

With how sad steps
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In his poem, 'With how sad steps' Sydney is addressing the issues of love together with rejection and depression. He has adopted a Shakespearean sonnet form, which immediately indicates that the poem is about love. It is apparent from the first line that the speaker is confiding in the moon. The speaker is expressing his own emotions through the moon and we can understand that because the moon is climbing the skies with such 'sad steps', that he doesn't want to be seen.

The exclamation mark shows that speaker has a sudden realisation that the moon reflects himself and perhaps it is he who wants to 'climb[st] the skies' in order to elevate himself to a place closer to God. The poem is very regulated but is also broken up by the large amount of punctuation, which perhaps indicates the speaker's confusion about love and his feelings. Personification is incorporated when the speaker talks of how the moon 'climbst the skies'. He is regarding the moon as a person and this is emphasised when the speaker 'read[s] it in [his] looks'.

The moon has been given a different symbol to that which was common at the that time the poem was written. It is seen as a Godly figure who is sympathetic to a speaker who feels forsaken in love. The fact that the moon climbs 'silently' and with a 'wan' face indicates that both the speaker is completely drained of all emotions and that he is feeling immense grief for his rejection in love. He has reached the point of desperation, which is highlighted by Sydney's continuous repetition of the word 'how' in the beginning of the poem.

This prolongs the sad sound of the poem and echoes the melancholy mood. The exclamation mark at the end of the second line is emphatic of how the speaker feels. The format of the sonnet develops after the second line, from the moon and the speaker being as one, to them being separate. The speaker begins to ask the moon a series of questions and appears shocked and confused when he concludes that even in 'heavenly place' cupid is still trying to create to create love. He may have assumed that in heaven, when close to God and his powers that love would be prosperous and ongoing.

The speaker goes on to find comfort in the personified moon and believes that '[he] feels a lover's case' because of his 'long-with-love-acquainted eyes'. He wants the moon to sympathise with him because he 'can judge of love' and must therefore know how the speaker feels. Sydney's uses a legal term in 'a lover's case' to justify the feelings of the speaker and to indicate we live in a nation of trial in which judgement must always be passed. He is trying to rationalise his love and is actually debating with himself on this subject.

Enjambment is used to keep the sentence flowing and to build up to the question. When the speaker 'read[s] it' in the moon's, he is actually revealing his own feelings and expressing them through the moon. He claims that the moon has a 'languisht grace' and therefore he must feel as like the speaker does. The speaker maintains that it is the moon who must want to '[decry]'. However it is obvious that it is the speaker who feels the need to make a proclamation and criticise love. The speaker is seen as reading everything to be sad and depressing, even the moon's 'languisht grace'.

This refers to his 'sad steps', which can either be seen as beautiful and graceful or as something dejected. The speaker considers the moon to be another forsaken lover, and claims that they have 'fellowship'. He shows his desperation when asking the moon if faithfulness is considered stupid in heaven. He is very confused and attempts to understand where he went wrong in love and therefore asks the moon if it is wrong to be faithful. He thinks this is true on Earth, but is unsure if it is also true on heaven.

He wants to know if 'beauties' in heaven, which are possibly the stars, as 'proud' in heaven as they are on Earth. The speaker understands women to be vain and manipulative but wants the confirmation that they are also like that in 'heavenly place'. The speaker continues to ask questions to the moon and recognises that women on Earth want to be loved but don't want to return that love. They reject men who become possessed by love, and he considers himself to be one of these men. He wants the comfort that in heaven the stars love to be loved and accept the love, but never reciprocate.

When the speaker asks the moon if women call being ungrateful and selfish a virtue, he has perhaps realised that his rejection signified a wrongdoing by the women and not by himself. His final request is to find out if women in heaven consider a man wanting to be loved by a woman being unappreciative. Sydney concludes the poem with this series of questions and also uses a rhyming couplet in the form of 'possess' and 'ungratefulness' in order to emphasise the finality. The poem 'Sad Steps' by Philip Larkin discusses the themes of life, love and ageing.

The first stanza begins in a colloquial tone and incorporates an uncomfortable rhyme to emphasise his sincerity. There is an immediate contrast between the two poems because in this poem the moon is not gazed at by a self-entranced lover, but glimpsed unexpectedly as the speaker is “ Groping back to bed after a piss”, a non-poetic situation that provokes amusement. This line immediately indicates that the speaker is ageing and is struggling within himself. This opening sets the scene for a modern mockery of Sydney’s poem ‘ With how sad steps’.

Whereas Sydney’s speaker finds comfort in the moon, this one is ‘ startled by the moon’s cleanliness’. This moon is not symbolic of forsaken or even virtuous love. We can assume that this speaker has never experienced long term love and does not feel and connection with a moon, whose purity possibly reminds him of his unsuccessfulness in love. He feels unease at the thought of ‘ rapid clouds’, which is perhaps because he fears the passing of time and wants to make the most of his life. The ‘ wedge-shadowed gardens’ can be seen as a lace of security and privacy, but they are contrasted by ‘ cavernous, wind picked sky’ that they lie under.

This indicates that in his own little world he feels safe and happy, but one he is in the real world he feels threatened and exposed. The ‘ laughable’ aspect is possibly the way nature is behaving like art, with a moon that ‘ dashes’ and ‘ clouds that blow loosely as cannon-smoke’. It can also indicate that the speaker sees all this as insignificant, therefore laughing at Sydney’s speaker who considers the moon and sky to be very important. The ‘ cannon-smoke’ can be symbolic of women and the love the speaker shared with them. This

type of smoke is momentarily and therefore shows that the speaker has experienced very little low in his lifetime.