

The flea by john  
donne, to his coy  
mistress by andrew  
marvell and how do i  
love t...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

This essay will compare the poems *The Flea*, *To His Coy Mistress*, and *How Do I Love Thee* all of which are love and seductive poems. Metaphysical poetry is often used to compare one thing to another that appears to have nothing in common and combines feeling with thought, and this method is visible in Donne's *The Flea* where Donne compares his love of his wife and his cravings for sex to a flea. There are many similarities and differences between the three poems. Both *The Flea* and *To His Coy Mistress* have a sense of urgency present within them with Donne urging his wife to have sex with him and Marvell trying to explain to his love to hurry up and let him love her.

The biggest difference however, between the three is that *How Do I Love Thee* by Elizabeth Barrett Browning is written from the women's perspective whereas the other two are written from the man's perspective and we do not hear the women's point of view. Both *The Flea* and *To His Coy Mistress* are sycophantic. Although *How Do I Love Thee* is purely a romantic seductive poem from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her love, Donne's *The Flea* is merely an attempt for Donne to get his wife to have sex with him.

Within these three poems there are many examples of where natural imagery has been used. In most cases to represent the love the poet has for his or her partner. It is said that Andrew Marvell travelled a lot and was very impressed with the works of John Donne; this would be a good explanation for some of his more vivid metaphysical poetry and natural imagery.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning suffered from a lung disease and had to take specific medication until the day of her death, this could also have had an

effect on her poetry. In Marvell's To His Coy Mistress, which is more subtle than Donne's The Flea, Marvell is explaining to his love that she deserves to be loved forever but they do not have this time to love each other so they must make haste.

" Had we but world enough, and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime."

Marvell uses natural imagery and compares his love to " vegetable love", and explains that their love would be bigger than an empire.

" My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than empires, and more slow"

The way that Donne uses natural imagery to compare his love for his wife to that of a flea and the way that it is written in the first person gives us a sense of urgency from Donne.

There are many examples of where religious imagery is used within the three poems. Most appear in Marvell's To His Coy Mistress. An example of this would be at the end of the third stanza.

" Through the iron gates of life

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run."

Here Marvell uses this religious imagery to explain to his love that together they cannot play God but they can take advantage of the time that they will have together. Elizabeth Barrett Browning spent most of her time writing love poems to her love Robert Browning, and How Do I Love Thee is one of her more romantic pieces. Browning uses religious imagery to show how true her love is to her partner.

“ I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight.”

This essay has compared the three poems The Flea, To His Coy Mistress, and How Do I Love Thee which are all linked by different methods of metaphysical poetry and love and seduction. In each case the poet is expressing a feeling or an urge for his or her partner as in Donne's The Flea where Donne compares his love for his partner and his cravings to have sex by using natural imagery to a flea. The Flea however is in contrast to Browning's How Do I Love Thee where there is no persuasion for sex and it is just a purely romantic poem.