“The Sun Rising”

"The Sun Rising" (also known as "The Sunne Rising") is a thirty line poem with three stanzas published in 1633[1] by poet John Donne. The meter is irregular, ranging from two to six stresses per line in no fixed pattern. The longest lines are at the end of the three stanzas and the rhyme never varies—each stanza runs 'abbacdcdee'.[2] Donne's poems were known to be metaphysical with jagged rhythms, dramatic monologues, playful intelligence, and startling images.[1] The poem personifies the sun.

"The Sun Rising" is one of Donne's best-known works.

Summary

Lying in bed with his lover, the speaker chides the rising sun, calling it a “busy old fool,” and asking why it must bother them through windows and curtains. Love is not subject to season or to time, he says, and he admonishes the sun—the “Saucy pedantic wretch”—to go and bother late schoolboys and sour apprentices, to tell the court-huntsmen that the King will ride, and to call the country ants to their harvesting.

Why should the sun think that his beams are strong? The speaker says that he could eclipse them simply by closing his eyes, except that he does not want to lose sight of his beloved for even an instant. He asks the sun—if the sun’s eyes have not been blinded by his lover’s eyes—to tell him by late tomorrow whether the treasures of India are in the same place they occupied yesterday or if they are now in bed with the speaker. He says that if the sun asks about the kings he shined on yesterday, he will learn that they all lie in bed with the speaker.

The speaker explains this claim by saying that his beloved is like every country in the world, and he is like every king; nothing else is real. Princes simply play at having countries; compared to what he has, all honor is mimicry and all wealth is alchemy. The sun, the speaker says, is half as happy as he and his lover are, for the fact that the world is contracted into their bed makes the sun’s job much easier—in its old age, it desires ease, and now all it has to do is shine on their bed and it shines on the whole world. “This bed thy centre is,” the speaker tells the sun, “these walls, thy sphere.”

Form

The three regular stanzas of “The Sun Rising” are each ten lines long and follow a line-stress pattern of 4255445555—lines one, five, and six are metered in iambic tetrameter, line two is in dimeter, and lines three, four, and seven through ten are in pentameter. The rhyme scheme in each stanza is ABBACDCDEE.

Commentary

One of Donne's most charming and successful metaphysical love poems, "The Sun Rising" is built around a few hyperbolic assertions—first, that the sun is conscious and has the watchful personality of an old busybody; second, that love, as the speaker puts it, "no season knows, nor clime, / Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time"; third, that the speaker's love affair is so important to the universe that kings and princes simply copy it, that the world is literally contained within their bedroom. Of course, each of these assertions simply describes figuratively a state of feeling—to the wakeful lover, the rising sun does seem like an intruder, irrelevant to the operations of love; to the man in love, the bedroom can seem to enclose all the matters in the world. The inspiration of this poem is to pretend that each of these subjective states of feeling is an objective truth.

Accordingly, Donne endows his speaker with language implying that what goes on in his head is primary over the world outside it; for instance, in the second stanza, the speaker tells the sun that it is not so powerful, since the speaker can cause an eclipse simply by closing his eyes. This kind of heedless, joyful arrogance is perfectly tuned to the consciousness of a new lover, and the speaker appropriately claims to have all the world's riches in his bed (India, he says, is not where the sun left it; it is in bed with him). The speaker captures the essence of his feeling in the final stanza, when, after taking pity on the sun and deciding to ease the burdens of his old age, he declares "Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere."

SETTING OF THE SUN RISING-

The poem is set in the rhythm of natural speech in the form of a one sided conversation between the speaker and the personified sun.

POETIC DEVICES IN THE SUN RISING-

PERSONIFICATION-

"Busy old fool", the sun here has been personified, also the use of the word "thou" as a means to address the sun is also indicative of the personification.

ALLITERATION-

"I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink"

REPITITION-

"Through windows, and through curtains call on us?"

TONE OF THE SUN RISING-

The tone of the poem is that of a natural speech mixed with emotions of anger, fascination, intrigue and most of all, love.

CONCLUSION-

“The Sun Rising” reminds the readers, in the most extraordinary way, that the strength of love defeats anything and everything, and that love is not subject to any universal law, it does not follow any rule, the beauty of love and the lovers’ emotions lie in the notion of independence.