

Compare carol ann
duffy's 'valentine' to
andrew marvell's 'to
his coy mistress' e...



**ASSIGN
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In this essay I am going to compare two poems, 'Valentine' written by Carol Ann Duffy and 'To His Coy Mistress', written by Andrew Marvell. The poem 'Valentine' was written in the twentieth century and the poem 'To His Coy Mistress' was written in the seventeenth century which developed many similarities and differences. The two poems are very similar because they show and express emotion about love or some kind of relationship. They differ because the poem 'Valentine' expresses ideas and feelings in complicated ways and 'To His Coy Mistress' expresses ideas in a simple and clear way.

But does Carol Ann Duffy express her emotions in this way maybe because she's a woman and women tend to express their feelings more because of lack of self control, Whereas men tend not to express emotions and keep their feelings trapped inside them. Writing poetry maybe the way in which Duffy expresses her ideas and feelings not only to herself but also to the others. The poem 'Valentine' is about a woman expressing her love on the day of love, Valentine's Day. The speaker is talking to her lover and is trying to express the feelings which she has inside of her.

Duffy describes her love by comparing the love to an onion which firstly comes about to be very unusual, but then becomes to be very familiar when thinking through the similarities of an onion and love. "Its is a moon wrapped in brown paper" When reading the metaphor at first you wouldn't know what feelings Duffy is trying to express, but then when you begin to study the line you begin to understand what Duffy is trying to say. She's saying that the moon is the actual onion which is white and so it would

promise light, and putting light into a relationship would make the relationship stronger and happier.

It emphasises the moon being a present because she is wrapping it and the moon is a present of happiness in their love. A moon is a romantic image of life, for example a traditional image in maybe another book or a film, the perfect couple would walk out of a beautiful dinner and dance sit on a bench, cuddle up and gaze into the light of the moon, it's the stereotypical meaning of the image. Duffy uses this image very differently; she describes the moon to be like light, " it promises light". he describes this line to be like putting light in the relationship, which would make the their bond to each other more fun, more stronger and that the relationship would last forever.

Her next line is " like the careful undressing of love", this line is presented as a simile describing the light, she is saying that the further you go into a relationship the stronger it will get in comparison with an onion, the further you go in an onion the stronger it will get. She also uses this line as a reference of sex, she shows this as she uses the word undressing.

When reading the poem, you study the poem's title, and with Duffy's title being Valentine you instantly think it's about romance. So you read the first line, a line on its own, which is emphasised " Not a red rose or a satin heart", the reason in which it stands out is that it mocks a rule of poetry, it also makes the reader think that a line on its own has an big meaning. She is trying to explain to her lover that what she cant give her the stereotypical image because of the way she is. So it directly makes you think that the

present wrapped in brown paper is something bigger and better, like a car or even happiness and joy.

Then the next line tells you that she is going to give her lover an onion. It makes a peculiar picture form in your head and there is a lot of confusion because an onion is a raw vegetable which is not very tasty, it does not cost very much and is a very weird thing to give to somebody as a present. Then the next line goes on about how the lover will cry because of the onion and the love, Duffy is trying to say that the lover will cry because when you love someone you are more hurt when they deceive you or do wrong to you. Later on in the poem Duffy uses the word 'lethal' which suggests death.

This is very unlikely to be in a love poem. The poem is not what we expect in a love poem as it includes many negative and pessimistic ideas such as "lethal" and "cling to your knife" and "its fierce kiss will stay on your lips". Another suggestion about the last line is the opposite and is describing that when they kiss, the kiss will stay on her lips forever just like the love that they share. When Duffy uses these lines we suspect she has many mixed feelings and emotions. She implies that love isn't always sweet and has sharp and cutting edges that can result in tears, just like the scent and taste of an onion.

Throughout the poem Duffy uses the line "I am trying to be truthful" which explains the negative images and her mixed feelings. Her mixed feelings also relate to the fact that she has an irregular structure, that she has lines and words on their own. My opinion to her mixed feelings is her sexual status and that it isn't what it traditionally should be and maybe that is why she

doesn't like doing what traditional lovers would do. " Not a cute card or a kissogram". Her sexual status shows that she has mixed feelings and that she is very confused.

She could also be having mixed feelings because she is receiving uncertainty from her lover and their relationship isn't stable and strong. This could explain her confusion. " Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring, if you like" Duffy is not certain that the relationship is firm, this is why she offers or hints for marriage but not a definite marriage proposal. This is because of the way she uses if you like which shows hesitation because she cant predict what her lovers reaction would be. The language used in Valentine is very straightforward. It's simple, contemporary and would be used in basic conversations.

Some examples of this is that she uses basic language such as I, like, will and etc. She uses lines such as " I give you an onion", " it is a moon wrapped in brown paper", " for as long as we are". These lines are very easy to understand and anyone who had capability to communicate in English that lives in the twenty first century will be able to understand this. Although the words are easy to understand the meaning isn't. The meaning is very difficult to understand, its like translating it to another language, because many of the lines mean something totally different to what it says there.

Like the title for example " Valentine". You'd instantly think it's a poem on romance but it's actually telling you that love isn't always sweet and that is has very sharp and cutting edges. Duffy uses many extended metaphors throughout the poem to describe her love in comparison to the onion, " Its

platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring". She is describing the loops of the onion to a platinum wedding ring, she purposely chose platinum because of the fact that platinum lasts longer than gold which shows that both the platinum ring and the love will last forever.

She uses fierce alliteration to exaggerate her negative ideas, so they are more thought about. " I am trying to be truthful". She uses words beginning with the letter ' t ' thrice. She also emphasises that line, by giving it a line on its own. In her language Duffy also uses similes " It promises light, like the careful undressing of love" Duffy was trying to explain that the further you get in a relationship the stronger the relationship gets in comparison with the onion, as layers begin to grow the onion gets stronger.

And when undressing the layers of love you make love to your lover by having sex, she may also be trying to say that when having sex the relationship also grows and having it more the stronger it'll get. The structure of the poem ' Valentine' is irregular, it has lines of its own and they do not have a sequence of approximate length of lines. It has seven stanzas including its four main ones. It includes no rhyming words. I think the reason why Duffy has an irregular structure is because of her confused mixed feelings about her lover.

Another reason about her distorted structure is because of the time she had written it in, the fashion of writing now is more broken, just like writing stories, now they tend to have a broken structure. But a few centuries back the fashion of it was to be stable, it had to have a proper beginning, middle and end. I think the way she has the irregular structure is very effective and I

enjoy the way she related her mixed feelings and emotions in this way. She has many ways in which she expresses her mixed feelings such as by having lines on their own, words on their own and short words.

Lines on their own are given freedom, they have a significant meaning to them, and some of them are " Not a cute card or a kissogram", " Not a red rose or a stain heart" and " I am trying to be truthful". Duffy is explaining that she doesn't want to go along the tradition and do what others always do. She wants to be different and doesn't want to be stereotypical. Short lines and words on their own are also given a large impact to it, in this poem they often tend to be quite rude and sharp. " Take it", " Here" and " Lethal". This is an excellent example of short lines.

The line " Take it" is very sharp, it emphasises aggression and is very rude. When giving or offering someone a wedding ring you would not express in that manner of tone, you would say it in a romantic and polite way. The effect to this may be firstly the reply in which she received from her partner. The reason to this is that she has many mixed feelings towards the relationship and feels that it is uncertain and very unstable. Now I am going to talk about the poem ' To His Coy Mistress'. It is written by a man and is persuading his partner to have sex.

He tries to persuade her in many ways, by using religious images. " I would love you ten years before the flood" Andrew Marvell is describing the flood as the Noah's Ark flood which happened an extremely long time ago so he's saying that he has loved her forever but using ten years before the flood mean even before forever. Also the Noah's Ark flood represents death, so

Marvell is saying to his lover that she is going to die soon so she has to have the best in life now and have sex. He also persuades her by repeatedly saying that time is running out, so we should have sex now before you die a virgin.

He describes this by saying "Times winged chariot hurrying near" to symbolise that time is running away from us not closer to us. He's showing that the chariot symbolises a person and time is going fast. He's expressing that soon enough she'll become ugly and he would no longer want to have sex with her. I believe that Marvell doesn't love her but just wants to have sex. He explains that time will run out and she will get ugly and die a virgin, so he wants her virginity instead of worms in the grave taking her virginity. But then some lines express that he does like her but doesn't say that he loves her and does want to be with her forever.

Deserts of vast eternity" He's trying to say that their love is to be forever but doesn't actually mention love. The desert being forever even in heaven. He represents deserts to be heaven and death. Also saying that by time passing by you would turn to him as unattractive so he wants to lose her virginity. The language in the poem is very old fashioned as it was written in the seventeenth century. The language is analysed to be very difficult to read for the people of our times because of the time it was written and the fashion of language now.

The language often relates to death and religion because he wants to persuade her to have sex with him, "The graves a fine and private place, but none, I think, do there embrace". He's telling her that time is running out

and you need to lose your virginity and when you get old and die you still wouldn't have lost your virginity, and so the worms will take your virginity. He uses the words " I think" in the middle of the line as he obviously hasn't experienced death and doesn't have the knowledge to say and justify it.

He uses flattery in his writing only because it works, when giving flattery to someone, they enjoy it. " Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze", " Two hundred to each breast. He also enjoys using it as he is positive it'll work and so he can win her heart. He also uses a collection of pronouns through out the poem, " Our sweetness into one ball" and " Now let us sport while we may". He uses these so that he'll make it sound as if they are united against time and they are no longer separate and classed together.

He also uses similes as a method of flattery to describe the mistress's beauty and their relationship, " And now, like amorous birds of prey" and " Sits on thy skin like morning dew". He uses them to describe them being together and uses it as a form of flattery against her. The poem's structure is also very old fashioned because it is regular and has a story like, beginning, middle and end. It has rhyming couplets and has equal lengths of lines. The reason for this is because of the fashion of writing in the time it was written, the seventeenth century.

Another reason for the perfect structure is that Marvell deals with one simple idea which is time is running out so they should have sex now. The rhyming couplets throughout the poem are continuous, many poems have a rhyming couplet and a normal line with no rhyme but this has a rhyme in every line of the poem. The lines in the poem are the same length are approximately the

same length, from about five to eight words. The way Marvell's structure of the poem is accurate literature, this may mean he has no mixed feeling so he doesn't know how to express them, or maybe not have thought of the idea.

The two poems "Valentine" and "To His Coy Mistress" are very alike as they are about love and wish to express their ideas to their lover by writing a poem. It may be this is how the poet's express feelings or may be that this way their lover can understand that the writer has spent time to write the poem and has many special feelings about the lover. Also a proposal of moving their relationship to a further level, Duffy wishes for a marriage, "It's platinum loops shrink to a wedding ring, if you like" and Marvell wishes for a sealed promise by having sex.

Some similarities in the poem are, that the poets are writing to their lover, they both love their lover but they rather lust because loving someone means forever but lusting is more physical activity than love. The quotes that represent those ideas are, from "Valentine" is "like the careful undressing of love" and from "To His Coy Mistress" is "Let us sport while we may". They both also have some doubts in the relationship. Another similarity is that they both use similes and alliteration to express ideas.

There are many differences throughout the poem and the main one is the structure, "Valentine" has a very irregular and "To His Coy Mistress" is perfect. "Valentine" has lines on their own, short lines and one word lines. This reflects her mixed feelings and her unstable relationship. "To His Coy Mistress" has the perfect structure with rhyming couplets. Another difference

is the language, "Valentine" is very modern and can be used in conversation in current times whereas "To His Coy Mistress" was written in the seventeenth century.

In the poem "Valentine" she describes her love, the way their relationship is, and many different and astounding ideas, which reflects the idea of an irregular structure. Whereas "To His Coy Mistress" only wants one thing which is sex, he aims his poem on only one thing, this makes it very straightforward, this could reflect to the idea of a perfect structure. The poem that I enjoyed reading the most definitely had to be "Valentine", the main reason explaining this as she used imagination by making the structure irregular to represent her mixed feelings, I enjoy the way she used lines on their own and lines of different lengths.

Also the language used is more modern and easy to understand. I also like the way she compared her love to an onion and the way she found comparisons. My main dislike "To his coy mistress" is his language and that it is difficult to understand. Another reason is that I don't like the way his mind works, he only loves her because he wants sex and he persuades her with religion which he is doesn't know for him self but is researched to amaze her, to deceive her. So my overall favourite poem is definitely "Valentine".