

Eileen mcauley's 'the
seduction' and
andrew marvell's 'to
his coy mistress'



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I am going to be comparing and contrasting Eileen McAuley's 'The Seduction' and Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'. The reason that I have chosen to compare these two poems is because they both have the theme of passion, love and the lack of respect for women, however they portray the theme from different points of views. The main link between them is that they are both about seduction.

'The Seduction' is a contemporary narrative poem set in the 1980's, whilst 'To His Coy Mistress' is a mid seventeenth century lyric poem. Both poems may have similarity in theme; however they also have many differences as well as numerous other similarities. The main difference between the two poems is the fact that they are written in different time periods. Another difference is that both poets tackle the aspect of love differently and this is what sets the two poems apart. Eileen McAuley's 'The Seduction' is set against the bleak surroundings of Merseyside. It is about a teenage girl, who is fed by teenage magazines about love and ends up having an illusion about what love actually is.

She meets a boy at a party, where he talks to her about football and ends up talking about the 'Milk Cup'. This shows us that he is self absorbed as he does not ask her about herself. After the party, he leads her 'to the quiet bricks of Birkenhead docks', where they both end up getting drunk. He takes her to the river where he spends the afternoons, reading his 'dad's magazines', when he should be at school. We can infer from this that he truants and we can also presume that the 'magazines' contain adult material.

They then make out as he 'swiftly contrived to kiss her' and after three months, she discovers that she is pregnant. She realizes that her 'My Guy and her Jackie' magazines manipulated and betrayed her. Later on in the poem she regrets the loss of innocence, as she 'cried that she had missed all the innocence around her'. She sees pregnancy as something to be ashamed of and she describes it as 'this despicable, feminine void'.

She feels that she has fallen into vast emptiness and that her pregnancy is something to despise. She also feels that being pregnant makes her become what she is called by the boy at the start of the poem, 'a little slag'. We can assume this, because she is concerned about the neighbours saying that she 'always looked the type'. Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' is a typical carpe diem motif poem, in which the speaker tells his beloved that they should "seize the day" and have sex now instead of waiting until they grow old. It is about a man who uses flattery and persuasion to get his beloved to do what he wants her to do. 'For lady you deserve this state'.

(In this case, it is to sleep with him). However, in this poem, we never actually discover if he is successful in persuading her. There are a number of ideas in 'The Seduction' that the poet is trying to convey to the reader. There is an idea of contrast between the illusion that the girl has of romantic love fed by the media (magazines) and sordid reality. The girl feels 'cheated by the promise of it all' and we can infer that she is referring to her 'My Guy' and 'Jackie' magazines. One other idea is that 'she had missed all the innocence around her'.

' She broke the heels of her high white shoes' and because the colour white has angelic and pure connotations, we can deduce from this that Eileen McAuley is trying to put across to the readers this idea that the girl's virginity, innocence and purity are all broken. Another major idea is about the balance of power between the sexes. From ' The Seduction', we can conclude that the teenage boy has power over the girl and is more dominant as he ' danced with her', ' he led her to the quiet bricks of Birkenhead docks' and ' she followed him'. This implies that it was his decision and not hers. There is also this idea that the girl has fallen into a ' despicable, feminine void'. This tells us how the girl feels about her pregnancy.

She feels that she has entered vast emptiness and it is like a huge chunk of her life has gone missing. She feels that it is ' despicable' because she is pregnant out of wedlock and everyone will despise her and it is a ' feminine void', because only females will be able to experience this feeling and it is the woman that always pays. As far as the message is concerned, the poet is probably trying to show how the media can manipulate you and can influence the way you think. Eileen McAuley is also trying to show the consequences of unwanted pregnancies, especially those of teenagers, who are fed by magazines about this illusion of romantic love, when the reality is quite different. The poem also shows how young teenage girls can be easily seduced under the influence of alcohol.

In ' To His Coy Mistress', the main ideas are about time and death in that there is very little time and that she wont live forever and she wont always be beautiful. The message that Andrew Marvell is trying to get across to the readers is to ' seize the day'. As said earlier, ' To His Coy Mistress' is a <https://assignbuster.com/eileen-mcauleys-the-seduction-and-andrew-marvells-to-his-coy-mistress/>

typical carpe diem poem in which the poet is telling his beloved to make the most of life. He does this by using words associated with death, time and love. He says 'Thy beauty shall no more be found' and 'Now let us sport us while we may' and the meaning of this is that he is trying to say that they should make love now, rather than waiting, because they won't live forever and she will not be beautiful forever.

However, the ideas completely contradict with each other, as Marvell first says that you should enjoy yourself, but then he goes on to talk about death and how time is running out. Then he goes on to say that because of those two things, you should live life to the full. Compared to 'The Seduction', the woman has more control in 'To His Coy Mistress' and has the power to say yes or no, whereas in 'The Seduction', the boy has more control as the girl is being led by him. There is also a major difference in that Eileen McAuley is trying to say 'think before you act', whereas Andrew Marvell is trying to say 'live life to the max' and to try and live out your dreams and do what you want before it is too late. As far as the mood of the poem is concerned, 'The Seduction' has a very sad and depressing mood, whilst 'To His Coy Mistress' has a variety of tones.

The first phase of the poem has a rather sweet tone, where Andrew Marvell is flattering his beloved slowly and calmly. The second phase has a threatening tone, where the poet is threatening the lady and the third and final phase consists of a passionate and persuasive tone, where he is trying to convince his mistress to make love to him. I know all this, because in 'The Seduction', Eileen McAuley uses words like 'sobbed' and 'cheated'. It is very disheartening and the readers really sympathise with her.

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In 'To His Coy Mistress', Andrew Marvell uses phrases like 'For lady you deserve this state', '... hen worms shall try That long preserv'd virginity' and 'Like amorous birds of prey'.

These phrases show the three different tones in Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress': his flattery tone, his threatening tone and his passionate tone. The phrase '...

then worms shall try That long preserv'd virginity' is also a tactile and visual image. The moods and tones of both poems totally differ from each other. On one hand, Eileen McAuley's 'The Seduction' has a negative mood and on the other hand, Andrew Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' has a positive mood (overall). These fit in with the ideas that the poet's are trying to put across to the readers. Eileen McAuley is trying to show the consequences of unwanted pregnancies and Andrew Marvell is trying to show the bright side of life and how people should do what they want rather than when it is too late. 'The Seduction' is written in third person and this is shown by words like 'she' and 'he'.

It allows the reader to understand the girl's feelings, but partially and with a detachment. This makes it harder for readers to empathize. I think the use of third person symbolises that the situation is quite common. The poem consists of both Standard English and dialect.

The only dialect used is when the boy speaks. 'Where I go, by meself...

. ' Eileen McAuley uses dialect effectively as the boy's social status is shown and he is of working class. Most of the poem is written in past tense;

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however, towards the end of the poem, Eileen McAuley has made good use of infinitives. ' To turn away, move away, fade away...

' This makes the poem more reflective rather than just narrating a story. It also shows different people's opinions about the situation and it allows us to understand what she is going through and how she is feeling at that moment. 'To His Coy Mistress' is written in first person and this is shown by words like ' our' and ' we'. This allows us to understand the poet's feelings and what he is trying to say. This poem is written more formally and is written in Standard English , for example, ' We would sit down'.

It is probably written this way, because it is aimed at a more upper class audience. This is effective as the writer picks out his audience by the words he uses, for example, ' quaint Honour'. There is a pun on the word ' quaint', as it had something to do with virginity and such like. ' To His Coy Mistress' is written in both present and future tense. It is written this way, because the poet is not narrating a past event but in fact is telling his beloved how things will be at the present and in the future. ' Think which way'.

' We will make him run'. The two poems differ in that ' The Seduction' contains Non-Standard English and ' To His Coy Mistress doesn't, ' The Seduction' is written in past tense (like a story), whilst ' To His Coy Mistress' is written in the present and future tenses. The other major difference is that ' The Seduction' is written in third person and ' To His Coy Mistress' is written in first. If the woman in ' To His Coy Mistress' wrote the poem, then we would have felt more empathy for her, but in this case, we feel more sympathy for the girl in ' The Seduction', because we are not actually told whether the

woman in 'To His Coy Mistress' has given in to the poet's flattery. In 'The Seduction', Eileen McAuley creates a wide range of images. In the beginning, the setting is described as 'the quiet bricks of Birkenhead docks' and you can visualise a rural area, very quiet, far from everyone else.

Another good visual image is where Eileen describes 'The Mersey, green as a septic wound'. You can just visualise this image in your head of an oozing wound and you get reminded of scum. In my opinion, Eileen McAuley is probably trying to relate these horrid images to the situation and that the relationship between the girl and boy was not romantic, but just a one-off. In 'To His Coy Mistress', Andrew Marvell also uses a variety of images.

Towards the middle of the poem, Marvell says that he hears 'Time's winged chariot hurrying near.' This is also a good example of a visual image, as you can just imagine a chariot going faster and faster towards you. This is also an aural image as you can hear the 'tick, tick' of a clock, quickening in pace. Another example is when he says that there are 'Deserts of vast eternity' that lie before them.

With this image, you can imagine a never ending desert like a wasteland, deserted. Both poets are good with their use of imagery; however they do it in different styles. Most of McAuley's imagery is associated with the setting, whereas Marvell uses a lot of geographical imagery and imagery associated with time, death and love. In terms of poetic devices, both poets have used them effectively.

On one hand, McAuley uses alliteration, personification, similes, repetition and infinitives. She describes the traffic as 'silver stream', where you can <https://assignbuster.com/eileen-mcauleys-the-seduction-and-andrew-marvells-to-his-coy-mistress/>

imagine a lot of silver cars streaming across the road. She uses personification, when she describes the windows as 'blind' and this shows us that they're away from everyone, away from people, away from houses. In a way, McAuley is trying to indicate that windows have eyes in that they give out a lot of information especially when people tend to peep through.

The words also add mystery to the setting. The most effective simile in the poem is when she describes the torn magazines 'like confetti'. This gives us a good visual image of bright and colourful tiny bits of paper 'strewn' about across the floor. Marriage is a connotation of 'confetti' and because 'The Seduction' is not a very modern poem, the word 'confetti' used to be associated with marriage during the time of 'The Seduction'. Repetition is used when 'she was truly truly frightened'. The repetition of 'truly' emphasizes her fright.

Since the boy is not mentioned in the poem after she is seduced by him, we can assume that he does not want to know anything about her nor the baby, and this could be one of the reasons why she is so afraid. There is also use of internal rhyming, where McAuley uses the words 'glamour' and 'stammer' in one line. Eileen McAuley is describing the magazines in this line, stating that even though the magazine may contain glamorous pictures, there is always a slight flaw in them. The last two paragraphs show use of infinitives, which show how the girl feels about her pregnancy.

The use of infinitives also allows the poem to become reflective rather than just narrating a story. McAuley also uses the word 'white' quite a lot to symbolise the girl's innocence. On the other hand, Marvell uses a lot of

hyperboles, personification, similes, long vowel sounds and metaphors.

Andrew Marvell's long vowel sounds are effective.

'... our long love's day'. The words are associated with time and as you read out the words, you immediately realise that the long vowel sounds reflect the words.

Marvell also uses hyperboles, when he's telling his beloved how many years he will spend on each part of her body. An hundred years should go to praise... but thirty thousand to the rest'. A lot of hyperboles are used to flatter her and to stress the point.

In the second phase of the poem, there is quite some successful use of metaphors and personification. 'Time's winged chariot hurrying near.' There is a metaphor and personification within this line, because he is comparing time with a winged chariot and because he is giving time characteristics that are not usually said, for example, 'winged chariot'. A person normally has a chariot and animals are the ones that have wings. Similes are also used, mainly in the last phase of the poem. Marvell uses similes 'like morning dew' to compare the 'youthful hue' of his mistress.

He also uses similes 'like amorous birds of prey' to describe the way in which they should make love. Both poets use figurative language and poetic devices to reflect their ideas and message. McAuley uses poetic devices to show the girl's feelings and to describe the setting, whereas Marvell uses poetic devices for his argument (split in the three stages) in order to persuade his mistress to sleep with him. As far as the layout and structure is

concerned, 'The Seduction' is written in quatrains and is set out in a way
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that allows the poem to be easy to follow. However, the poem consists of a run-on line to the next stanza - '..

. like confetti, strewn On the carpet. ' This is why it is very important to note down the punctuation rather than just read from line to line; otherwise you won't understand what is going on. Although the rhyming pattern does not apply to every stanza in the poem, the rhyming pattern for this poem is ABCB, where the second and fourth lines of each stanza rhyme.

In ' The Seduction', Eileen McAuley uses an ellipsis very effectively - ' Stories from teenage magazines... When she discovered she was three months gone' The main reason for this ellipsis is that it shows that it has flash forwarded three months; a major leap from the time she spends with the boy to the time when she finds out that she is pregnant.

Another reason for this ellipsis could be that Eileen McAuley is linking the stories from the ' teenage magazines' to her betrayal by her ' My Guy and her Jackie photo-comics', which she later regrets. On the other hand, ' To His Coy Mistress' is written in three stages (however not in stanzas, in paragraphs). It is also quite easy to follow, however it consists of many run-on lines and again the reader must follow the punctuation and not just read from line to line. It contains more run-on lines than it does in ' The Seduction'.

The poem consists of many rhyming couplets, yet there is no pattern, as it is not written in stanzas. This differs a lot to ' The Seduction', where the rhyming pattern is ABCB and is written in quatrains rather than mere

paragraphs like in ' To His Coy Mistress. ' As far as the language is <https://assignbuster.com/eileen-mcauleys-the-seduction-and-andrew-marvells-to-his-coy-mistress/>

concerned, Eileen McAuley uses pastoral language quite a lot. Her diction is unexpected, as she describes the setting as 'Far past the silver stream of traffic through the city'. With words like 'silver stream', you would expect a romantic setting, however Eileen has chosen to use it with 'traffic' and that is a contrast. There are also other areas where she uses unexpected diction such as when she describes the boy's eyes 'as blue as iodine'.

We would expect in a romantic setting, the boy's eyes to be as blue as the ocean, sea or sapphire, but instead we get the unexpected. In the second stanza, the boy's words of endearment to the girl are 'little slag' and this is pejorative and derogatory language, which nobody would expect to be used as words of endearment by anybody. Andrew Marvell uses seventeenth century language such as 'thou', 'thine', 'thy' and so on. This reflects the time that the poem was written and the language that the mid seventeenth century folk used to speak.

Marvell also uses Latinate diction when he describes his love as 'vegetable'. This means that his love is flourishing and burgeoning and that his love for the woman will always grow. Marvell also used words like 'state' which means a pomp. Marvell's diction differs a lot to McAuley's diction, as McAuley used words associated with love, but used them in such a way that it contradicted with what she was actually describing. On the other hand, Marvell used quite a lot of Latinate diction and a lot of seventeenth century language.

In terms of cultural context, at the time when 'To His Coy Mistress' was written, women were given no rights and there were no laws. This made

it possible for men to have power of their wives. On the other hand, at the time when 'The Seduction' was written, women had rights and were able to do things that were not possible for them to do back in the olden days. In relation to the poems, this is very ironic as the girl in 'The Seduction' is living with all the rights and she is the one who has no control over the situation, whereas the woman in 'To His Coy Mistress' is not living with rights and she has more power over the man.

'To His Coy Mistress' also uses seventeenth century language, for example, 'thou' and this is because that was how they spoke. He also uses conditional clauses except there is an inversion of word order. Instead of saying 'if we', he says 'had we' and this was probably quite common in those days.

Seventeenth century folk also liked exotic faraway locations, for example, Marvell's use of the 'Ganges', which has religious significance, but most importantly, was exotic in their opinion. The title of the poem ('To His Coy Mistress') also indicates about the time of the poem. In the mid seventeenth century, the word 'mistress' meant either someone of lower class (like a servant) or girlfriend.

With 'The Seduction', there are a few indications. The football players are the first indication that the poem is set in the 1980's and the main indication is when the girl talks about her O-levels that she would be sitting. This shows that the poem is set pre 1987. I enjoyed both poems quite a lot, but I preferred 'The Seduction' in terms of its ideas that it portrayed as I agree with it and can relate to it.

I also preferred 'The Seduction' in terms of its language and its layout, because it was more understandable, as it was written earlier than 'To His Coy Mistress' and also because it was written in stanzas. However, overall, I favour 'To His Coy Mistress' more than 'The Seduction', because I preferred its rhyming to the rhyming of 'The Seduction' and even though the poem used more abstract concepts and ideas, I liked the way it consisted of geographical imagery and hyperboles.