

The picture of little tc in a prospect of flowers essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The civil war disrupted the very idea of the Renaissance love lyric. The idea of tenderness itself – whether as a component of love or as the sweet music of verse that expressed love. Mid-century Britain witnessed physical violence produced by radical religious ideas of spiritual tenderness so that the violence seemed to be appearing out of tenderness itself. This idea of tenderness producing pain already had its literary equivalent in the sequence of poems of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. Marvell takes this literary tradition and uses it to examine the political and religious struggle taking place during his lifetime.

Marvell explored the relationship of tenderness and a spiritual ideal in poems such as "On a Drop of Dew", "The Coronet", "Clorinda and Damon" and "Bermudas" but there is one poem where the Petrarchan ideals of tenderness and delicacy are most apparent. By beginning with a young girl or nymph lying in the grass, Marvell opens the poem in Petrarchan mode, just as Petrarch had first met his Laura, and where he was to return both physically and mentally in order to re-enter the paradise of meeting her and hope for her return.

Indeed Marvell's poem can be read as a fairly simple witty retelling of the Petrarchan story of love describing a young girl's movement through the stages of naivety, chastity, refusal, wounding and then being wounded by love, told from the point of view of a young man who both fears the girl's future power and wishes her to experience punishment for her future scorn. However, it is unlikely that this was Marvell's only purpose.

Presbyterians, Independents and sectarians all wanted to be thought to have tender consciences i. e. to be purified spiritually, beautiful, chaste, delicate and sweet. Some felt this to be a cloak for future violence and control. So this is not just a poem about his neighbour Theophilia Cornwall but the “tender conscience” which had taken hold of his contemporaries. He uses the image of femininity and the chaste Diana to draw attention to the conflicts of the time and the competing ideas of reform which become increasingly tyrannical in a move to crush all opposition by means of a “wheel with eyes” and the expectation that more violence will follow.

The poem opens looking at the nymph in all her simplicity and innocence with an exultant tone full of wonder and admiration yet the verb ‘begins’ alerts us that we are just at the beginning of a process. There is an ironic undertone in the ‘golden days’ as we learn that there is another side to her as she gives the flowers names with a demanding and tyrannical presence. She ‘tames’ them and tells others what to do and how to act.

Such themes of perfecting a garden are part of the Golden Age tradition but have greater significance in this era of Civil War. The activity of tending to the garden and the ordering of the state are explored at a time when both Independents and Presbyterians are accused of imposing their views violently on others as they work to reform the nation. Like them Marvell’s nymph strives to remake the world into a more beautiful thing, taming that which is wild and making more perfect that which is already the essence of perfection, the rose.

The taming and renaming of the ' wild' ones and the work to direct the already tame ones to greater beauty was fitting for the political groups who sought to control those not in favour of their cause and then to further purify those within their ranks by creating a new ideal. Marvell paints a portrait of a girl whose vision of the future (prospect or aspect) involves a golden age or paradisiacal future. This imagined future is shown as a walk through a garden where the prospect opens out to the next view, only glimpsed at from here. As he watches outside her vision he sees it as delusional.

The frame is widened beyond the girl in the following stanzas to reveal the oppression becoming more visible and threatening. The language of love and purity combines with a triumphant rise to power. The reformers at that time also sought to legislate a new order and saw themselves as being of " high cause" and God's beloved. Their self-love is placed within a larger doubt of an uncertain future, " who can foretell". The " yet" intensifies the irony as the " chaster laws" are invented and imposed with a severity that makes others " fear".

Here is a young virgin who does not only say " no" to a lover but who is attempting to rout " love" from the kingdom. The severity of this moral reformation is finally triumphant by means of military defeat as " love" must " see his bow broke and ensigns torn". These " virtuous" people, as they see themselves, who engage in military conquest, are the " enemy of man" with their " command severe" and " chaster laws" and if one is not in their party, they must be " appeased". Marvell shows us their triumph from the

viewpoint of the defeated or the bystander, in the dust, beneath the powerful chariot wheels.

In the opening stanzas the voice of the speaker is constrained as he is compelled to praise rather than freely praising. Although the poem begins in the present tense it is clear by stanza 3 that the speaker already knows what will happen in the future, and the certainty with which he announces his desire to hide from the nymph's "force" strengthens the already present sensation, in the first stanza, that the speaker is observing the nymph and reporting on her from an unseen, safe hiding place.

Compound" evokes the process by which Royalists who were afraid their property would be sequestered or whose property had been sequestered could compound their estates by paying a heavy monetary fine and taking the covenant and later Engagement Oath, a kind of psychological subjection that, once agreed, would wash the former Royalist clean. Yet even those who did "yield" in this way were still despised and subjected to new assaults. No wonder Marvell does not want to get too close to this kind of glory.

Praise is the strategy that this speaker uses to remain safe. Petrarch's images of the tenderness and sweetness of the eyes' glance wounding the speaker so that, even in the moment the speaker experiences the refusal or scorn, it is the memory of the tenderness that carries the wound is adapted by Marvell. The wound or threat of harm here arises only from violence as expressed in the image of the chariot wheel. The tenderness is never

directed at the speaker but merely exists as a picture of the nymph's posture as she lies in the grass.

Marvell has taken the image of the violence implied by the Presbyterian goal of uniformity in religion and placed it in the poem as the eyes of his tender delicate nymph. "Glancing wheels", wheels made out of eyes that ride over the prone speaker, make vivid the threat of Presbyterian conformity. The language of Stanza 4 confirms the case for reading this entire lyric as referring not only to a young girl but to the contemporary conflict surrounding those who sought to reform the kingdom. Just as Petrarch wrote of the reforming of the errors of youth the Presbyterians set out to reform the errors of the kingdom.

The stanza captures the way that in 1646-7 time felt bracketed by an unknown event – whether the return of the King or the end of negotiation with the King – that would provide a conclusion to this attempt at reformation. The word "charm" has connotations implying a kind of subjection against one's will. The verdant thing falls under some kind of enchantment and subjection while gazing at this beauty. The whole nation has put itself under the spell of the reformers, a kind of forced compliance, though it is seen to be temporary – "meanwhile".

On one level the reformation of the garden/state is seen as an unrealistic fantasy: tulips will not have sweetness (cannot be used, as other flowers, as a sugar), roses will not grow without thorns, and violets will be short-lived and will not endure. He mocks the reformers as those who look beautiful are

not really sweet, those who are perfect are armed with thorns, and especially those who are seen to be lowly having no humility. That which is most beautiful and full of life - the spring- will now be called “ error” and reformed.

The reformers are reforming something which does not need to be reformed and then try to correct the errors of that which they have already reformed, “ the errors of the spring” - the results of their own rebirth. In Stanza 5 the speaker relocates the nymph into a more dangerous place by a shift in perspective rather than her movement. Some critics assume that it is the girl falling into sin by not remaining chaste that leads to the warning at the end of the poem but her actions have not changed. She is consistently reforming the spring.

But through stanza 5 we see looking back that her actions in reforming the flowers is actually cutting or destroying them. It is a warning by coming out from the cloak of beauty to reveal the violence of reformation that wishes to make everyone as “ beautiful” as the religious reformer. Meanwhile nature is courting the “ virtuous enemy of man”, their victories having given the reformers the sense that the world favours them. But the poem ends with a warning that someone will come to reform them. The discipline will be turned against the reformers themselves. Flora in the 17thC had become associated with the monarch who rules the garden.

Flora, the queen of the shepherds, had long been associated with royalty. Marvell now warns of a retribution coming from the return of a royal figure.

In the poem we meet a young girl lying in the grass who becomes a victorious general of an army commanding and breaking her adversary, then, a triumphant charioteer driving over the body of her prone enemy, then merely a girl who towers over only the flowers and finally, diminished, she is humiliated by the regal figure of Flora in the final stanza. Meanwhile the speaker too has undergone an opposite deflation and inflation.

At first he is out of view, looking on from an unknown vantage point. Later he is positioned more precisely under the driving wheels of the chariot. In the final stanza he emerges with full power, pronouncing retribution on the nymph as he predicts the future of the girl and the garden. Little T. C. thinks of herself as a chaste child of nature and of the gods but ultimately wreaks violence on nature and on others until she brings retribution on herself. Far from being in love with a nymph Marvell spies on her self-proclaimed innocence from his hidden corner of the garden, filled with fantasies of a retribution that will sweep her away.