



LECTURE FIVE

Traditional Approaches In Practice

To His Coy Mistress



By
Andrew Marvell

Andrew Marvell

- An educated man (Cambridge B.A., 1639).
- received a classical education (emphasis on classical logic and polemics).
- A Puritan, a Parliamentarian, an admirer of Oliver Cromwell, a writer of political satires, and an assistant to John Milton,



Genre of the poem

- The lyric: a brief poem characterized primarily by emotion, imagination, and subjectivity.
- Written in the tradition of love poetry (courtly love) which is based on the elevation of the beloved to the status of a virtually unattainable object almost like a goddess.

Speaker

- He is anonymous, could be any man, anywhere. He speaks very beautifully.
- Could be Marvell himself.
- Competent in arguing.

Addressee

- "mistress" nowadays probably means one thing: a woman (married or not) having an affair with a married man.
- in the 1650s, it also meant "a woman loved and courted by a man; a female sweetheart."
- In Marvell's time, "mistress" also means a woman who acts as a patron, or sponsor, for an artist or artists.
- "Coyness" means affected shyness. "to coy" means to lure or to attract

Structure and Form

- divided into three stanzas structured as a logical argument.

IF → BUT → THEREFORE

1. IF we had world enough and time, I could court you forever.
2. BUT we do not.
3. THEREFORE we should make love now, before it is too late.

Setting

- The literal setting: the poem moves from confinement, to freedom, to confinement, to freedom.
- Examples: the Ganges River in India and the Humber River in England, the body of the mistress, to her heart, "Deserts of vast eternity," "marble vault, and so on.

Religious and Classical Allusions

- Allusions to Greek mythology and the Bible.
- The Flood and the conversion of the Jews.
- “dust” and “ashes,” suggest the terminology of the Christian burial service.
- "Time's winged chariot" the vehicle in which the sun, moon, night, and time are pursuing their course.
- Time's "slow-chapped [slow-jawed] power" alludes to the cannibalism of Kronos

Metaphysical Imagery

Bizarre, grotesque, shocking, and often obscure elements (revolt against the saccharine conventions of Elizabethan love poetry)

1. the warning that worms may violate the mistress's virginity and that corpses do not make love
2. the likening of the lovers to "amorous birds of prey"
3. the allusion to Time's devouring his offsprings
4. "My vegetable love should grow,"

Moral, Philosophical Issues in the Poem

- The common theme of carpe diem, "seize the day"
- 17th century intense religious and political struggle + revolutionary scientific and philosophical thought
- Paradox of being hedonistic and pessimistic
- Is sensuality a way of spitting in the face of Time?

OR

- Is it simply a stereotypically male way of seeking a sensual end?



“Everyday Use”

by

Alice Walker

Alice Walker

A Writing Activist



"Deliver me from writers who say the way they live doesn't matter. I'm not sure a bad person can write a good book. If art doesn't make us better, then what on earth is it for?"

— Alice Walker

Life of Alice Walker

- 1944—born to sharecropper parents (one of 9 children) in Eatonton, Georgia.
- 1952—Alice is blinded by a BB shot by one of her brothers (physically and emotionally traumatizing)
- 1960 graduates from her high school to attend Spelman College
- Worked as teacher, activist, writer of poetry, essays, short stories and novels

Biographical Elements

- The narrator is like Minnie Walker, Alice's mother
- Maggie reflects the young Alice Walker while Dee's sophistication and educational achievements show another different side of Walker (though the former is trendy and superficial)

Plot Summary

- A story of a mother's conflicted relationship with her two daughters
- On its surface, it tells how a mother gradually rejects the younger, more fortunate daughter.
- On a deeper level, it explores the concept of heritage as it applies to African-Americans.

Historical and Philosophical Issues

- Set in the late '60s or early '70s (time of African-Americans' struggle to define their personal identities)
- A period and place where dramatic changes in racial relationships have taken place
- The term "Negro" had been replaced with "Black." There was "Black Power," "Black Nationalism," and "Black Pride."
- Alice Walker argues an African-American is both African and American.

Dee (Wangero)

- Bright, beautiful, and self-centered symbolizing the Black Power Movement.
- With Dee (misguided black pride), Walker is challenging the part of the movement that does not respect the many African-Americans who endure incredible hardships.

Maggie

- Represents the neglected American heritage.
- Her scars are symbolic of the scars that all African-Americans carry as a result of the “fire” of slavery.
- Represents the years before the Black Pride Movement when blacks were silent.