, the phrase already communicates the vitality and power of the king portrayed in the statue. With the hard

Comment [J1]: Fine discussion of theme, but how does Shelley's choice of the sonnet form convey such a message?

Comment [J2]: An interesting argument you explained well in class.

Comment [J3]: See comment 2: how does Yeats's abortive sonnet (unrhymed octave) and complete (unrhymed) sonnet respond to Shelley's appropriation of the sonnet form for a politically charged poem about tyranny?

Comment [J4]: Lovely paragraph thesis.

Comment [J5]: PQ

alliteration "cold command," the aura of power and authority around the statue increases further still. Later on, Shelley uses the other hard alliteration when describing the desert's supremacy over the statue: "boundless and bare-" (13). Again, the phrase alone is already very meaningful – here signifying the infinity and by extension immortality of the desert. But the inclusion of the hard alliteration emphasizes this immortality and helps ensure that the reader understands the power of infinity – even barren infinity – to be greater than the power of human achievement represented in the statue. Finally, Shelley also includes one soft alliteration as he continues to describe the desert: "the lone and level sands stretch far away." (14) This line again serves to emphasize the infinity and immortality that the desert represents – here the soft alliteration causes sounds of the phrase "lone and level" to almost run together, emphasizing the length of the line over the distinctiveness of each syllable and thus not the power of the desert (as the hard alliteration does) but the sheer infinity of it. Thus, the alliteration in "Ozamandias" serves to emphasize the power of the statue only to emphasize to an even greater degree the power and scope of the desert.

Another crucial element in "Ozymandias" is the vertical symmetry of structure Shelley employs to flesh out the meaning of his sonnet. To create this vertical symmetry, Shelley stresses first the defeat of the statue, then the vitality and former power of the statue, and finally the defeat of the statue and the triumph of the desert once again. The traveler recounts, "'Two vast and trunkless legs of stone/Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand/half sunk, a shattered visage lies-'" (2-4). Shelley focuses on two images here: the desert and the statue. Shelley depicts the latter as thoroughly defeated – the "trunkless" legs stand without purpose while the head, as if decapitation is not humiliation enough, lies "shattered" and "half sunk" in the sand. In contrast, by explicitly mentioning that the statue's visage is "half sunk" in the

Comment [J6]: PQ

Comment [J7]: Empty expansiveness?

Comment [J8]: √

Comment [J9]: Perhaps.

Comment [J10]: its fragmented impermanence amidst

Comment [J11]: Another fine paragraph thesis—arguable and intriguing.

Comment [J12]: √

"sand," Shelley implies that the desert itself is slowly consuming the statue and must therefore be the victor. From lines five to eleven, however, the sonnet begins to reverse its tone as Shelley recounts the former condition of the statue:

> [the] wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
> Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things. . .
> ~~/~~And on the pedestal these words appear:
> 'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings.
> Look on my works ye Mighty, and despair!' (5-11)

Here the imagery contrasts sharply with the previous visions of defeat: the "wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command" not only project vibrant life onto the statue, but also give the statue an aura of power and confidence. Furthermore, the phrase "yet survive . . . on these lifeless things" reminds the reader that the statue has been able to maintain this image of power and confidence even long after the original king died. Finally, the powerful imperative that concludes this middle portion of the sonnet fully captures the power of the king's achievements: they must be great indeed if the king feels that they alone are grounds for his own elevation to a position of power above the gods-- ~~(~~the king feels justified in openly mocking the immortals ("ye Mighty") and *ordering* them to acknowledge his superiority ("'despair!'").~~)~~ At the end of the sonnet, however, the tone of the first four lines returns with a vengeance: "Round the decay/Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,/The lone and level sands stretch far away~~.~~" (12-14). No longer glorified, the statue loses all the powerful vitality and becomes a "decay" once again. And only one line after the statue openly mocks the gods, Shelley in turn openly mocks the statue as a "colossal ~~(mocking the statue's prior magnitude)~~ wreck." Shelley once again portrays the desert itself as the victor: the infinity of the desert (described as surrounding the statue and

Comment [J13]: √

Comment [J14]: No virgule needed for a block quotation of verse.

Comment [J15]: √

Comment [J16]: So the true power lies with the sculptor, yes?

Comment [J17]: I take this imagined apostrophe as a defiance of other rival kings, but I also take point as a possible reference to the gods.

Comment [J18]: I cut what you don't need, as your point is clear enough.

"stretch[ing] far and away") makes the defeated wreck of the statue seem irrelevant and insignificant in comparison. Thus, Shelley brings the tone of the sonnet full circle with vertical symmetry. And this vertical symmetry greatly enhances the meaning of the poem: that the segment of the poem glorifying the statue is sandwiched between two segments of the poem glorifying the desert implies that the immortality represented by the desert is the true authority and supreme order compared to which man's achievements are insignificant, and not the other way around.

Comment [J19]: I'm not sure I hear Shelley as glorifying the desert, so much as setting its expanse and emptiness against the vainglory of the mocked monarch.

To further reinforce his assertion that true order is immortality and infinity, Shelley uses a unique rhyme scheme. The first four lines of the sonnet, those portraying the desert as the victor, have the ABAB rhyme scheme used in most sonnets. The last three lines, which also glorifies the infinity of the desert over the achievements of mankind, also have an orderly rhyme scheme: FEF. The middle chunk of the sonnet, however, which lionizes the achievements of the king, has a rhyme scheme that is far more chaotic: ACDCEDE. Having been lulled by the first four lines into expecting the rhyme scheme of a Shakesperian sonnet, this jumbled rhyme scheme (which includes the off-rhyme: "appear". . . "despair") immediately stands out. Thus, the rhyme scheme perfectly mirrors the vertical symmetry of structure of the sonnet, and also has the same effect: by pairing the chunk of the sonnet devoted to the glorification of the statue with a chaotic rhyme scheme, Shelley reinforces his assertion that mankind's efforts to supersede the limitless expanse of space and time through his own achievements represents chaos. Conversely, by pairing the segments of the sonnet portraying the desert as the victor with an orderly rhyme scheme, Shelley asserts that the absolute supremacy of the limitless expanse of space and time is the most supreme form of order.

Comment [J20]: You're close, Hunter. Shelley fuses elements of the English sonnet (the altemating rhymes of the opening quatrain) with elements of the Italian sonnet (the two intertwining tercets of the sestet), and his second quatrain seems to follow neither sonnet form.

Comment [J21]: Not sure I see your "perfectly mirrors" point here.

Finally, the rhythm of Shelly's "Ozymandias" reinforces the underlying message

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concerning the fragility of man's accomplishments. The poem is written in iambic pentameter, whose steady and regular beat sounds like the ticking of a clock and is thus already suggestive of mankind's impermanence. However, Shelley takes it a step further. As Shelly begins describing the history of the statue, the rhythm of the poem slows down significantly:

> A shattered visage lies, whose frown,
> and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command
> Tell that its sculptor well those passions read,
> Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
> The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed:
> And on the pedestal these words appear:
> 'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings.
> Look on my works ye Mighty, and despair!' (5-11)

First, Shelley employs mild polysyndeton - the use of excess connectives: the extra connective in the phrase "and wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command" slows down the pace of the line. More significantly, however, is his excessive use of subordination (hypotaxis): "which yet survive," for example, is a relative clause which is itself within a relative clause. Finally, almost every single line is an end-stopped line, slowing the rhythm of this particular chunk of the poem down even further. Taken together, all of these three elements dramatically slow down the pace of the description of the statue's history, making the king's achievements seem as if they took ages and ages to build up and establish. Immediately afterward, however, the single word "No" (12) negates the entire passage, reminding the reader that the desert ultimately rendered all of that effort useless. By dragging out the pace of the passage dealing with the statue's history and then negating the entire passage with a single word, Shelley emphasizes that even the most time consuming and laborious of human achievements are ultimately undone by the infinity of time

Comment [J22]: VR. It what?

Comment [J23]: Lovely sequence of analysis, Hunter. I'm just surprise you skip over another clear means of slowing the lines down—the hard caesuras.

and space in what amounts to, geographically speaking, a blink of an eye.

Comment [J24]: Lovely.

In contrast, not only is the meaning of Yeats' "The Second Coming" rather different, but the methods through which he communicates that message are also very different. Instead of using vertical symmetry to reinforce an *abstract* message about the supremacy of immortal order, Yeats uses *horizontal asymmetry* to tie his message about the struggle between order and chaos *directly* into the real-life political world of his time~~.~~:

Comment [J25]: More precise transition and paragraph thesis?

> **Turning and turning** in the widening *gyre*
> The **falcon** cannot hear the *falconer*;
> Things **fall apart**; the *centre* cannot hold;
> **Mere anarchy** is loosed upon the *world*,
> The **blood-dimmed tide** is loosed, *and everywhere*
> The **ceremony of innocence is drowned**;
> The *best* lack all conviction, while **the worst**
> **Are full of passionate intensity**. (1-8)

As Helen Vendler points out, the elements of chaos (boldfaced: "turning and turning," "falcon," "fall apart," "mere anarchy," "blood-dimmed tide," "the ceremony of innocence is drowned," "the worst are full of passionate intensity") are almost all on one side, while the elements of order (italics: "gyre," "falconer," "centre," "world," "and everywhere," "best") are almost all on the other: the entire octave can almost be divided right down the middle into two opposing (asymmetrical) camps (Vendler, 173-74). It is even more significant, however, is that the elements of chaos are specifically on the *left* while the elements of order are specifically on the *right*: the "right-wing" "left-wing" system for classifying political positions had been in place since the French ~~revolution~~Revolution, and those with radical "left-wing" political positions included the socialists responsible for the recent Russian Revolution. Combined with clearly

Comment [J26]: Bolsheviks?

representative phrases such as "The falcon cannot hear the falconer" (a reference to the diminished power of the monarchy, whose sport was falconry) and "the blood-red tide" (a reference to the Red Army's revolution in Russia), this horizontal asymmetry clearly not only neatly divides the elements of chaos from those of order, but also identifies left-wing radicals (such as socialists) as the elements of chaos and the right-wing conservatives as the elements of order. Not only that, but the pessimistic language of the lines themselves ("Things fall apart") is supported by the fact that the elements of chaos outnumber those of order – clearly Yeats is using the asymmetrical structure to stress not only *exactly who* the elements of chaos are, but also that defeat for the forces of order seems inevitable.

Having anchored his poem firmly in the political reality of 1918, Yeats further moves away from Shelley by looking to the future, not to the past, to shed light on the struggle between chaos and order. The second stanza begins:

> Surely some revelation is at hand;
> Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
> The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
> When a vast image. . . .
> Troubles my sight. (9-12)

The tone here is at first one of denial: the word "surely" and the repetitive nature of the first two lines suggest that the second stanza begins with Yeats (or perhaps all the people fighting the losing battle for the forces of order) in a state of denial (It can't be. . . It can't be. . . it must be this instead. . .). This despair turns to euphoria ("The Second Coming!" includes the only exclamation point in the poem) as Yeats meets in a vision the savior he prays for. But this tone of ~~Euphoria~~ euphoria fades fast – the vision "troubles his sight." What is the nature of the beast that so vexes Yeats? And by extension, what does Yeats foresee as the agent by which order will

Comment [J27]: ☺

Comment [J28]: Perhaps.

Comment [J29]: Aren't these conservatives "the worst/full of passionate intensity," a phrase that strikes me as prophetically visionary in an uncanny foreshadowing of the Nazis and Fascists. You make the same point in your concluding paragraph.

Comment [J30]: Isn't the power of the poem that Yeats does NOT identify ANYTHING exactly—at best, indefinite allusions to a Red Army, for example?

Comment [J31]: I don't see how you hear the repeated "Surely" as denial; what I hear is despairing certitude that disaster is "slouching" towards the birthplace of Jesus for an apotheosis of apocalyptic doom.

Comment [J32]: √

Comment [J33]: Yeats is praying for "some rough beast"??????

once again be reinstated? The answer is a "a shape with lion body and the head of a man,/A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun." (14-15). The salvation of order takes the form of a Sphinx – a creature deeply rooted in western culture (dating back to the ancient Greeks) and a creature who symbolized objectivity: the power of the sphinx in Greek mythology had derived from its power of intellect (its riddle) after all. Yet Yeats clearly feels troubled by the objective nature of the savior he envisions: the pure empiricism of the Sphinx ~~makes~~ leaves it "blank and pitiless as the sun." Yeats' misgivings on the form of the beast are also evident in the broken structure of the stanza: the phrase "but now I know" takes as a direct object both an indirect statement ("that twenty centuries of stony sleep") *and* a question ("and what beast. . .born") (Vendler, 174). The second stanza reveals that the only hope for the restoration of order rests with the forces of cold, pitiless empiricism and objective science: but the description of the beast and the broken structure of the stanza suggest that Yeats might be more troubled less by the disease of chaos than by the cure of total objectivity.

Comment [J34]: √

Comment [J35]: Lovely conclusion.

Yeats too uses soft alliteration to describe the desert in his poem, but unlike Shelley he uses it to emphasize not the power of the desert, but rather the uncertainty surrounding his vision. Yeats describes the Sphinx as "troubl[ing] my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert." (13) This soft alliteration ("sight: somewhere in sands"), just as in "Ozamandias," emphasizes the size and scope of the desert by blurring the boundaries between syllables. Yet the soft alliteration serves an entirely different purpose here: by emphasizing the size of the desert, Yeats gives the reader as vague a notion of where the beast is as possible (not only is the beast "somewhere" in a nondescript desert, but the beast is "somewhere" in a very large nondescript desert). This effect, coupled with Yeats' description of the beast as simply a "*shape* with a lion body and head of a man" and his later use of the adjective "rough" (as in blurry or sketchy),

Comment [J36]: √

indicates to the reader that Yeats' vision is incomplete. Thus while Shelley uses alliteration and desert imagery to connote the power and infinity of the immortal, Yeats uses them to instead make his vision seem as uncertain as possible, and, by extension to make the fate of humanity to seem as vague as possible.

Finally, unlike "Ozamandias," the very dimensions of the stanzas in "The Second Coming" carry meaning. While "Ozamandias" was written as a fourteen line sonnet, "The Second Coming" takes the form of a single octave and a broken sonnet. The iambic pentameter of the first stanza suggest to the reader that Yeats intends to write a sonnet, but the sudden termination at the end of the octave leaves the reader searching for the extra ~~four~~ six lines. This adds emotion to the poem, almost implying that Yeats is so disgusted or frightened by the collapse of order around him that he cannot bear to fill an entire sonnet with a description of the decay of order around him. Even the stanza that follows, which does indeed contain fourteen lines, lacks any semblance of a rhyme scheme and thus feels rough and unpolished. This not only complements Yeats' obscure vision of the beast, but also implies that, rather than a work whose beauty he is proud of, "The Second Coming" is to Yeats an unwanted child he would rather forget than invest in. Thus while Shelley uses the sonnet structure and a customized rhyme scheme in "Ozamandias" to align the desert and infinity with a sense of order, Yeats uses a broken, unfinished feeling structure and rhyme scheme to imply that the poem is to him both disturbing in its portrayal of the real political events around him and vague when it comes to looking toward the future solution.

~~On the surface, there are many similarities between "The Second Coming" and "Ozamandias." After all, both use very similar imagery and carry significant weight and power. And, most crucially, both seek to define the world in terms of the struggle between chaos and~~

Comment [J37]: √ Note that the "rough beast" is likely NOT the sphinx, but rather is a sphinxlike, amorphous, not-yet-seen shape.

Comment [J38]: Right?

Comment [J39]: VR. This what?

Comment [J40]: VR

Comment [J41]: OK. Or, rather than a child as savior, a child as…?

Comment [J42]: Huh?

~~order. Yet the message of each poem – and how the poets communicate that message – are fundamentally different.~~ In "Ozamandias," Shelley uses strong symmetry in both rhymes and structure to imply that the infinite expanse of space in time represents the supreme force of order, which mankind can never hope to transcend through power or achievements. For to Shelley, the order of immortality must always crush – or slowly erode - the chaos of mortality. Yeats presents an entirely different perspective: "The Second Coming" deals not in broad, abstract terms, but defines the social and political turmoil in 1918 as a struggle between the forces of chaos (left wing radicals) and forces of order (conservatives). And instead of symmetry, Yeats uses horizontal asymmetry– and a broken rhyme and structure to portray the poet's disgust and fear at the chaotic world around him, as well as his fear and misgivings for the times he sees ahead. Ironically, though written almost exactly one hundred years apart, both poets ultimately prove correct. The vague form of ultimate order in Yeats' vision sharpens over the decade after "The Second Coming" is published: as fears of communism spreads through Europe, the people of Italy and Germany ultimately turn to fascist leaders Mussolini and Hitler to halt the slide of society towards chaos. In this way not only does the vision come true, but Yeats' deep seated misgivings about the true nature of the "beast" are confirmed. Yet the message of "Ozamandias" is also ultimately confirmed: the Thousand Year Reich and the Fascist Roman Empire ultimately fall, proving that no great power can last forever.

Comment [J43]: I don't see what the sentences I suggest cutting add to the transition to your conclusion.

Comment [J44]: Fair enough, but don't miss the poem's target—the tyrants of the world.

Comment [J45]: PV

Comment [J46]: Lovely conclusion to a lovely essay. I would like your blessing to publish the essay on the course online site (with or without my comments). I also would like to send your essay to Helen Vendler, once you've cleaned up a few rough spots.

Works Cited

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