

The Eye-Mote

Blameless as daylight I stood looking
At a field of horses, necks bent, manes blown,
Tails streaming against the green
Backdrop of sycamores. Sun was striking
White chapel pinnacles over the roofs,
Holding the horses, the clouds, the leaves

Steadily rooted though they were all flowing
Away to the left like reeds in a sea
When the splinter flew in and stuck my eye,
Needling it dark. Then I was seeing
A melding of shapes in a hot rain:
Horses warped on the altering green,

Comment [EH1]: Blameless suggests innocence, something that cannot be blamed would be viewed as innocent. Daylight creates a sense of relaxation in its natural image, comparing innocence with nature. Daylight can also symbolize a new beginning, or a new life. Comparison of "blameless" and "daylight" suggests that innocence is natural and everyone is born with it.

Comment [EH2]: Horses are generally tamed animals, throughout history. However, "field of horses" suggests otherwise, as the horses are all free.

Comment [EH3]: "Blown" suggests the presence of wind, or that the horses are galloping in the field which causes their manes to blow. Galloping in the fields accentuates the freedom and untamed nature of the horses, without the human factor. As the horses are free and untamed, it could suggest that they have not come into contact with humans and thus can be considered as innocent.

Comment [EH4]: Again, "streaming" emphasizes the freedom that the horses have.

Comment [EH5]: The color green is most often associated with nature. However in this use of "green" the persona could possibly be alluding to the figurative meaning of the word "green": inexperienced. Lack of experience could also describe someone who is innocent.

Comment [EH6]: Backdrop could be taken literally and figuratively here. In the literal sense, it is a piece of cloth that is hung in the background to set the scene. This sense of backdrop suggests that the perspective of the persona is superficial in its innocence and is being cut off from the reality of the world surrounding it. In the figurative sense, a backdrop is the background of the scene. Sycamores are large trees and in this line, there are multiple sycamores in the field. As the background is not superficial, it could be that it is actually endless, suggesting that there is no escape from this innocent world.

Comment [EH7]: White symbolizes purity and innocence.

Comment [EH8]: The word "holding" is in direct contrast to the rest of the stanza. The stanza creates the sense of freedom, however "holding" is a glaring attempt to impede or stop the freedom. The sudden change could suggest that the innocence and freedom t... [1]

Comment [EH9]: "Splinter" and "stuck" sibilance of the "s" connotes the harshness of the splinter, as well as the force and pain that it causes. "Flew" connotes that the splinter traveled really quickly, and that everything was sudden. It could also be connected back to... [2]

Comment [EH10]: "Eye" is alluding to the perspective, and is the first mention of referring to the persona's perspective. It is significant in its literal meaning: the eye is one of the most important sense that humans use to perceive their world. With this signif... [3]

Comment [EH11]: "Needling" connotes a directness in which the splinter flew into the eyes of the persona, as if it were meant for her and her alone. It also connotes a piercing pain, perhaps the pain of losing her innocence and freedom, as well as the literal sense of... [4]

Comment [EH12]: "Then" implies that there is something new, after the darkness.

Comment [EH13]: "Melding" denotes a distortion, distorting the shapes of the persona's former perspective. "Shapes" indicates a loss of individuality in what the persona sees. The pain of the splinter has altered her perspective to the point that everything is distorted... [5]

Comment [EH14]: Again, the warped image suggests that the persona's vision and new view is distorted and warped.

Comment [EH15]: "Altering" suggests a change in the scenery, the view. It also connotes that there is no more "green", that the persona has gained something to lose the green: experience. The persona has lost her innocence and therefore is not green anymore. Another... [6]

Outlandish as double-humped camels or unicorns,
 Grazing at the margins of a bad monochrome,
 Beasts of oasis, a better time.
 Abrading my lid, the small grain burns:
 Red cinder around which I myself,
 Horses, planets and spires revolve.

Neither tears nor the easing flush
 Of eyebaths can unseat the speck:
 It sticks, and it has stuck a week.
 I wear the present itch for flesh,
 Blind to what will be and what was.
 I dream that I am Oedipus.

What I want back is what I was
 Before the bed, before the knife,
 Before the brooch-pin and the salve
 Fixed me in this parenthesis;
 Horses fluent in the wind,
 A place, a time gone out of mind.

Sylvia Plath (1959)

Comment [EH16]: As "outlandish" is the first word, it foregrounds this stanza, creating a sense of confusion and unfamiliarity. It seems to further accentuate the disfiguration and warped nature of the new perspective the persona has. Although double-humped camels exist - bactrian camels - unicorns do not. This further adds to the confusion as the persona is seemingly unable to discern the difference between real and imaginary.

Comment [EH17]: The persona believes that there is a way to return to the old, innocent perspective as she perceives "margins of a bad monochrome". The margins denote the separation between the two different perspectives while "bad monochrome" suggests that the new perspective is eventless, dull and boring.

Comment [EH18]: The "beasts" that the persona perceives are obstructions so that she cannot return to the old, innocent view. The former perspective is described as an "oasis" because of a lack of pain, and the presence of freedom. The innocent view on life would most likely be a happy, pleasurable experience much like an oasis would be.

Comment [EH19]: The image of something "abrading" against another thing brings to mind pain and damage. When something abrades, it causes damage as it wears away or scrapes away something. In here, note that the splinter is not abrading the eye, but the lid. The splinter is not causing the persona blindness, but in a sense, is providing her with eyesight. This could also be an allusion to the metaphor of opening one's eyes. Before, in the former perspective, the persona is innocent and does not truly see the world around her, but with the splinter eroding away the eyelid, she is able to more clearly see the world around her.

Comment [EH20]: The "grain" that is the splinter alludes to the image of a desert, as a "grain of sand". As well, an oasis would most likely only be found in the desert, giving the overall image one ... [7]

Comment [EH21]: Here, "red cinder" also creates the image of heat and pain, accentuating the suffering felt by the persona.

Comment [EH22]: A constant image that is repeated over and over within the poem is the image of horses. In this poem, horses are a symbol of freedom, of innocence and therefore symbolize the i ... [8]

Comment [EH23]: The persona feels trapped as she has to "revolve" around the splinter, to bend to its every will otherwise suffer pain.

Comment [EH24]: "Neither" connotes that whatever the persona attempts to do to rid herself of the splinter, it cannot go away. As this is also foregrounded, it gives a sense of urgency to return to w ... [9]

Comment [EH25]: The pain of the splinter in her eye, combined with losing her innocence and being thrust into a new reality causes the persona to cry, but it is still not enough to remove the splinter ... [10]

Comment [EH26]: The persona tries then to remove the splinter more forcibly, with the help of an eyebath. However, this does not work either, further suggesting that the splinter has a life of it ... [11]

Comment [EH27]: Opposite to seat, "unseat" creates the image of someone trying to usurp a position of power. This suggests that the splinter is now more powerful than the persona and that it al ... [12]

Comment [EH28]: The persona is only "blind" in a figurative sense. She can no longer return to her old innocence, so it is blind to her. She can not see what will be because of the pain of the splinte ... [13]

Comment [EH29]: The persona can no longer see, so she sees by dreaming, seeing without seeing. Here, she finally comes to the realization that she can no longer go back. Much as she wants ... [14]

Comment [EH30]: This creates an image of being trapped, with barriers and is inescapable.

Comment [EH31]: Again, horses make an appearance, alluding to the old innocent perspective. "Fluent" connotes that the horses are moving gracefully in the wind, with ease and without pain. Th ... [15]

Page 1: [1] Comment [EH8]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 06:00:00 PM
<p>The word "holding" is in direct contrast to the rest of the stanza. The stanza creates the sense of freedom, however "holding" is a glaring attempt to impede or stop the freedom. The sudden change could suggest that the innocence and freedom that the persona has will be withheld or seized.</p>		
Page 1: [2] Comment [EH9]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 06:11:00 PM
<p>"Splinter" and "stuck" sibilance of the "s" connotes the harshness of the splinter, as well as the force and pain that it causes. "Flew" connotes that the splinter traveled really quickly, and that everything was sudden. It could also be connected back to "holding" in the previous stanza, which was also sudden.</p>		
Page 1: [3] Comment [EH10]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 06:15:00 PM
<p>"Eye" is alluding to the perspective, and is the first mention of referring to the persona's perspective. It is significant in its literal meaning: the eye is one of the most important sense that humans use to perceive their world. With this significance in mind, a splinter that is able to stick into the eye accentuates the fact that something is changing very suddenly. This also connotes that all that the persona perceives will be affected by a distraction in the eye as well as a possible changing of perception as the vision itself is being affected.</p>		
Page 1: [4] Comment [EH11]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 06:48:00 PM
<p>"Needling" connotes a directness in which the splinter flew into the eyes of the persona, as if it were meant for her and her alone. It also connotes a piercing pain, perhaps the pain of losing her innocence and freedom, as well as the literal sense of pain.</p> <p>"Dark" is the opposite of daylight, and this suggests that all that daylight stood for and meant were now gone: innocence and freedom have all been lost. In addition, this could also signal that the persona's vision has gone dark all of a sudden, perhaps due to the needling pain.</p>		
Page 1: [5] Comment [EH13]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 07:14:00 PM
<p>"Melding" denotes a distortion, distorting the shapes of the persona's former perspective. "Shapes" indicates a loss of individuality in what the persona sees. The pain of the splinter has altered her perspective to the point that everything is distorted and disfigured, making it difficult to tell different things from each other. Hence, a loss of individuality by classifying everything as "shapes".</p>		
Page 1: [6] Comment [EH15]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 07:49:00 PM
<p>"Altering" suggests a change in the scenery, the view. It also connotes that there is no more "green", that the persona has gained something to lose the green: experience. The persona has lost her innocence and therefore is not green anymore. Another thing is that there is an implied change from something natural to something more sinister and dark.</p>		
Page 2: [7] Comment [EH20]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 08:22:00 PM
<p>The "grain" that is the splinter alludes to the image of a desert, as a "grain of sand". As well, an oasis would most likely only be found in the desert, giving the overall image one of heat and being trapped. The "grain burns" as the heat harms the persona. It not only burns the eye, but it also burns the perspective, causing even more pain. The heat image created suggests that the persona is currently suffering a lot, although it is also evident through the pain imagery already created.</p>		
Page 2: [8] Comment [EH22]	Eugene Ho	4/1/12 08:41:00 PM

A constant image that is repeated over and over within the poem is the image of horses. In this poem, horses are a symbol of freedom, of innocence and therefore symbolize the initial, innocent perspective of the persona. This same image is repeated multiple times, implying that the persona yearns to return to what once was.

Page 2: [9] Comment [EH24] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 08:49:00 PM

"Neither" connotes that whatever the persona attempts to do to rid herself of the splinter, it cannot go away. As this is also foregrounded, it gives a sense of urgency to return to what once was, but no more.

Page 2: [10] Comment [EH25] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 08:51:00 PM

The pain of the splinter in her eye, combined with losing her innocence and being thrust into a new reality causes the persona to cry, but it is still not enough to remove the splinter. This also could suggest that the splinter itself is taking on a life of its own: first by forcing her to revolve around her and now resisting her attempts to get the splinter out.

Page 2: [11] Comment [EH26] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 08:53:00 PM

The persona tries then to remove the splinter more forcibly, with the help of an eyebath. However, this does not work either, further suggesting that the splinter has a life of its own in that it wants to show the persona the real world and not let her lapse back into innocence.

Page 2: [12] Comment [EH27] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 08:55:00 PM

Opposite to seat, "unseat" creates the image of someone trying to usurp a position of power. This suggests that the splinter is now more powerful than the persona and that it also has a life of its own, preventing her from returning to her old self.

Page 2: [13] Comment [EH28] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 08:58:00 PM

The persona is only "blind" in a figurative sense. She can no longer return to her old innocence, so it is blind to her. She can not see what will be because of the pain of the splinter and as well as the large yearning to return to her old self.

Page 2: [14] Comment [EH29] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 09:00:00 PM

The persona can no longer see, so she sees by dreaming, seeing without seeing. Here, she finally comes to the realization that she can no longer go back. Much as she wants to, she has given up, as she likens herself to Oedipus. Oedipus is an allusion to the Greek tragic character who killed his father and married his mother, without realizing what he has done.

Page 2: [15] Comment [EH31] Eugene Ho 4/1/12 09:06:00 PM

Again, horses make an appearance, alluding to the old innocent perspective. "Fluent" connotes that the horses are moving gracefully in the wind, with ease and without pain. This seems to describe the old, innocent view: horses represent the freedom, "fluent" describes the peacefulness and pleasure, while wind represents freedom as well.