ODA AL TRAJE

Resumen

In the poem Oda Al Traje, the speaker addresses his suit directly. The suit is partially personified, and is also filled by the emotions and body of the speaker. Their relationship is intimate and secure. The suit is part of his morning routine, and by extension, the fundamental structure of his life. This routine allows him to write. Since the suit allows him to enter and engage with the world, it supports his basic identity. As the outside world shapes him, he shapes the suit. The speaker sees the suit as having a life just like his. He compares the suit to his own soul. In a dream realm, the speaker and suit fly together. Then he speculates about how he and his suit will die, presuming that whether their deaths are violent or peaceful, they will be together either way. The poem returns to their morning routine. The speaker reminds himself why he greets his suit with respect, and then forgets the suit, as they are “one being” and “one body.” He recalls all they have been through together. In the end, he struggles about whether to qualify his idea of their unity, but finally evaluates their relationship from his experience of their past and present.

Analisis

The speaker of the poem addresses his suit, the subject of his Ode, directly, using the second-personal pronoun “you.” The poem uses enjambment to make the reading flow and the images have discrete presence. The suit is personified—partially. It is “waiting” like a human, but once the speaker puts the suit on, it is “filled” by his emotions and body.

The scene is very intimate; the speaker is naked and sleepy as he emerges from the shower, and thus he is vulnerable. Some translations use the word “water” instead of “shower.” That would emphasize the metaphorical resonance of the scene, comparing waking up to emerging from underwater. When his “legs seek /the hollow of your legs,” the tone becomes romantic or sexual, as if the suit were his lover. It continues in this vein as he is “thus embraced/by your untiring loyalty.” The implication is that this relationship with his suit is actually better than his relationship with a lover, because the suit doesn’t get tired of him and leave, as a person might do. He leaves the house secure in his suit’s support. In mentioning his “morning walk,” the speaker points to his daily routine, which includes putting on his suit. The suit is part of the fundamental structure of his life.

This routine allows him to write. With the alliteration of walk/work/windows, he describes the parallel journeys of walking and working, part of a process. Poetry is a mental place that he enters “into.” With the semicolon, he links this poetic state of mind to his vision of things that shape him. Through his windows (presumably back at home), he can see the world that creates his identity. Without the routine of getting dressed in his suit, he wouldn’t be able to take his morning walk, or enter the world, interact with other people and things, and be a poet. The repetition of gerunds (-ing words): “confronting,” “setting,” “opening,” “creasing,” adds cadence to the poem. The objects, people, and relations among them force him to respond, make him aware, and inspire him to work.

He returns to addressing the suit. As the outside world shapes him, he shapes the suit. He fills out the suit, and wears it out “threadbare,” as the world shapes him, and presumably wears him down. In another gesture of personification, the speaker gives his suit life. As it “grows/in the image of my own” the speaker grants himself a fatherly or god-like status—just as, in the Bible, God creates Adam in his own image.

The next sentence begins with a simile that compares the presence of his suit, its motion and sound, to his own soul. It is something that is with him, and is almost the most meaningful part of him. The suit’s personality includes fear; in “bad moments,” it clings to him. They have been through tough times together, and are vulnerable together. In this sense, the suit is like a partner. In the enjambed lines “you cling/to my bones,/abandoned, at night time” there is a blurring of subjectivities. Is his suit abandoned at night, or is he? It could be read both ways. Some translations replace “abandoned” with “empty,” which would possibly more obviously refer to the suit. When he removes the suit at night time, leaving it on the chair for morning, has he abandoned it, left it empty? Or has it abandoned him?

The next lines play with alliteration: darkness/dream and people/phantoms. The lines set up a series of pairs, which include “your wings and mine.” At night, in the magical dream realm, both the speaker and the suit fly together.

Then the speaker speculates about the future, about how he and his suit will die. Whether they die from an “enemy bullet” or from old age, he assumes that they will die together, another form of intimacy. Notice that the bullet is personified as well. The phrase is an “enemy bullet,” not an “enemy’s bullet.” And the word “bullet” is the lone word on line 45, adding to its importance and dramatic effect. In an odd construction, the bullet stains the suit with the speaker’s blood. The suit is separate from the speaker, but dies with him, perhaps because the blood stain would render the suit unwearable.

The poem breaks up the enjambment with the end stops of commas, which naturally causes the reader to pause. In pausing after “simple,” “sick,” and “suit,” the reader sees a pattern of both alliteration and sibilance ("s"-sounds), which can feel sinister. It also gives the rhythm of the poem a halting quality, as if the lives of the speaker and the suit are slowing down bit by bit and aging until the final period representing death. The repetition of the phrase “with me” and the word “together” has a comforting tone. He is treating the suit here as one would speak to a spouse or other life-long companion. He is reassuring the suit, and so himself, that they will be together until the end.

After meditating on his relationship with his suit for 59 lines, the speaker returns to his morning routine and reminds himself that’s why he gives the suit the respect of personhood. As in the beginning of the poem, the suit embraces him once again, like a lover, a friend, a child, a spouse, a soul, a life-long companion. He then forgets the suit, because they “are one being/and shall be always.” He is entirely secure in their eternal bond; they are one. The following lines remind the suit, and the reader, of all of the challenges the speaker and the suit have faced together in the poem: the wind, the night, the “streets and the struggle.” And they will also, one day, die together too. They are not only “one being,” but “one body.” The speaker considers this idea, then qualifies it, twice, with the word “maybe,” then adds the hopeful future “one day,” then the word “still.” Still, as an adverb, means “happening or existing before now and continuing into the present.” So this last word stops questioning and embraces the reality of his relationship with his suit, as “one” with him—in the past, and in the present.