

Significance and interpretation of william shakespeare's "my mistress' eyes are n...

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In the poem *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun*, the speaker talks about the different ways in which people compare their wives or mistresses falsely to different entities. He points out how people do not see things how they really are and uses an example with his own mistress, stating how she does not have the characteristics of the various entities mentioned. He spends this poem comparing his mistress's appearance to other things, and then telling us how she doesn't measure up to them. He goes through a whole laundry list, giving us details about the flaws of her body, her smell, even the sound of her voice.

Then, at the end, he changes his tune and tells us about his real and complete love for her. The speaker uses an example in the first lines of the poem: *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun; Coral is far more red than her lips red;* (1-2) Here, he makes the case that her eyes are very different from the sun. Though the sun is beautiful and glowing, it has little in common with her eyes. He means that even if that is a beautiful thing to say to someone, reality is that they cannot really be compared to the sun. He also mentions other examples, like coral having a different shade of red than his mistress' lips.

This is very different from words of men who claim that their women have the light of the sun in their eyes and coral lips. He asserts that though men might make these comparisons, they are not accurate, at least not when he gazes upon his mistress. He also speaks of perfume and notes that at times her breath reeks: *And in some perfumes is there more delight. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks* (7-8) The speaker expresses the reality

that one's breath is not always perfect and does not always seem pleasant. Over time, that attraction that people have between themselves can wane.

He means with the poem that physical attraction is neither constant nor stable and for this reason, a couple needs more than just false compliments to remain together. He wants individuals to be able to accept the weaknesses and defects of their loved ones and love them for who they are inside and not what they imagine them to be. He continues to paint an unattractive picture of his mistress. He states that: If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head. I have seen roses damasked red and white, But no such roses I see in her cheeks; (4-6) Again, he does not perceive her as beautiful.

Her hair is coarse and her cheeks have no color and luster. One can only wonder how he can love someone with no appealing physical qualities. The sonnet may appear to be negative and insulting, but it has positive words at the end. These words paint a different picture of his love towards his mistress and change the view of the reader, who might see it as insulting at the beginning. It shows that he is actually praising her, disregarding the method he uses to do it. He justifies all the negative things said about this mistress.

This can be seen in the following quotation: I grant I never saw a goddess go; My mistress, when she walks treads on the ground. And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare As any she belied with false compare. (11-14) He means that although this woman is not a goddess, he loves her for who she is because she does not pretend and is an uncommon love. This shows that

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he is praising her highly because he means that although reality is different from people's dreams and desires, he knows that he loves her intensely and unconditionally.

He describes the love as rare and clearly maintains that he does not need to compare her falsely to know that his love for her is tremendous. While this might not be the type of poem people give to their lovers, it is still about love. It looks at love from a human and imperfect point of view. The speaker has been with his mistress for a long time and knows her well. Although her eyes are nothing like the sun, he is still glad because he knows that his love for her is rare. He prefers showing it through actions rather than using false words. The poem praises the flaws of this woman who must be really lucky to find such an undeniable love.

It is a poem of praise because it truthfully separates the deeper meaning of true love from false fantasies derived by different individuals. One might blindly call it insulting, but how can it be when it speaks of the truth? It is rather a sonnet of high praise because the speaker portrays the beauty of the woman realistically, focusing on her personality as the reason she is wonderful. Works cited Shakespeare, William. "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun". *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, compact edition. Eds. Alison Booth, J Paul Hunter, Kelly J. Mays. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006.