

# To his coy mistress compared to other love poetry

[Life](#), [Love](#)



To His Coy Mistress by Andrew Marvell is a love poem from the period of the renaissance. The poem appears in rhyming couplets which is different than the typical love poems, seen in sonnet form that we are used to from that time. The rhyming couplets are our first clue that this poem is not your typical love poem. Through his approach of theme, tone, and his use of language, Marvell criticizes the lovepoetrytradition as it existed in his time in order to argue that we must seize the moment and see the reality of time and love.

Marvell contradicts the traditional love poetry theme; love is eternal and stable, by using a theme of carpe diem. Carpe diem means to seize the moment and live for the day. Marvell does not believe in waiting for love to blossom or believing that love will last forever as we see in Shakespeare's sonnet 18, " Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade/ When in eternal lines to time though growest: /So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/ so long lives this and this gives life to thee. Meaning, nor will death claim you for his own because in my poem you will last forever, and if there be people on this earth, then my poem will live on, making you immortal. The reader's see the opposite of this in Marvell's poem as he believes that when you die " Thy beauty shall no more be found" By this he means that once his mistress dies her beauty will no longer be recognized so she must use her beauty to her advantage now.

Unlike Shakespeare, Marvell does not view love as passionate, beautiful or emotional. Rather, his carpe diem theme suggests that love does not last forever, and beauty will fade. He continues to try to convince the reader that you must live for the day; " Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound/ My echoing

song; then worms shall try/ That long preserv'd 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” Through the use of this quote Marvell claims that saving yourself for everlasting love is a waste of time because when you die you will not be loved eternally, rather you will be eaten by worms and your youth will be wasted. Marvell's tone of urgency, morbidity, and negative attitude towards love contrasts the typical love poetry tone of delicacy, intimacy, and patience. Marvell feels that there is no such thing as eternal love. Perhaps you may think he does not believe in love at all.

We first see his sarcasm towards love when he claims to give a hundred years to praise his mistress eyes, two hundred to adore each breast, and thirty thousand to the rest of her body in which we believe to be the waist down. However, we greatly see Marvell's sense of urgency when he says “ But at my back I always hear/ Time's winged chariot hurrying near; /And yonder all before us lie/ Deserts of vast eternity. ” By this he means that behind him time is catching up fast, but in front of him are deserts of vast eternity, and emptiness.

He sees a tragedy in living for the afterlife and believes it's a waste of youth. He continues the metaphor of the desert in the third stanza by talking about birds of prey who devour and hunt time. Normally, in traditional love poems, a poet believes that love can be eternal as we see in Spenser's sonnet 75 “ Not so (quoth I), let baser things devise /To die in dust, but you shall live by fame: /My verse your virtues rare shall eternize, /And in the heavens write your glorious name. Where whenas Death shall all the world subdue, /Our

love shall live, and later life renew. " In this sonnet, addressed to his wife, Spenser claims to give her immortality in his verse, similar to Shakespeare's sonnet 18. Marvell's use of language, including figurative and non-figurative, and his choice of words, fail to evoke the passion and sweetness found in the love poetry of his time. Most love poems consist of soft and beautiful words to create a loving and emotional theme and tone.

However, Marvell use's words such as vegetable, worms, birds of prey, devour, ashes, and dust, create images that do not evoke pleasant feelings. For example, when Marvell says " My vegetable love should grow/ Vaster than empires, and more slow" by using this hyperbole metaphor, he identifies the scale of his love for women; for a vegetable to grow as vast as an empire would take longer than humans have to live.

Also, the use of the word " but" in the opening of the second stanza suggests they don't have enough time to wait for love to blossom. The image you see when he says " the worms shall try/ That long preserv'd virginity" creates irony because his mistress has spent her life trying to preserve herself, meanwhile he claims that worms will take over her body. In Shakespeare's sonnet 18 he use's words that are passionate, beautiful, emotional, and most of all, create feelings and images of love. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate: /Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, /And summer's lease hath all too short a date: /Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimm'd; /And every fair from fair sometime declines, /By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd; /But thy eternal summer shall not fade We see through the words used in this quote, such as summer's day,

buds of May, and the eye of heaven, Shakespeare succeeds to enhance the theme of love and beauty while Marvell's use of words is not typical of the traditional love poem and create more of a morbid feeling.

In conclusion, Marvell's use of theme, tone, and language, highly criticized the traditional love poetry of his time. In the opening of the poem Marvell's use of his carpe diem theme creates an immediate break in the normal love poetry by starting the poem with a problem; time and space limitation. As the poem continues we sense a feeling and tone of urgency which entwines with the theme of carpe diem. The register of the poem, through hyperbole and metaphor, shows how "To His Coy Mistress" is predominantly about time rather than lust, love, or seduction.