



## OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN AND LOVE IN THE SELECT METAPHYSICAL POEMS OF ANDREW MARVELL AND THOMAS CAREW

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### Abstract

This paper makes a serious attempt to examine and analyse the select metaphysical poetry wherein poet's/narrator's outlook gives the reflection of objectification of women and concretization of love. The objectification theories postulated by Martha Nussbaum, Rae Langton, Fredrickson and Kant have been employed as a vital critical framework for digging deep and researching the select literary works of Andrew Marvell and Thomas Carew to delve deep and explore how women have been dehumanized and deprived of their personhood and how they were considered to be a mere body and tool to satiate and gratify the sexual urge of man and make their bodily constitution fit for satisfying the male gaze. This paper also studies the degraded depiction of women's lives in a socio-cultural context i.e. Patriarchal thinking which not only subjugates and sexually objectifies a woman and reduces her to be a "sweetie pie", 'candy' or 'lollipop' 'plum cake' etc. but also makes them throw to the dustbin their shyness and self-imposed free will when man desires so or to cater to the unlicensed conduct of opposite sex. This research paper examines two metaphysical poets- Andrew Marvell ( 31 March 1621 – 16 August 1678) and Thomas Carew (1595 – 22 March 1640) and their selected poems- "To His Coy Mistress" , 'Definition of Love' & " The Fair Singer" and "A Rapture" respectively to dig out the portrayal of women in bad light.

**Keywords:** Sexual Objectification, woman, Concretization of Love, Body, Metaphysical Poetry

Women have been considered a human with only physical existence. Men in the society are taught to view women as prizes to win. The belief that women are trophies still permeates through the culture still prevailing in our society, whether it's in the media or simple everyday conversation. Since the early days of the society, women have been taught that their entire gender exists purely to satisfy other's needs. It's very likely that there are many people-MEN, who don't realize that they are

perpetuating a culture that dehumanizes and objectifies Women (Robin Tran, 2016).

Objectification is a notion central to feminist theory. Objectification Theory by Fredrickson is based on the principle that girls and women develop their primary view of their physical selves from observations of others (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Majority of the thinkers discussing objectification have taken it to be a morally problematic phenomenon.

Objectification basically means to present as an object, especially of sight or other physical sense. But if we just ponder on combining the word Women with Objectification we are just left with lustful mindset, few of us thinking what rubbish talk and the rest feeling pity about such scenario still persisting in the society.

We are living in 21<sup>st</sup> century the modern era. Hard to say but still with such narrow mindsets. Men like to subjugate women. It's not something which has recently come up in the society but something which is deep-entrenched into the inner recesses of the societal structure and prevailing and permeating into the mental and psychic structure of male-dominated society. From those early days of society till today we see women are treated as well as termed as consumable items and objects. Those objects which are always used by others to satisfy their personal basic instincts. The titles for women still roaming in and around society are all consumable items such as 'Honey', 'Cutiee', 'Cupcake', 'Sweetiee', 'Sugar Plum', 'Pie' and so on so forth. Recently a cake for two crore has been designed as a girl to be consumed by society.

Well, one could easily trace the very presence of sexual objectification of women in the select famous metaphysical poets of 17<sup>th</sup> century-John Donne, Andrew Marvell, Thomas Carew, Robert Herrick however the author would delve deep into the select poems of Andrew Marvel ( 31 March 1621 – 16 August 1678) and Thomas Carew (1595 – 22 March 1640) and not venture into the discovery of the objectification of women in George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan and on...

Before examining and analyzing the select poems of Andrew Marvell and Thomas Carew, let's understand what the term objectification means. According to lexico.com, objectification has two meanings –

1. The action of degrading someone to the status of a mere object.
2. The expression of something abstract in a concrete form.

"... the key to female emancipation lay in woman's release from her bodily identification" (Waugh, 322)

John Donne is celebrated as the father of metaphysical poetry. Majority of his poems comprised of male speaker and the audience predominantly male. He wrote in an era where a female was deemed lesser than a male and solely followed the conventions used by other coterie poets by composing misogynistic writings about women from a hyper masculine point of view.

A selection of lines from Donne's poetry will help us better understand about the kind of objectification in his poetry and other metaphysical poets,

"Hope not for mind in women; at their best, Sweetness and wit they are, but mummy, possess'd."From: Loves Alchemy (1681)

Similarly, Andrew Marvell's verse contains not only delightful romantic expressions but also an account of expressions tilting towards outraging the modesty of women or to flagrant outright rape threat. His poems have texture of his woven perversity discarding platonic promises culminating in to the description of harsh sexual imagery. A feministic reading of "To His Demure Courtesan" is of utmost need as Marvell had a place with that extraordinary abstract gun which composed books by men for men and furthermore for those ladies who surrender to the male perspective and begin to adopt the thought process of a male. "Such a procedure Judith Fetterley calls, "the immasculation of ladies by men." According to Duyfhuizen, as readers, educators and researchers, ladies are instructed to think as men, to relate to a male perspective, and to acknowledge as typical and authentic a male arrangement of qualities." (415) Man controlled society has consistently been a basic strain that goes through the writings of Andrew Marvell and the female voice is frequently observed hushed in his stanzas. His most commended ballad, "To His Bashful Fancy Woman" is an incontestable case of sex separation and the man-centric thought that traps ladies and powers on them certain sexual orientation rules. Marvell's Courtesan is "coy" and "coyness" is as far as anyone knows a noteworthy

piece of the “feminine nature”. He connects his fancy woman with slightness, delicacy, and timid humility. “Let us roll our strength and all/ Our sweetness up into one ball...” (Ferguson 436). The common idea of “strength” as a masculine attribute and “sweetness” as synonymous to the “feminine nature” is evident in the poem. Marvell’s idea of measuring female worth by physical attractiveness is sure to anger the feminists who believe that biological and physical differences between the two sexes do not justify the discrimination against women and that there is no reason why men should consider themselves superior to women. ‘The Second Sex’ argued that there was no such thing as “feminine nature”. (Waugh, 320) This expels Marvell’s guarantee of his paramour being demure. It may be his male sense of self that mistakes dismissal for shyness. Marvell, in his lyric, externalizes the woman and respects her appropriate just for the delight of his sexual needs.

This is proposed by the very title of the sonnet, “To His Hesitant Courtesan”, where he clarifies that the lady isn’t only any special lady however she is “His” property. In the ballad, the escort isn’t the subject, as some may respect her, rather she is an article in connection to the subject which is the man wherefore the title “To His Bashful Fancy woman”. Special lady, as indicated by the word reference of Samuel Johnson is synonymous with prostitute or mistress. Marvell considers her to be a “plaything”. He tends to her as ‘Mistress’ in the title and calls her ‘lady’ in the sonnet. Notwithstanding, it isn’t out of regard he considers her a “lady”. It ought to be noticed that he utilizes the word “lady” and not “Lady” (honorific utilized for a prominent lady) to address his special lady. There is a dormant feeling of the lady being “doubly colonized” in the initial scarcely any lines of the sonnet when Marvell relates his lady to the “Indian Ganges’s side” and himself to the “Humber” waterway. One can detect the interminable relationship that is built up between colonized nations of the East and ladies, both saw as the place where there is openings a thought later formed into the idea of “eastern bride” by Conrad in his novel Master Jim. “Thou by the Indian Ganges” side Shouldst rubies discover; I by the tide of Humber

would grumble.” (Ferguson, 435) Marvell draws the whole character of his fancy woman against her sexual capacity as though there is no more to her and the entire reason for her life is to fulfill him, explicitly, similar to the “eastern bride”. The seventeenth century viewed virginity as the best ownership of a female which could acquire her regard and acknowledgment in the general public. The second route other than this to pick up regard was through marriage. For De Beauvoir, “Marriage is a harsh and exploitative course of action, which fortifies sexual imbalance, and ties ladies to family life.”

It propagates the conviction that if the female is ensured and accommodated by her male accomplice, she is happy...she (Beauvoir) contended that satisfaction of human potential must be judged, not regarding bliss, yet as far as freedom”(Waugh, 321). Marvell’s coy mistress is reluctant to submit to the mulish demand of the man, perhaps because she is worried about her position in the society as a non-virgin maid. It is unfair for Marvell to regard his mistress’ coyness as a crime because “...the Mistress” coyness is her only means of protecting what seventeenth-century society defined as her moral and economic value- her virginity” (Duyfhuizen, 417). If for once, we consider that Marvell has an intention to marry this silent woman, even then it will not do any good to her but instead would put her freedom into shackles of domestic responsibilities and “... she will become her husband’s property and be subjected to the tyranny of English Law that sanctioned her powerlessness. As long as she is “coy”, she has power” (417).

The poem is structured into three parts, and each part builds up his frustration and the poet soon becomes restless with lust. Marvell begins the poem in a manner of courtly love. He tries to win over her in the Petrarchan style. “An hundred years should go to praise Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze...An age at least to every part, And the last age should show your heart.” (Ferguson, 435) However, when the lady does not respond to his praises he takes the help of philosophy of life which suggests that death is an inevitable truth, and life a transitory state. He, in a manner, tries to play with what he thinks the puny head of his mistress. He thinks she would be

perplexed by this intellectual philosophy, and out of fear of losing the good things in life, she would agree to go to bed with him. However, his devious plans prove to be a fiasco when the mistress keeps silent and then he resorts to “textual harassment”. Such a pattern is also seen in Bollywood films with stereotypical heroes chasing heroines who feign coyness and wear a scolding expression only to fall in love with them later. However, “To His Coy Mistress” does not represent a reel life but the reality. Men try to woo women and when the women do not reciprocate, they force themselves on them. Rape, acid attacks, and harassment done to women are an outcome of such an uncontrolled rush of hormones. This poem is not an expression of passionate love but of excessive lust which blinds the poet. Towards the end, he discards all morality and chivalry, and verbally molests the women by giving an intricate description of inappropriate feelings- “... then worms shall try/ That long-preserved virginity... Now let us sport us while we may /And now, like amorous birds of prey, Rather at once our time devour...” (436) This is no less than a rape threat in disguise of a glorified verse. “The juxtaposition of tear and rough strife with the image of the iron gates pertains to time, but beneath there is a deeper and more unsettling suggestion of violation, even of rape” (Hirst and Zwicker, 72). Marvell tries to strip her of her morality by forcing her mentally, if not physically, to indulge in sex with him. “Rough strife” is used interchangeably with rape. He attacks her “marble vault” (vagina) and gets past “the iron gates of life” (hymen) with his piercing words. Marvell may have also entertained the idea of procreation in this poem. The “iron gates of life” may stand for the way to the womb of the woman where life originates. Marvell feels that the only way to make a woman useful is to plant the seeds of life in her. He associates women only with their birthing role or as a procreating machine and this is against the feminist notion of freeing women of their reproductive function that “has placed woman at a disadvantage”, (321) and giving “free access to abortion and contraception.” (323) However, for Marvell, the main and only purpose of women is to reproduce and give the man a child, preferably a son, after which she is no more needed. Marvell in

the poem assumes that the woman is as passionate and tempted as he is –“... thy willing soul transpires/ At every pore with instant fires.” (Ferguson, 436) His “vegetable love”, a reference to his penis and fertility, is competent enough for giving her both sexual and social completeness. Male superiority is vividly expressed by the concept of “vegetable love” which stands for his ability to proliferate and woman is just a medium in the process, a fertile land. The male plot in the poem is further supported by the concept of “Time”. Time in the poem is given an absolute masculine description: like a war-lord Time is seen riding a chariot “hurrying near” them and it is almost unbelievable that it is only the woman who is a slave to time. It is she who will perish with time and her ancient integrity along with her genitals would be devoured – “And your quaint honour turn to dust/ And into ashes all my lust.” (436) Marvell’s time only ticks for the mistress and it seems as if he is unbounded by time and has the power to eternize her through physical contact. He calls the love making a “sport” which denotes that it is a fun activity for him. His casual attitude is explicated in the end couplet- “Thus, though we cannot make our sun / Stand still, yet we will make him run.” (436) He clearly admits that he cannot stay with her forever but he would make love to her so that each second of their togetherness would seem like eternity. “... with a sufficient intensity of loving in a brief time the equivalent in experience can be achieved of slow-paced loving over a vast eternity” (Sedelow, Jr., 7). This is the kind of power assigned to the male and it is expected of the female to feel obligated to such a man. Marvell in his overconfidence pronounces that if the woman rejects him she will have to let worms eat up her virginity, here worms can be a reference to undeserving men who are considered unmanly as their penises are of the size of a worm. “The worm, a treble signifier (phallic joke/ Edenic serpent/ agent of decay) is able almost literally to deflower the woman and remove her, not restore her, to a grisly naturalness she can hardly help but shun.... her virginity cannot last forever.” (Hirst and Zwicker, 72) Such phallic jokes are a way to demean the choices women make in their lives. Her rejection is unbearable to him because she being a woman is not allowed to have autonomous power to say “No”.

A man wants what he wants, and he frustrates if he does not get it. The sexual images echo that women, though are weak creatures, are objects of attraction for men and they have the power to render them helpless with the passion to possess them. This shows femininity in a very negative light- "they can only draw power from sexual relationships rather than having autonomous potency of their own." (Robbins, 27) The limited power offered to women is also snatched away once the man has accomplished his goal. The woman in this poem is an ambiguous character. She is eternally silent but her silence itself is the most perplexing feature of her persona. Her silence can either mean that she is petrified by the way Marvell has devoured her body and fears to be an object of male gaze or it can mean that she is a woman with a voice, which may not be heard but certainly is felt by the readers at every verse. "I postulate Mistress" coyness strictly as a symbol of her own power.... The plot of her refusal of love is powerful in its own terms and demonstrates her conviction to love only on her own terms." (Duyfhuizen, 419) She is often seen as Medusa, by critics, as she can turn the man into stone by one quick gaze. This is signified by the "marble vaults". "...women frequently appear as objects of men's desires or fears- metaphorically virgins or whores- but never complex autonomous individuals." (Waugh, 321) Hence, time and again women have just been represented as subordinate to men. Women, either become an object of lust for men or an object that arouses in them a "castration fear". They are never shown as free individuals with a sense of identity. Finally, the poem, "To His Coy Mistress" is disturbing and offensive to a female reader who tries hard to exist in the male-dominated world of texts. The woman is always in a fix in such a space. She is subjected to eternal doom and her punishment is inevitable. She is spoken cruelly of when she tries to protect her honour from male predators, at the same time she is punished brutally when she gives in to her sexual needs. Society "punish (es) women associated with sexuality and lust...transgressive female is eventually penalized for her actions, and the patriarchal moral code is reasserted and actually strengthened." (Waugh, 327) Hence, silence is assumed to be the

best weapon of a female. The woman in the poem, a smart lady well aware of her situation, resorts to silence and uses it as her weapon to frustrate her predator. Not once in the poem, it is mentioned that she succumbs to his needs. A feminist critic would regard this as a victory for the female sex and an inexcusable act of self-assertion. In his poem "To His Coy Mistress" the speaker invokes Petrarchan convention, a poetic mode originating in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in which a male lover uses exaggerated metaphors to appeal to his female beloved. Yet Marvell alludes to such excessive-and disempowering -pining only to defy this tradition of unrequited love. Instead of respectful adulation, he offers lustful invitation, rather than anticipating rejection, he assumes sexual dominion over the eponymous 'Mistress'. The poem is as much a celebration of his rhetorical mastery as it is of his physical conquest. Through his verbal artistry, the speaker-perhaps a figure of the poet Marvell himself-manipulates his female subject, rendering her both as his idealized beloved and eventually as his vision of impending death. In the course of his invitation, he portrays her as alternately desirous and repulsive, but ultimately identifies the female body itself as a loathsome symbol of human decay.

An hundred years should go to praise,  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirsty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart (13-18)

In the above lines, 'Shoulds' and 'Woulds' that consistently punctuate the poem reach their pinnacle with the blazon beginning in line 13 as he describes how each part of her body 'should' receive an appropriate number of years of homage.

Now, after sifting the above mentioned poems we infer that the outlook and psyche of the men of that era was just to objectify the woman with paramount level of sexuality, say it by materialising, distorting or disintegrating her image in the society. Instead of elevating a woman on the basis of her mind and soul, they just considered 'The Body' her flesh i.e. on her sexual objectification and

that is very well displayed by the poets in their works. Now, considering the present scenario, it's need of the hour to urge men to eradicate such monstrous mindsets still prevailing in the society. The urge is to consider woman as a jewel, as an asset and as an epitome of love by considering the contributions of her mind and soul...her inner beauty, whereas not at the cost of her body, or by her sexuality or on the basis of objectifying her....but for her Inner Radiance... "... the key to female emancipation lay in woman's release from her bodily identification." (Waugh, 322)

As regards to the objectification of love, the poem 'The Definition of Love' depicts the despondency and depression of love in geometric terms. The lovers are like opposite poles of the globe, enviously separated by Fate's "Decrees of Steel"; to consummate this love would require the destruction of the world: "And, us to joyn, the World should all / be cramp'd into a Planisphere." (poetryfoundation.org) It is the very perfection of such love that renders impossible its temporal and physical realization: As Lines so Loves oblique may well /Themselves in every Angle greet: But ours so truly Parallel,/ Though infinite can never meet. This poem has a strongly logical and intellectual pattern. The title exposes that the poem is defining love. Marvell knows the situation about the impossibility of fulfillment of his love, and he feels despair. The right approach of despair is shown, the inevitable futility of hope, the quality within the love itself which in an imperfect world makes a perfect love impossible and in conclusion, the union which exists only because the lovers are apart. Marvell stands back from the emotion of love to discuss the qualities and the destiny of this particular kind of love. In the pretty love-lyric "The Fair Singer", the poet finds in his beloved a combination of two beauties-the beauty of her eyes and the beauty of her voice. It has compelled the poet to surrender to her. He says:

But all resistance against her is vain, Who has the advantage both of Eyes and Voice.

The poet, in 'Definition of Love' compares his and his mistress' love to parallel lines which can never meet even if stretched to infinity. Finally he

describes the love between him and his beloved as the "conjunction of mind" and "the opposition of stars." The entire poem rests on logically developed arguments and creates the illusion of an essay in abstraction. Besides, science has been called to the aid of art for expressing the sentiment. Geometry and Astronomy are here pressed into the service of logic.

The poem, therefore, expresses a thoroughly unconventional theme and holds a unique position in the whole range of English love-poetry.

Andrew Marvell has not composed an incredible number of effective love-sonnets shockingly maybe in view of his distraction with the subject of religion, god, and nature. However, he will consistently be associated with the absolute best love verses of English writing.

Thomas Carew's most notorious work, "A Rapture" (1640), has bewildered the critics since its publication. Composed in the 1620s or 1630s, "A Rapture" has interested readers with its lecherousness, licentiousness, rebellious topics, profoundly eroticized cast of supposedly virtuous female characters, including Lucrece, Daphne, and Petrarch's Laura, and its peculiar and disturbing ending. It confuses readers with its unexpected move in the treatment of the speaker's paramour, Celia, and with its mix of crossover structures, including peaceful, Ovidian, epyllion, carpe diem enticement verse, and elegiac couplet, all of which freely relate to Donne's Elegy 19, "To His Mistress Going to Bed." (qtd. in Linker 1)

"A Rapture" connects new scholarly and social shows, the one that presents explicitly self-assured profligate ladies who not just take an interest in a firmly manly custom of libertine conduct, convictions, and qualities, however challenge, even undermine, the misogynistic desires prevalent in this culture. Anthony Low reminds us that

Carew develop [ed] ... a radically new kind of love poetry in England - libertine, anti-authoritarian, almost wholly disconnected from the Petrarchan traditions that even Donne felt obliged to parody and dispute.

As critics have noticed, the title itself suggests both strict and sexual experience alongside assault (Johnson 153), an implying that relates to the different ladies' places that Carew draws from artistic convention. Lucrece and Daphne, for instance, endure endeavored or genuine mythic assaults, yet in the sonnet, they appreciate sexual opportunity, taking part in scurrilous movement inconsistent with their run of the mill creative depictions. This is a noteworthy takeoff from Carew's peers, who berate, persuade, lure, or dispose of the special lady, however never envision her as an independent sexual being whose libertinism is more emphatically communicated and spoken to than the male speaker charming her.

His smooth as opposed to "solid lines" recognize him from Donne and portray him as a "Child of Ben," a gathering that incorporates Richard Lovelace, whose *Lucasta* lyrics show an inheritance both from Catullus' *Lesbia* sonnets furthermore, Carew's "A Rapture." "Love Made in the First Age. To Chloris" starts with a sexual perfect world that, similar to "A Rapture," alludes to the reductive treatment of Chloris, the speaker's special lady, by inconspicuously typifying ladies all through the lyric: "Young ladies like harvest time plums dropped,/And fellows apathetically cropped/A blossom and a maidenhead" (16-18). Chloris, whom the speaker enjoins to "miserably crave (55) his adoration, which he "evermore... must deny" (57), apparently sits tight for her sweetheart, "violated with these respectable dreams" (59) of free love coordinated by characteristic driving forces. One may state that Carew's speaker, as Lovelace's, is additionally "violated" more by "respectable" or disgraceful "dreams" than by a fancy woman; in the two lyrics the endings, be that as it may quietly foreshadowed in advance, lessen the fancy woman's significance and undercut the whole *carpe diem* contention. Lovelace's "A Loose Saraband," likewise a *Lucasta* ballad, straightforwardly suggests Carew's "A Rapture," however not at all like Carew's speaker, who eventually can't relinquish Honor's laws notwithstanding his contentions against them, Lovelace's speaker regards respect as "a fool" (41), straightforwardly citing "A Rapture" in line forty-two by calling it "a mammoth." Even in this way,

Lovelace parts of the bargains "love and sherry" (48), as carefree as the "free saraband." Both Carew and Lovelace disdain convention and convention, including love, in their suggestive section; however while Lovelace targets Chloris for her dismissal, Carew targets Celia for her potential acquiescence.

In the poem, the introduction of a highly eroticized relationship between speaker and mistress, are images and language consonant with pastoral, seduction, and *carpe diem* poems that urge the mistress to "come". The first line, "I will enjoy thee now, my Celia, come" suggests immediacy, that they must flee "to Love's Elysium" forthwith to avoid the ravages of time that decay the body and spoil the moment. The entire argument until line twenty imagines their flight together after the speaker persuades his resisting mistress, Celia:

I will enjoy thee now, my Celia, come,  
And fly with me to Love's Elysium.  
The giant, Honour, that keeps cowards out,  
Is but a masquer, and the servile rout  
Of based subjects only bend in vain  
To the vast idol; whilst the nobler train  
Of valiant lovers daily sail between  
The huge Colossus' legs, and pass unseen  
Unto the blissful shore. Be bold and wise,  
And we shall enter: the grim Swiss denies  
Only to tame fools a passage, that not know  
He is but form and only frights in show  
The duller eyes that look from far; draw near  
And thou shalt scorn what we were wont  
fear.  
We shall see how the stalking pageant goes  
With borrow'd legs, a heavy load to those  
That made and bear him; not, as we once  
thought,  
The seed of gods, but a weak model wrought  
By greedy men, that seek to enclose the  
common,

And within private arms empale free woman.  
(1-20)

The speaker only appears to solicit Celia into a world of unbounded and unlimited sexual freedom, but in these first lines, Celia's body, far from the fragrant roses or the tantalizing grove of the locus amoenis, becomes common land for everyone, not just the "private arms" of the speaker. In the end, Celia becomes the most common object of all, a "whore". As readers have observed, the speaker treats Celia as a vehicle for desire, and his explicit enjoyment of her body, likened to economies of wealth and land, can only lead to the poem's reductive ending, which completely reflects the objectification of women.

To sum up, when looking through the glass of feministic notion, there is found the explicit objectification of women and love in the select poems of Andrew Marvell and Thomas Carew.

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