

Struggle for Seizing the Day and the Sick Love in *To His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell: An Anti-Platonic Reading

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Abstract

Platonic love refers to a kind of love that has no relationship with the negative mode of sexuality that is completely free of it especially in poetry. In Plato's dialogue the Symposium it has been examined that Vulgar Eros is nothing but mere material attraction towards a beautiful body for physical pleasure, which Plato does not agree. Divine Eros, on the other side, begins the journey from physical attraction i.e., attraction towards beautiful form or body but transcends gradually to love for Supreme Beauty. Moreover; it implies active concern for the virtue and goodness of another soul, founded on the love of Goodness; it also implies sexuality, since sexuality finds its purpose in the intercourse of man and woman for the procreation of the children and the continuation of race (Allen, p. x). Based on this theory this research paper tries to show the theme of Anti-Platonic in the selected *carpe diem* poem, a poem which does not coincides to Plato's theory but also objects to it too. Furthermore; it tries to shed light on the Anti-Platonic love that Marvell has it done by referring to the erotic love which is included in the frame of his works through symbols and other literary devices.

Keywords: pleasure, passion, corruption, Platonic and Anti-Platonic love

1. Introduction

At that time Plato lived in his domain, everybody thought that poets are as good as teachers and their patterns are like prophets since they are inspired by the great power. On the contrary, Plato did not conform to what people opined and he broached this question in his mind, "Doesn't the Truth arrive at by reason?" In his book "Ion" (Also included in Hall's book, 1963, p. 2) he also believes; "even if a poet is a holly thing there is no invention in him until he has been inspired and it is out of his sense and then the mind is no longer in him: when he is not attained to this state, he is powerless and is unable to utter his oracles."

To labor the above mentioned point, Plato presumes on this short sentence that poets are inferior teachers since they talk what they themselves like to talk about and it does not come out from their knowledge but from what is called inspiration. By acquiring this inspiration they are ready to talk about everything that comes to the mind, which the term *love* is of no exception.

Love for Plato is not something so disturbing but it is the matter of perpetual aspiration for the matter of possession. As he believes people on earth impelled by two kinds of love but these two have their own trails, that is, a love which tempts the body to carnal temptation also deals with sensuality while the other has to deal with achievement of Goodness and is done through spiritual relationship. Thus the lovers even can achieve this pure love if this love goes on to search for the procreation. It is not the matter of molded love but what is called "*Beauty*" and "*Perfection*." Moreover, the true love as a matter of procreation is our nearest approach toward perpetuity and it does not culminates in madness.

Marvell in his poem "*To His Coy Mistress*" injects into his speaker what he has. The speaker, apparently the poet himself, has done his best to describe beloved not through the pure love but the one which has been named the insane love, painfully, the sexual love. The existence of this sexual love which is expressed in every line of his poem does not issue in to procreation and perpetuity but it only kindles the fire in poet's body to follow his passion and whim. Finally this poem which rotates around Plato's theory shows how love in this poem is not a real one but one that tries to pollute both the lover and beloved and to a more consideration it can also put a

heavy toll on us to conclude that poets in their poems, even according to what Plato says, do not speak from their knowledge but what is to be called inspiration that is, madness. Also this paper digs into the poet's imagination and reveals the poet's intention about his sexual love which does not move toward Supreme Love.

2. Discussion

From early times the Greeks were known to be great talkers and mostly they spoke about poetry. Among the Greeks came out Plato who examined different aspects of poetry and came up with the opinion that poetry is dangerous. Having been mentioned in Hall's book Plato also had decided to cast away the bards and great poets from his Republic. He also believed that since poets speak, not from knowledge but from inspiration (madness), he cannot be trusted (2).

Marvell was a poet during 1621 to 1678. He was one of those quite men of wit and spirit whose voices generally went unheard during the storm and turmoil of revolution. He was a great admirer of Oliver Cromwell so except for being a poet, he was an assistant and politician. When he was alive, he was not so popular and even celebrated among people but when he died, he was simply known for his satires in prose and verse. *To His Coy Mistress* looks like a dozen other poems on the *carpe diem*, which according to Sokhanvar (2008, p. 271) involves around the theme of urges on the lady enjoyment of the present hour. Similarly Guerin believes that *The Coy Mistress* is called the most celebrated erotic poem in English literature. The speaker of the poem begins his proposition of love by stating an impossible condition. He addresses to a coy or putatively unwilling woman and pleads for sex. On the one hand, it is a poem about youth and passion for life, both intellectual and physical, both male and female. It gives us a picture of the lives of sophisticated people during the time, people who enjoy sex for pleasure and even no mention is made of procreation neither in the poem, nor of marriage, or really of love. It is about sex (2004, p. 3).

From the beginning of the poem the speaker shows that he is both patient and impatient. He will be completely patient with his beloved if she listens to him and satisfies his needs. If she will do, he will promise not to sojourn but to stay and be with her forever "*We would sit down and think which way To walk and pass our long love's day*" (Marvell, 2012, p. 139). He continues that if they will be faithful to each other, he even dedicates hundreds of years to depict her body even in his dream "*Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze*" (Marvell, 2012, p. 139). The description of the eyes opens another simple way for him to infringe the rule and to become involved in the sexual love. Here the speaker does his final pressure to take pleasure in description of her body. He states that he allots his time even for more than two hours to voluptuously describe her seducing body especially her "*breast*." By mentioning the beloved's body in his poem the speaker of the poem enjoys involving the sexual love that is totally against Plato's view about what he calls "The Supreme Love."

In other lines the speaker flatters her beloved sometimes by the logical, convincing arguments and words as "*time*" and "*world*" that they have no time and they must enjoy their present time "*Now let us sport us while we may, And now, like amorous birds of prey*" (Marvell, 2012, p. 139). The speaker sighs and he offers to his beloved that if they do not start kissing and love making, the time goes by and one day there is no doubt that they repent and only thing they have to say is "*let bygones be bygones*" (Marvell, 2012, p. 139). It is here that Barreras and Mendoza also believe that *To His Coy Mistress* is presented as a declaration of love from the writer to a young lady who avoids engaging herself in physical intimacy with him (2015, p. 7). In an argumentative fashion the lover stresses the idea of the passing of time and associated physical deterioration as the reason why both the lover and his beloved should grab the chance and enjoy life while they are still young (p. 2). As a way of persuading her to have sexual intercourse, the writer reasons in ways that are suggestive of the "seize the day" motif which has been designed as an example of the *carpe diem* motif (p. 7). So the speaker he knows that time is limited and if they want to progress forward this whimsical relationship, they must not hesitate. So time is a matter of gap in speakers view if they don't misuse it. Golban also believes that time is an important factor either for the fulfillment or lack of accomplishment of their rather physical love. In proffering his invitation, and in developing the image of the incompatibility between time-consuming coyness and the relatively short time of enjoying the pleasure of making love, the poet develops an arithmetical recital of the lady's beauty in which, as in the entire poem, he uses the Ancient motif of *carpe diem* in relation to the equally Ancient motif of *tempus edax* (2016, p. 14).

From another side the deception of the lover by the betrayal of time makes the speaker not only to shock but also to compare the beloved's body as her "*breast*" to "*marble vault*" which symbolizes her death. The speaker in the first line was so patient since he wanted to show his power to his beloved to soap her to be with him just for the sake of sex, it means that he first instills in her the image of immortality but when he is unrequited in progressing it, he looks for another way till he compels his beloved to get her final decision. Since the final decision does not

move his beloved and his beloved is stubborn not to make love with him in the present time, he admonishes her that certainly death comes to her and “worms” will get her virginity. So the illustration of death as something which is devouring another thing lurks the woman with fear that her virginity is on the hook. So the speaker changes from a person who spends all his time with her to a person whose time has approached to an end. By seeing her beloved in his lap the speaker gives a hopeful promise to his beloved that time is never consummated and even he finds more time to praise her body but on the contrary; the speaker goes on repetitively and states that if they do not move, death shall come to them. He, for his last time, beseechingly asks his beloved not to waste her time since death is waiting to her to consume her body and finally to get her virginity, therefore; in this poem Marvell scoffs at her mistress emphasizing that if she puts off the relationship (sexual intercourse), she has nothing to do with her life in the future. So they should both do away with trepidation when it comes to seduction and temptation. To labor the points this poet tries to show the classic symbol of feminine beauty and love is blown into bits by the agent of masculine sexuality. Also the word *carpe diem* which involves in the poem, goes through it, makes the most of present pleasure, which according to the rule of Plato, whose approach was fundamentally utilitarian, the poetry is condemned as immoral and untruthful (Mohammadi Yegane, 2010, p. 5).

3. Conclusion

Plato, as a critic, he always casted away the poets from his Republic and he believed that poets could be the greatest enemies of the young. He believed that poets describe women body to fire whims in the young. He preferred using philosophy to versifying the poems since philosophy deals with purifying and refining our sins and sexual urges. That is, we do not seek wisdom by first suppressing sexual desire and other distractions but rather by refining that desire and training it on a higher purpose (SparkNotes Editors, n.d.). In order to follow his opinion about poetry and to confirm it, we analyzed that Marvell’s purpose of writing this poem was to show the speaker’s erotic urge toward his beloved. At first he makes himself ready to describe her eyes to show that he is not erotic but step by step he goes on for the description of his beloved’s body. And even when he knows that he is not successful to satisfy his beloved to lie at least one night with him, he furthers his pressure by his false excuses. He says consecutively if they have romantic relationships, the world never comes to an end. On the contrary when he is vexed, he threatens his beloved that if he does not touch her, the worms get his revenge by taking her virginity. Finally the poem has lots of connotations which one by one they zoom in on sexual desires and needs and since they have no implications to show the perpetual procreation, it avers Plato’s theory that poem can be immoral and far from ethicality.

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