

Analysis of the poem “To His Coy Mistress”

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“To His Coy Mistress” is Metaphysical Poem

The poem deals with Carpe diem theme

Dr. Gautam Sen says “In *To His Coy Mistress* the lover establishes before the “coy” or shy ladylove the value of physical closeness as long as youth remains. He uses the three-tiered structure of debate: proposition-disposition-conclusion or thesis-antithesis-synthesis.” (78)

“Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love’s day.” (1-4)

Poet is addressing to his beloved:

- a) if they had the endless world (infinite space)
- b) If they had infinite time
- c) shyness is not a sin
- d) They could walk together to kill many days

"Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews." (5-10)

If they would have ample time and space:

- a) beloved would be doing petty things by the side of river Ganges to pass the days
- b) Poet would be complaining repeatedly by sitting at the Humber river bank
- c) poet would propose to the lady ten thousand years before the great flood (Old Testament)
- d) Beloved might be refused until all the Jews' conversion (impossible/ infinite time)

“My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;“(11-16)

- a) Like “Vegetable” Platonic love would grow at a snail's pace
- b) Poet would like to spend the time to describe the beauty of his beloved:
 - i) eyes and forehead– 100 years
 - ii) breasts – 200 years + 200 years
 - iii) rest of the body part – 30000 years

“An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.” (17- 20)

lady love is so beautiful that :

- a) poet needs an age to narrate the beauty of every single part of his beloved's body
- b) last age is allotted for the beloved's rigid heart

“But at my back I always hear
Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.” (20 -23)


Poet realises that:

- a) being human they have very little time in life
- b) death comes to all

Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.(24 – 31)

Poet thinks:

- a) there is no use of beauty after death only worms can enjoy the flesh
- b) gradually dead body inside the grave rotten
- c) Poet's desire to make love would also died out
- d) nobody would be there to cuddle inside the grave



“ Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,” (32-36)

Poet suggests to his beloved that youthful days should be enjoyed by love making as much as possible

“And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,” (37- 41)

The Poet suggests:

- a) to love like amorous birds of Prey
- b) one day time would end us
- c) to be unified Physically as well as emotionally

“And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.” (42 – 45)

- a) Poet wants to enjoy the physical pleasure to the highest level
- b) poet could not stop the pace of time
- c) but they can enjoy the time together

References:

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Thank you