



Victoria University
of Bangladesh

ASSIGNMENT

NAME: Zannatul Fatema

DEPARTMENT: BA.IN.ENGLISH

BATCH: 44th Batch

ID: 1819440011

SEMESTER: Summer-2022

COURSE: Metaphysical Poets

COURSE CODE: ENG 419

1. Evaluate *To His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell as a metaphysical poem.

Answer: *To His Coy Mistress* by Andrew Marvell is considered to be a Metaphysical Poem. In this poem, the speaker attempts to convince his coy lover that they should make love. Because his resistant lover wanted their relationship to move slowly but the speaker try to explain that they have very little time to live in this world to move this slowly. Metaphysical Poetry is a term introduced by Samuel Johnson also known as Dr. Johnson. He describes the poems written by a group of 17th century English poets to be Metaphysical Poetry. Although in many cases these poets didn't meet each other or inspired by each other, their poems contain many similar characteristics which are witty and extremely intellectual yet ironical and deeply religious. This group of poems share some common characteristics, contain extremely complicated thought and frequently uses seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or proposition which when investigated may prove to be well founded or true. In the book *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets (1179-1781)* by Dr. Johnson also known as Samuel Johnson first used this term 'Metaphysical Poetry'. In his book Dr. Johnson wrote about John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Henry Vaughan and many other 17th-century British poets. The word Metaphysical is literally translated to 'after the physical' which basically tries to explain phenomenon which can't be explained by science in a philosophical way. Metaphysics is not about mathematics or science, it's about philosophy and exploration and covers broad range of topics including religion.

Andrew Marvell was an English poet who was also a politician who had a seat in the House of Commons. Andrew Marvell is considered to be a metaphysical poet. His poet *To His Coy Mistress* is a love song or a romantic poet which was published in 1681 after his death. He was named after his father Andrew Marvell who was a clergyman in the Church of England. Andrew Marvell was meritorious from a very young age. After graduating from Hull Grammar School, he attended Trinity College, Cambridge at the age of 13 and eventually received his BA degree. After that he travelled the Europe and also may have been as a tutor for an aristocrat. But his life is still a mystery.

To His Coy Mistress is considered to be Andrew Marvell's one of the best and finest poems. This poem starts with the speaker addressing his lover who is very slow to his romantic advances. The speaker tries to explain that he could spend centuries speaking to her and admiring every part of her body if lifespan of a normal human was not so short. And once the life is over the opportunity to enjoy one another's company is gone. So, it is best for them if they indulge in making love and make best use of their brief existence. This poem is a great example of metaphysical poetry and until recently this poem was considered a great example of *carpe diem* love poetry that follows tradition conventions. Many recent critics have been criticizing this poem by defending the coyness of the lady and the use of imagery of marble vaults, worms and graves is going a bit far to seduce someone. Although, some critics don't appreciate some aspects of this poetry it is still a brilliant form of metaphysical poetry.

In the poem *To His Coy Mistress* the speaker says to her lover that her coyness would be accepted if they had all the times in the world. He would have sat with her somewhere for a long time and make plans in which way they can spend their time together. He would silently love her and wait for her sitting near the Humber River of England, while she searches for

precious stones sitting by the side of river Ganges in India. This indicates that his lover could be from Indian origin. Since Andrew Marvell is a British poet and he is talking about waiting at side of river Humber, it is safe to assume that her lover is from India since she is said to be searching for precious stones near the river Ganges. It also explains the coyness of his lover. Indian women are socially and culturally groomed to protect their chastity at all cost. It is socially unacceptable for a woman in India to commit extramarital affairs or indulge in any sexual activities outside of marriage. Indian women in general are very respectful towards this aspect of their culture and they would rather die a virgin than commit fornication. The speaker also adds that if they had all the time in the world, he wouldn't mind her refusing his advances as many times as she wants. Which means his advances was refused by his lover on many occasions which further indicates that it was an Indian woman. Because they don't refrain from fornication just because of social pressure or religious obligations, they do this because this is part of their dignity which is very precious to them. When we consider his lover to be an Indian woman this poem makes more sense. Because British women were not this much conservative ever in history. Western women would not voluntarily or morally refrain themselves from fornication unless they were extremely religious or if they had fear of society finding out. Otherwise, a passionate lover like the speaker himself would not be required to put so much effort and be so patient to convince his lover to give up her coyness. Maybe the writer never had to wait so patiently or put so much effort to seduce someone that he was so fascinated that he wrote a whole poem about it. Moreover, river Ganges is considered holy by the Indian people. They believe the flowing water of this river has the power to purify everything. Many Indians go there to purify themselves by dipping themselves in the river. They also believe that the stones found in this river are also holy and valuable. That is why the speaker makes this clever remark of her searching for valuable stones at the river. That is one of the significant characteristics of metaphysical poetry. Not everyone will catch onto this detail at their first reading. There is an element of ambiguity which becomes clear from multiple readings and careful analysis of this poem.

In this poem, there are many literary devices cleverly used to make a vivid image in reader's head so that they can understand exactly how the speaker feels of this predicament he is in. He uses terms like Desert of Vast Eternity, the Grave, the Morning Dew, the river Humber, the river Ganges etc. giving subtle references to the readers to understand this poem even more deeply without using too many words. This poem conveys so many emotions and experience of the speaker without even using that many words to describe them. That is a sign of clever metaphysical poetry.

The main theme of this metaphysical poetry is love. This poem also has other themes including carpe diem, time, morality, sex, platonic love etc. The metaphysical poetry usually celebrates platonic love. But this poem is completely opposite of platonic love. In this poem only thing that matters to the speaker is romantic love and he would give all his efforts to succeed. The speaker greatly emphasizes that physical relation is absolutely necessary for love. Physical relation gives the relationship between a man and woman fulfilment, compatibility and bonding which is not achieved by only platonic love. Carpe Diem is a concept which means seizing the day. The speaker stresses that no other time is better than the present to enjoy life. Anything can happen the next day and there may not be another chance. It prioritizes the desires and negates dignity and religious obligations. This poem also addresses mortality and life after

death. To the speaker after death humans are ashes and dust in the vast desert. So, you should enjoy life as long as you are alive, especially when you are young and youthful. You can only enjoy your life to the fullest at your youth. Because the major theme of this poem is Time waits for none. That is why the speaker mentions that his lover's shyness would have been fine and he would have been patient if time was not of the essence. They have limited and short time in this world to live and the youth of a person is even shorter. While the speaker is the protagonist of this poem the time is the antagonist for his love. And considering the situation for the speaker the shyness of his lover is a crime to him. The speaker addresses his lover that through the passage of time her long preserved virginity will be of no benefit to her and it will just vanish like everything else. If she wastes her opportunity and delays to response to her lover then maybe her well preserved honor would be of no benefit to her. After she passes away, her virginity will be taken by the worms in her grave. These themes and clever use of Marvell's poetry skill makes this poem unique and original. Originality is the hall mark of metaphysical poetry, which is displayed by this poem very well.

Metaphysical Conceit is also a major characteristic of metaphysical poems. Metaphysical conceit is comparison between two completely different things. Comparison between two dissimilar things is a unique quality of Metaphysical poetry. It is an intellectual literary device that adds depth to the emotions of the poetry. The implicit implication or metaphor used in this poem is, "My vegetable love should grow, Vaster than empires and more slow." Literally, there is no relation between vegetable and love or vegetable and empire. But in this poem readers will understand and get exactly what the speaker is feeling because of this clever use of metaphor. We all know vegetables grow very slowly which is undetectable in real time. But it grows vast given enough time and patience. So, here his love will grow slowly and surely, which is undetectable when it happens, like vegetables vaster than empires being patient and given enough time. In these lines, we also find the use of hyperbole. Hyperbole is when a poet or a writer exaggerates a scene or a feeling. Here, Andrew Marvell exaggerates his love by saying something like, "vaster than empires". This exaggeration may emphasize his love for her. He also says something like, "An hundred years should go to praise Thine eyes." Here the speaker exaggerates that, he would spend hundred years to just praise her eyes, which is clearly an exaggeration only emphasizing his love. Similarly, "An age at least to every part", where the speaker would spend an age for each of her body part which is humanly impossible. But the exaggeration in his words reflects the fondness he has for his lover.

In this poem Personification is also used. Personification is when nonhuman things are attributed with human qualities. Such as "Time's winged chariot hurrying near". Here time is personified like a person sitting in a winged chariot. There are also some religious references such as "The flood" and the "Conversion of Jews". Here "The Flood" is referred to the flood during prophet Noah. "Conversion of Jews" refer to the doomsday when Jews will convert to Christianity. This poem has got every attribute of a metaphysical poem and this poem is one of the greatest examples of Metaphysical Poetry by Andrew Marvell. This poem encapsulates all the features of Metaphysical poetry like Ambiguity, Wit, Concise, Originality, Love, Religion, Metaphysical Conceits, Carpe Diem, Hyperbole and everything. It is crafted beautifully with the poet's knowledge and clever use of literary devices.