

Defamiliarization in
the "the definition of
love" by marvell and
"washing day" by...



The art of poetic depiction of daily actions and familiar objects has become one of the most unique, especially with the development of such technique as defamiliarization. This stylistic technique has become popular due to its ability to depict typical objects from an unusual angle. That is why today it is possible to find a range of poetic masterpieces, which enable the reader to have a totally different vision on familiar things. In particular, *The Definition of Love* by A. Marvell and *Washing Day* by A. Barbauld are the perfect examples of the art that enable to have the most unusual view of the things reader might face every day.

The Definition of Love is one of the most famous poems of Andrew Marvell, which is believed to be categorized as metaphysical and philosophical at the same time. In this case, an anonymous lover, the speaker of the poem, provides with his struggle to understand and explain the true feeling of love. In general, this poem represents a scientific and ontological approach to the explanation of love concept. Thus, the speaker tries to define: "What is the being of my love?" The very headline of the poem gives a hint about the paradoxical attempt to define what the love is. In other words, the speaker seeks to find the central feature, which might define love and, therefore, find its limits. *The Definition of Love* provides with the elaborate imagery and platonic implications of love between minds and souls that are distinct to the body. This poem depicts the two lovers who are opposite, enviously separated by Fate and its "Decrees of Steel"; to save this love would require world's destruction: "And, us to joyn, the World should all / Be cramp'd into a planisphere" (Marvell 22-24). The philosophical style allows looking deeper into the essence of feelings' description. Thus, the speaker is not simply

concerned with the romantic relations to his beloved but the core state of being in love matters a lot. The very first lines of the poem seem to be uncommon in the traditional poetry about love: " My love is of a birth as rare, As 'tis for object strange and high" (Marvell 1-2). The speaker describes love as a strange phenomenon, which happens rarely to him, which makes the reader think about his tragic experience. The lines " It was begotten by Despair Upon Impossibility" (3-4) are filled with the two personified entities, which is evident by the capitalization used. As the speaker claims, Despair and Impossibility are the only driving forces of his love experience. Thus, this is a surprisingly dark formulation of love, as the speaker explains that only despair could have opened this love for his, as it reveals the utter perfection of his feeling and the impossibility of its physical realization. Hence, the second stanza begins with the oxymoron: " Magnanimous Despair alone Could show me so divine a thing" (5-6), which brings the reader closer to the speaker's unusual feeling of love. Such oxymoron leads to wonderful paradox, as despair could show him the divine nature of love, while hope could not. In fact, the use of the high-flown vocabulary might give a hint to lady's noble state, which makes this love impossible to live. Here, Despair is identified as emotional integrity and strength, which makes the speaker search for the more logical explanation.

A third phenomenon which might explain love is Fate. As mentioned by the speaker, Fate does not allow two perfect lovers to be united and together enjoy their feelings. In this case, he compares their connection with the two infinite lines. For Fate with jealous eye does see Two perfect loves, nor lets them close; Their union would her ruin be, And her tyrannic pow'r depose.

And therefore her decrees of steel Us as the distant poles have plac'd
(Marvell 14-18) These lines indicate speaker`s frustration about the physical separation, which is also viewed through the abstract ontological notion. It is evident that Fate is also personified here, as its power is perceived as usurping to some extent. Fate is depicted as tyrannic, with its "jealous eye" trying to take control over two people in love. Mainly, the presence of third "separation power" is the feature that makes this poem unique. In this case, the speaker blames Fate in his personal tragedy. While traditional love poetry does not seem to figure out the essence of love, the speaker in Marvell`s poem constantly seeks for the direct and clear definition of this concept by introducing personified phenomena. Besides, he tries to explain love from the geometrical point of view, which is introduced by the parallel constructions: "As lines so Loves oblique may well Themselves in every angle greet: But ours so truly parallel" (Marvell 25-26). In this case, lovers are compared to the oblique lines, which will never meet. In the final stanza, the speaker manages to formulate two definitions for his state of love: it is "the conjunction of the mind" as well as "the opposition to the stars" (Marvell 33-34). Such two-sided definition represents the divided nature of love as such. Being "the conjunction of the mind", it suggests being harmonious, while the opposition implies its tragedy and impossibility of lovers be together. This is the first attempt to combine the emotional aspect of love to the aspects of the physical universe, which is defined by the power of Fate preventing people from the physical union.

The poem Washing Day by A. Barbauld is filled with totally different techniques, which help view typical things from another angle. Generally, the

poem illustrates two various perspectives on the same events happened during the typical washing day. The first vision incorporates the way surrounding people feel towards the chores needed to be done that day. Meanwhile, the second view is the speaker`s memories of childhood observing the events of that day. As Barbauld pays close attention to the role of women in particular situations, this piece belongs to the sort of feminist poetry. However, the key idea is to draw readers` attention to the joy of childhood, described via the image of a daily routine. Thus, typical washing day may not be that usual as it often seems. Still, the opening line “ The Muses are turned gossips; they have lost, The buskined step, and a clear high-sounding phrase, Language of gods” (1-3) immediately create negative tone, as inspiration (Muses) are turned here into something unpleasant and common. As the poem goes on, the sense of sarcasm can be traced, as the author describes the typical day of women “ prating on”. What is more, Barbauld successfully implements metaphor here by naming women “ domestic Muses”, which also sarcastically depicts the status of women in the society. Then, the author ends this section by the lines: “ Come, Muse; and sing the dreaded Washing-Day” (Barbauld 8). The use of negatively connotated word “ dreaded” creates a paradoxical situation, as it is not usual to sing about the “ dreaded” things in life. In this case, the greatest opposition is evident. In fact, Barbauld expresses the ways possible to find pleasure and joy even living in the overwhelming misery and hard physical work.

However, the whole poem indicates constant shifts concerning the events on the washing day. For example, the description of marriage is clearly

negative: " Beneath the yoke of wedlock bend,..." a yoke is put on an ox which is a beast of burden!" (Barbauld 9-10). These lines probably indicate the absence of choice for women in questions of marriage. Besides, one of the most remarkable features of *Washing Day* is reflection and motif of childish games: Sometimes thro' hollow bole Of pipe amused we blew, and sent aloft The floating bubbles, little dreaming then To see, Montgolfier, thy silken ball Ride buoyant thro' the clouds - so near approach (Barbauld 80-84) This is a postmodern technique of observation, which is generated through the light image of bubbles flying from the tub. Moreover, the image of childish innocence is created by the alliteration of the sounds /b/ and /s/ that echo with the sound of washing. In addition, the poem creates a number of symbolic connections, which enable the reader to see the full picture of the daily routine. Barbauld manages to depict all typical aspects of domestic atmosphere- women`s work, children`s play, singing. All of them are collected in order to combine human activities together with the restoration of harmony and conventional hierarchy. The lines " Earth, air, and sky, and ocean, hath its bubbles, And verse in one of them - this most of all" (90-91) present the childish figure of a bubble, which conceptualizes and opposes the sense of playfulness to adults` everyday hard work.

The suggested poems can definitely be named as the perfect examples of defamiliarization technique. Marvell adopts a completely new philosophic and scientific approach in order to understand the concept of love. What makes this poem unique, is its parallel constructions and personifications, which contribute to the two-sided definition of love. In fact, the very attempt to scientifically define " love" is rather non-typical for the traditional poems.

Besides, the poem by Barbauld reveals the opposed vision on the same day. In this case, she manages to combine the worlds of adults and children by adding negative and positive connotations to the events. Therefore, the variety of perspectives is the key feature, which makes the readers fully understand the poems.

Works Cited

Barbauld, Anna, Letitia. Washing Day. Monthly Review. 1797. Web. 12 September 2016. Marvell, Andrew. The Definition of Love. The Poems of Andrew Marvell. 1892. Web. 12 September 2016.