

An analysis of the  
essence of love as  
revealed by andrew  
marvell and percy  
shelle...



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Love is an idea that many are familiar with – a term used to characterize one's deep affection for someone. Love is unique in the ways that it is manifested and presented. Sometimes love is portrayed as genuine devotion to another, while other times it is portrayed as simply lustful. In some cases, love can be so intense that it develops into pure madness to possess one's lover. Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" and Percy Shelley's "Love's Philosophy" are direct contrasts in the ways that they portray love. "Love's Philosophy" presents love as honest and divine as "To His Coy Mistress" presents love as a lustful sentiment. In addition to these two poems, Robert Browning dwells upon the subject of madness in his dramatic monologue, "Porphyria's Lover," presenting madness as the result of love as well as the result for a man's need to control and possess. These poems all portray the radically different views of the nature of love.

"To His Coy Mistress" portrays the lustful aspects of "love". Although this poem is a love poem, the poem culminates into one huge ultimatum, which is: sleep with me because we're running out of time. The first stanza of the poem is when the speaker makes his first point. He opens the poem by saying "Had [they] but world enough, and time...[they] would sit down, and think which way to walk, and pass [their] long love's day" (Marvell 1-4); meaning that if there were enough time, he would be patient in loving her. He continues on by using flattery to tell his lover how he would "love at [no] lower rate" because she deserves nothing but first class love. Then he introduces the "but" statement. Although he would like to love her at a slow and patient rate, he claims that he can "hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near" and so must rush her. He then brings into account the next

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reason why they must hurry the pace of their love—this being because her beauty will eventually fade. He claims that her “ beauty shall no more be found” and that the “ worms shall try / That long-preserved virginity”. As grotesque as that sounds, he is basically attempting to provoke a sense of urgency within his lover as well as scare her by saying she will die a virgin. In the end, he states that they are basically trapped in the prison of life and that the only way to escape is by “ tear[ing] [their] pleasures with rough strife / Through the iron gates of life”. This whole poem, as symbolic and insightful as it may sound, culminates to the simple fact that his love for his lover manifests in the utmost lustful—and almost vain—manner that a love poem could ever get.

In direct contrast to “ To His Coy Mistress,” “ Love’s Philosophy” presents love as genuine and heartfelt as the poet, Shelley, utilizes personification throughout most of the poem. This use of personification allows the many descriptions of the grandiosity of his love to seem even grander. Shelley splits the poem into two stanzas; each ending with a question. In the first stanza, he states that the “ fountains mingle with the river... [and that] the winds of Heaven mix for ever” (Shelley 1-3). Along with this description, Shelley argues that nothing in the world is single and he ends the short stanza by asking that if everything in this world has a match, “ Why not I with thine?” (Shelley 8). The second stanza follows the same pattern, presenting love, again, as grandiose and divine as the “ mountains kiss high Heaven / And the waves clasp one another” (Shelley 9-10). But as he concludes describing the marvelous essence of nature, he asks “ What is all this sweet work worth / If thou kiss not me?” (Shelley 15-16). The manner in <https://assignbuster.com/an-analysis-of-the-essence-of-love-as-revealed-by-andrew-marvell-and-percy-shelley-in-to-his-coy-mistress-and-loves-philosophy/>

which Shelley expresses the nature of love is one of true honesty and love as is seen in his simple but beautiful descriptions of the Earth.

Unlike the lovey-dovey personality that “ To His Coy Mistress” and “ Love’s Philosophy” possess, “ Porphyria’s Lover” focuses on the strained relationship between Porphyria and her lover that quickly digresses to her death, as a result of social barriers and the lover’s obsession with Porphyria. The poem begins with Porphyria entering a cottage where her lover patiently waits as she starts a fire and “[makes] the cheerless grate / Blaze up, and all the cottage warm,” revealing her authority in establishing the environment in which they reside (Browning 8-9). It can be seen that Porphyria possesses the control in the relationship which her lover makes obvious when he states that “ She put [his] arm about [her] waist” and “ made [his] cheek lie there, / and spread, o’er all, her yellow hair” (Browning 16-18) Although Porphyria is seemingly the one in control, her lover reveals her “ Murmuring how she love[s] [him]” and how “ She [is] too weak [...] / [To] give herself over to [him] for ever” (Browning 21-25). Not only is it made clear that Porphyria is reluctant to be with him, but it also presents the idea that her lover is upset that she does not make him her primary and only love. In fact, C. R. Tracy observes that Porphyria’s lover knows that “ Porphyria loves him passionately but has not the strength of character necessary to make her true to him” and, therefore, finds it more logical to kill her rather than let her live (579). Porphyria’s lover also suggests her social standing as an upper class woman when he claims that she is incapable of setting her “ passion free from pride, and vainer ties,” establishing the social barrier that perturbs him from fully possessing Porphyria. In the moment that Porphyria’s lover

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recognizes that she reciprocates his love for her, he revels in the moment because at last he knows that “ Porphyria worship[s] [him]” (Browning 33). His love for her is so obsessive and desperate that he is led to madness and finds another reason to keep her in this perfect instance by killing her. He goes on to state that in “ That moment she was mine, mine, mine,” highlighting the idea that he now possesses her and can keep her forever (Browning 36). Not only does the night continue with the now-deceased Porphyria lying beside her lover, but her lover also goes on to describe Porphyria as significantly more alive after death, with cheeks that “ Blushed bright” (Browning, 48). Her lover’s madness and desperation is so severe that he feels as if he has allowed “ Her darling one wish [...] be heard” (Browning 57). This manner of expressing love is much more extreme than many love poems in the way that love is seen to drive someone to madness.

Although Porphyria’s lover did end up murdering Porphyria as a way of possessing her, he holds a completely different view of his partner. It can be seen that he does wish for her to love him, and only him, but he does not share the trait with the speaker of “ To His Coy Mistress” where he expresses his lustful nature to the extreme. Actually, his madness spouts from the opposite idea - he feels as if he does not have the social standing to keep her with him forever and, therefore, kills her out of desperation.

Love, as we all know, is quite complicated. Not only is it complicated, but it is different for everyone. Some choose to express their love through a sincere and warm expression as is seen in “ Love’s Philosophy”, while others make it obvious that love is simply possessing the other through sexual relations as

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is seen in “ To His Coy Mistress”. In the utmost level, love can also be presented as destructive. As is evident in “ Porphyria’s Lover”, love kicked up a few notches creates a sense of madness and desperation, which culminates in the death of Porphyria. It is interesting, indeed, to dissect how these poems accurately portray the many ways in which we love.