

The beggar woman and to his coy mistress



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In this essay I am going to be comparing and contrasting the style of which William King and Andrew Marvel present the relationships between the gentlemen and mistresses in the poems 'The Beggar Woman' and 'To His Coy Mistress'. In both poems, the gentlemen are trying to persuade the mistresses to have sex with them; this makes the poems seductive poems. The difference in both poems is the status of the woman. In 'To His Coy Mistress' she is in the same class as he so it would prove harder for him to seduce her. Whereas in 'The Beggar Woman', the woman is of a lower class which may mean she would be easier to persuade as she is more eager. The structure of 'To His Coy Mistress' is 'octosyllabic' which means that each line only has eight syllables. The theme of 'To His Coy Mistress' is introduced early on in the poem as it says 'Had we but world enough, and time' which shows the reader that time is an important virtue of this poem and is shown throughout.

This links in very well to the other theme of Carpe Diem (seize the day). 'To His Coy Mistress' is split up into three sections, through the stanzas. In the first section the gentleman appears to be very flattering in hope that he will seduce the woman so she will have sex with him. However the tone of his language promptly changes from flattery to warning yet referring to Carpe Diem a lot throughout the stanza. The quotation 'them worms shall try, That long preserv'd virginity,' This shows the reader how his tone and language has changed as he is saying that only the worms will be able to admire her virginity when she has died.

This is a very graphic image and may be very insulting to the mistress which might essentially jeopardise his chances with the lady later on. This is also

linked to *carpe diem* as he is telling her to appreciate her time before it is over. This changes the love poem to a more morose tone. The third stanza changes back to contemplative lust. In the first line of 'To His Coy Mistress' the speaker uses a personal pronoun in order to persuade the Mistress so straight away we get the impression it is a persuasive and seductive poem, 'Had we world enough, and time,'.

This introduces the theme of time into the poem. As well as using personal pronouns, the speaker also uses subjunctive mood verbs such as 'would', 'were'. This gives the reader gracefulness and apprehension to his style to involve the reader and make them feel more sympathetic. By using these modal words they are also very persuasive. He says that her 'coyness' would be acceptable if there were enough time.

This gives the reader the impression that the lady is quite shy, and if they had all the time in the world it would be acceptable for her to be shy, however they don't have much time so they should 'seize the day' and have sex as soon as possible. In the first four lines of the poem the poet tries to make it as clear as possible about what he wants. This comes across most, in lines three and four, as he is telling the Mistress they could spend all day, every day doing what they like if only they had the time. 'To walk, and pass our long love's day:' He is saying that they could court forever.

This is very hyperbolic and at the same time very flattering as he is showing what he would do if they had the time. The speaker in "To His Coy Mistress" shows his intense passion for the mistress and tries extremely hard to persuade her to have sex with him. He does this by incorporating a lot of

imagery, “Thou by Indian Ganges’ side Should’st rubies find: I by the tied”.

He uses flattery here to attract her attention, but he is being very hyperbolic again by saying if they had all the time in the world (which they don’t) he would buy her everything.

This is again linked to Carpe Diem, as he suggests there is not much time so they should hurry and not waste time. He knows that he doesn’t have much time to persuade her and how time will stop for no man, so he uses flattery in such a way to try and get her to make love to him and seize the day. The speaker also uses Biblical references, “till the conversion of the Jews.”, he uses this as an opportunity to entice the woman; in effect saying he will love her forever because “the conversion of the Jews” was to take place just before the end of the world. The speaker begins to describe the amount of time it will take to love his mistress, these very extreme passions stress the large amount of time it would take the speaker to love her. These passions are very excessive and exceedingly hyperbolic.

The speaker includes a variety of metaphors such as “vegetable love”, which gives the impression that his love will slowly grow forever. However, this could also be perceived as an innuendo pertaining to his phallic organ. This is also floral imagery because he could be suggesting that he needs a suitable atmosphere, such as her ‘soil’, for his amorous interests to grow for her and they can run away and remain incognito forever. He also uses a comparison to the British Empire “Vaster than Empires, and more slow.

” This insinuates that he wishes for their love to grow as rapidly as the British Empire did in the 17th Century. From here the speaker uses very

hyperbolic language but yet its still very original. He shows his devotion to all her physical attributes and shows how he intends to worship them. The line "Thine eyes," this proves that he started at the top of her body and carries on to the bottom. He still uses flattery to persuade her, as he over states the amount of time he would spend worshipping every part of her body, "Two hundred to adore each breast," Here the speaker is going back to what he's really interested in, but he could be relating to her pure heart under her chest, which is what he wants to praise most of all, as it's where all the passion lies.

However flattering he seems, he's not complementing any part of her body, he's just simply stating the time he would spend on them. The end of this first stanza the speaker introduces a monetary metaphor, "Nor would I love at lower rate." This could be compared to an interest rate at a bank for lending money and that this is all the least he can do. He's metaphorically paying for what he wants. The pace in the poem increases as the verb "hurrying" introduces anxiety.

"Time's winged chariot hurrying near" the "winged chariot hurrying" could be symbolic for the fact they might be rushing towards death, so they should "seize the day", linking to the theme once again. He now talks about their relationship if they were to be barren and have no children, 'Desert of vast eternity.' Deserts are hot and barren, so this could be a link to the denial of life, love and sexual activity. This would show the fact that they would not be having sexual intercourse, which would be very dull just like their relationship would be. This is different to the previous imagery of his 'vegetable love', as this would need a very moist atmosphere to grow, so

there would be no 'vegetable love' found here. He is also linking back to the fact if she leaves it too long she will be barren.

The speaker becomes more desperate in the next section and begins to warn and threaten the woman. The speaker repeats the sombre tone again whilst using another reference to the bible, 'into ashes all my lust.' This relates to the biblical reference of 'ashes to ashes dust to dust.' This emphasises his thriving passionate lust, which would be reduced to dust if she does comply.

He carries on the image of death as he says that the grave is a "fine and private place." He uses irony, as he is praising the grave calling it fine and private. This is a perfect example of carpe diem. The punctuation shows the speaker's being very charming. The last stanza returns to the theme of youthful passion and still intertwines the theme of carpe diem through it, 'while the youthful hue Sits on thy skin like morning dew.'

'Here the speaker is obviously telling her to 'seize the day' once again and that she should do this while she is still young and they still have the time. He is also referring to her young beauty, as 'dew' seems very youthful and fresh like the early morning dew you find on the ground outside. Again he uses euphemisms to express his way of meaning by using the word 'sport', as a verb for 'making love'. This could also be related to 'The Beggar Woman' where the gentleman speaks of the woman being 'Game'. However the difference between the two words and meanings is that in 'The Beggar Woman' the gentleman is referring to the mistress as game which would show status.

The speaker once again tells the woman not to repress her feeling and make love to him now while they can as he says to her ‘ Through the iron gates of life. ‘ The speaker may be relating this back to his earlier statements of death as ‘ Iron gates’ represent death, however he could also be saying this to be interpreted as though he were breaking through the ‘ gates’ of her ‘ virginity’ once they make love. The last two lines in the poem could also have two meanings, ‘ Thus, though we cannot make our sun Stand still, yet we will make him run. He may be saying that their time together and passion towards each other could melt the ‘ sun’ or he may mean it in such a way that they should speed up the time ‘ run’ and make something happen, because by now he might be starting to be very impatient.

The two poems are different in the way that in ‘ To His Coy Mistress’ it is never revealed whether they made love or not, yet in ‘ The Beggar Woman’ we know how it ends, and it ends with a fantastic twist. The gentleman in ‘ The Beggar Woman’ spends a lot of time trying to persuade her throughout the poem to make love to him. She tells him they should go to a secret place to make love. After delaying the action, she then ties the baby which she has onto his back, and leaves him.

‘ The Beggar Woman’ is a narrative poem, which is written in formal English with rhyming couplets and regular stanzas, which makes the structure very conventional for its time. It tells a story and the rhyming techniques are so you can remember it. King uses a lot of euphemisms throughout the poem. “ For he himself had other Game in view:” This shows how men used to treat women as he referred to her as “ game” by using the word ‘ game’ it shows status of which the male is higher than the female.

Another example of a euphemism used is “Retire a little way into the wood?” here the gentleman uses very polite language in order to flatter the mistress potentially to get her to make love to him. ‘The Beggar Woman’ is a ballad, and in such a time before popular press and television, these ballads satisfied a need for light entertainment. “He ambles on before, she trots behind;” This again shows status and that he is in full control of almost every move she makes. As he strides ahead, she is expected just to follow along behind, which is where women of this time were expected to belong even though she would be struggling to keep up with the baby on her back. The use of euphemisms occurs throughout the poem more often when the male speaks. “I know an unfrequented place,” This is in response to her worrying of other people arriving, and it carries on from the previous euphemism of when the gentleman asks the mistress to “expose” meaning to reveal herself and commit the act of love.

The pace of the poem also speeds up towards the end, “speed... oss..

. dexterous” These words indicate speed as the pace of the poem speeds up and the words become more emphasised. With these words making the poem speed up, it makes the poem involve the reader more as they want to keep up with the pace to reveal what happens. Another technique which King uses is similes “like a cross,” this makes a reference and implies how the baby is a burden on her back, just like the cross was on Jesus’ back before his crucifixion, which could also show that he could have committed a crime to have the burden of the baby on his back. This makes a brilliant twist in the poem as it would have been the least thing we would have expected

for the woman to dispose of her child like that. This also shows that she may be of a low status.

However the lady seems very cunning and rather clever to think of such a plan to fool a gentleman of a higher status. Both gentlemen use persuasion to try and get the mistress to make love to them. However they do this by using very different strategies. In 'To his Coy Mistress' the gentleman tries to persuade her through three stages, which correspond to the three stanzas. He uses different methods of and techniques in each one of these stanzas whereas in 'The Beggar Woman' the gentleman uses a lot of euphemisms similes and flattery throughout the poem.

King's style of writing is also different to Marvell's due to this fact. King shows a lot of speed in 'The Beggar Woman', 'With speed' which make the words more emphasised to the reader. The general idea of both poems is to entertain the reader. However they both do this in very different ways, as 'The Beggar Woman' has a moral twist and 'To His Coy Mistress' is a purely entertaining light hearted poem. The effect of both poems on the reader is that it makes them understand how life was in the 17th century and how women could be treated in such a way just because of their status. In my opinion there are many similarities and yet many differences between the two poems.

'To His Coy Mistress' has been written very hyperbolically by Marvell, which to today's society makes it seem very desperate. However, King uses more euphemism to persuade the Mistress and does so in a much more basic way.