
Subject And Forms Of Love In William Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 And Andrew Marvell's Poem To His Coy Mistress

Introduction

Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' and Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116' address the subject matter of love but two different perspectives. As evident in the poems, the speakers perceive and speak of love differently. As 'To His Coy Mistress' focuses more on the seduction and sexual expression of love whereas Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 is more about spiritual love which is platonic and goes beyond physicality. While 'To His Coy Mistress' is more about making the most of what we have today as the speaker is trying to persuade his lover by using the importance of time.

Analysis of William Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116'

In the first stanza of the poem when the speaker states "let me not to the marriage of two minds| admit impediments." The speaker is talking about how he does not want to say anything or get in the middle of people who have mutual feelings for each other or people who have the same mindset. Right after that he starts off by saying 'love is not love| Which alters when the alteration finds,|Or bends with remover to remove'. In these lines the speaker is trying to state that the love is a feeling which cannot be hampered or reduced by any particular incident and should not fade over time or in other words 'love is not harvested by time's sharp edge'-(Virgil.Norton Anthology,Norton,2005). Love might face a lot of challenges and obstacles on the way but nothing should affect the way one loves another.

Distance or even death cannot alter the feeling of love for each other. In the second stanza, the speaker starts off by saying that although love binds two people very strongly and nothing should change the feeling of love one has for another, but it is also a very delicate relationship. A small act of unfaithfulness or betrayal may leave a permanent scar and break the trust; which is the main foundation of love. Hence one should not take any relationship for granted. In the second line of the second stanza the speaker states 'That looks on tempests and is never shaken'. In this line the speaker is stating that no matter what crisis one goes through the love should not be compromised and should not be shaken. In the third line of this stanza the speaker states 'it is the star to every wandering bark,| whose worth unknown, although his height be taken'. 'In these two lines the speaker compares love to the 'pole star of every ship; it's worth be unknown but its degree (location) be known'-(Ref: Juda,David 'Shakespeare online'ND). By this line the speaker is implying that true love is often taken for granted and its worth can never truly be measured although its height can sometimes be determined by the extent to which one might be willing to sacrifice for his loved one.

In the third stanza the speaker has stated that although the spark and physical beauty of love will surely fade away with time but true love will surely remain constant till end of time and no external physical appearance can hamper the amount of love one has for another. In the final couplet the speaker challenges the reader that if he is proven wrong then he will never write

again and that no man has ever truly loved. By stating this the speaker has expressed his confidence of his analysis of love.

Analysis of Andrew Marvel's 'To His Coy Mistress'

In the stanza of the poem the speaker acknowledges about the softer and subtle platonic side of love where his tone is on a more romantic side of love. It can be seen in the first two lines, the speaker stated 'Had we but world enough, and time,|This coyness, lady, were no crime.'". In these two lines itself the speaker is placing a condition that as time is passing by quick. Therefore, she will have to make her decision fast.

In the later part of the stanza from lines five to seven he further mentions that he will be at the 'Indian Ganges side' and she will be at the 'Tide of Humber'. He was exaggerating in this part of the stanza as the places he stated were miles apart from each other, as one is in India and one is in England and at that era when the technology was not as advanced as it is today it was not practically possible to communicate.

From lines ten to twelve the speaker states 'love you ten years before the flood,| And you should if you please, refuse| till the conversion of the time of the jews' here the speaker is using biblical reference in order to further explain to his lover how much he would adore her beauty. In this line the speaker is using a visual imagery to further explain how long he would woe her beauty.

Later in the stanza the speaker is using metaphors such as 'my vegetable love' to explain that how if he had enough time he would take things slow and love her day in and day out. In the second stanza of the poem the speaker changes his tone and states that time is ticking really fast and though he would want to adore her beauty for an eternal amount of time but unfortunately the time is not in their favor and shall not be wasted any further and should rather be used by celebrating their carnal desires. He also states in this stanza that she should not be wasting her youth and 'long preserved virginity' getting wasted in the coffin after she is dead; 'although grave's a fine and private place'-implying that she will decay. Through these lines he is trying to persuade his mistress to give up her coyness and to fulfill their sexual desire at the earliest, as the clock is ticking away.

Comparative Analysis of 'Sonnet 116' and 'To his Coy Mistress'

The poems 'Sonnet 116' and 'To His Coy Mistress', both are love poems although they differ in many possible ways, but both brings out a lover's yearning for his beloved. Lines such as 'let us roll our strength and all out sweetness| up into one ball and tear our pleasure with rough strife' the speaker is providing the reader evidence of his dominant sexual desire. While some may argue that the speaker's love for his mistress is not 'real' and may only be tied to his sexual desires. It can also be said that in order to have such a strong physical desire, one must have very strong feelings for that individual or here referred to as his 'coy mistress'.

Shakespeare's sonnet 116 surely celebrates love in a more platonic manner and love here takes a more spiritual form when the connection of 'love' is more about feelings and can be more generalized and not necessarily among two lovers. It can also be said that 'Sonnet 116' can be described more as connection between two people or relationship among two individuals

based on trust and empathy. This is more evident when the speaker states 'love is not with his brief hours and weeks| But bears it out even to the edge of doom'.

Conclusion

Both the poems have similar theme; which is 'love', but in different dimensions. As discussed earlier Sonnet 116 speaks about the general love which can be among anyone and how it can be strong, yet fragile love is and how beautiful and yet how damaging love can be. However, the poem- 'To His Coy Mistress' the speaker is more specific about what he wants from his lady, whom he is trying to woo and also gives us an illustration about the importance of seizing the time as both time and youth are perishing away real fast.

REFERENCES

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