

The depiction of love in "envoi" by victoria sackville-west



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Sackville West's "Envoi" reads as a celebration of the beauty and power of romantic love which is able to brighten the surroundings of those who experience it. Nonetheless, Sackville-West eventually reaches the same realisations of predecessors Shakespeare and Donne in concluding that love, no matter how deep, is fated to fade with the passing of time.

Envoi might be read as a testament to all the joys of romantic love which are able to enrich the everyday experiences of those who are lucky enough to experience it. Such is demonstrated through the rich coloured imagery throughout the poem: 'the silver' and 'golden' skies which overarch the couple mark out love as a thing to be treasured like precious metals, and the 'red' moon symbolises the progression of the romance which begins innocent and fresh and blossoms into something deep and passionate. It could be argued that the colour 'red' alternatively warns of the danger that the couple will come under as their love is destroyed, and yet such awareness of the brevity of love allows it to become even more appreciated as it must be savoured in the short period in which it lasts. Highlighting this is the alliteration of the letter 'r' in 'rose round and red', as one must literally appreciate and savour the words on the tongue, mirroring the action of appreciating love. The poem is written in a catalogue of rhyming couplets which represent the unity of the couple who are able to live a life of beauty due to their status as a pair, just as the poem's harmony relies on pairs.

Furthermore, the regular iambic meter- through echoing the human heartbeat- colludes to the physicality and passion of romantic love, suggesting that it is both physically and mentally vital to the human condition. The first-person voice that is sustained throughout the poem

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might be said to represent the eventual disillusionment of the pair's love, and yet that the personal pronoun ' you' is repeatedly placed before personal pronoun ' I' in the syntax suggests that the speaker's will ever hold a degree of respect and care for the poem's addressee. There is a semantic field of nature (' catkin', ' hazel', ' harvest') that is continued throughout the lines, suggesting that love is natural and uncomplicated, whilst also able to blossom and flourish similarly to nature. The month May is personified through the notion that it ' dripped [with] flute-notes', and the compound noun suggests that love is able to create new and incredible concepts and ideas. Indeed, the internal rhyme between lexis ' dripped' and ' liquid' is further testament to the ability of love to create an internal music in the lifestyle of those under its influence.

Nonetheless, Sackville-West- whilst evidently enthralled with love's beauty- is disillusioned with its timespan- and this is a message conveyed throughout the course of the poem. Indeed, the poem tracks the course of a year through running through the months- from ' March', to ' May', to ' December', creating a rapid and urgent pace that signifies the fleeting nature of romantic love. ' October', for example, is said to rust into ' gold' as love grows ' old', and the perfect masculine rhyme employed here suggests that the ' golden' era of the pair's love is fated to remain in the past as they move forward without one another. There is a steady iambic meter employed throughout the poem, and it is interesting therefore that the phrase ' Then, when we could no more remember' fractures the heart-beat rhythm, symbolising physical heartbreak as the lovers lose their passion.

Alternatively, the steady regular rhyme scheme might indicate towards the

mechanical passing of time that stops for no-one, regardless of their feelings of love. Indeed, the declining seasons may act as a metaphor for the decline of the pair's relationship, which pales and loses vibrancy just as December when ' Snow lay on hedgerows': the setting detail of ' snow' is used here to show that any prior vibrance in the relationship has been distinguished and replaced by a cool indifference of character.

Indeed, the only punctuation used throughout the poem is an end-stop used to close each rhyming couplet, suggesting that no matter the beauty of romantic relationships, they all will eventually reach their respective ends. Sackville-West claims that ' habit came and wonder fled' during ' harvest', a line connoting disillusionment, used to juxtapose the narrative beauty of prior stanzas, and thus hone into the rapid transition between love and hate. Furthermore, the personification of traits habit and wonder with verbs ' came' and ' fled' suggests that other characteristics have replaced and overpowered the intense love previously shared by the pair. It could be argued that the final couplet, which tells of the ' other loves... found in March' gives the poem a hopeful and optimistic finale through suggesting that despite that decay of the couple's love, both members will rekindle their passions in the following year with others. Nonetheless, to close the poem on the diction choice ' March' acts as a prolepsis to the poem's opening on month ' March', thus creating a cyclic structure which forwards the unfortunate idea that the pair's future feelings of love will similarly fade and out and die.

" Envoi" is an exquisite study in love, in its achingly beauty, yet fleeting nature and ability to rapidly fade. Whilst Sackville-West indeed suggests that <https://assignbuster.com/the-depiction-of-love-in-envoi-by-victoria-sackville-west/>

all love eventually dies, this in fact intensifies the fact that love should be treasured by all those who experience it.