

USAGE OF THE FLORA IN THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH POETRY

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Abstract: *In literature, flowers often represent emotions, beauty and its symbolic meaning can take on new depths beyond the silky texture of the flower or its fragrance. The pain often accompanying love, found in the bloom's thorns, can express the dual nature of love and other expressions. As time passed, poets expressed their ideas via flora in various ways. This article focuses on how the some representatives of this early period's poetry used this character in their poems and analyse them carefully by giving some examples.*

Keywords: *language of flowers, early modern period, trees, flowers, characters of protagonist, symbolic meanings.*

INTRODUCTION

For many centuries flora has adorned not only the earliest poetry, but also modern ones. It became increasingly entwined with nature, love, human character, even legends and religious symbolism. The language of flowers is subtle and mostly secret language which are mostly used in Early modern period. In literature, the colour, number, placement and cut of the flower all have an influence upon its intended meaning. A cipher hidden in a bouquet of flowers could pass by many unnoticed, but to someone with the decoder, a covert message communicated in plain sight. The flowers are used by many poets, in order to clarify their ideas by some literary devices such as metaphor, personification and etc. These professionally usages can be seen mostly, the poems of the famous poets like Michael Drayton and Edmund Spenser. A rose is never just simply a rose in the hands of these poets; a rose can mean anything from appreciation and respect to embarrassment and humility to deceitful desire , passion of love or appearance and character of humans. They particularly converge different flowers together while giving descriptions.

ANALYSIS

During the Early modern English period Edmund Spenser was known to have a keen interest in flowers and loved to use them within his poems. One of them is his Sonnet of the Amoretti is about the desire he feels about his lover, when he begins to kiss her, he describes the aromas coming from her different parts of her body, saying “Me seemed I smelt a garden of sweet flowers: that dainty odours from them threw around”. In this line “Her lips did smell like unto Gillyflowers, her ruddy cheeks, like unto Roses red”, the poet describes her lips are like gilliflowers, another name for the carnation, thus means pride and beauty; and her cheeks are like red roses representing love and respect. “Her snowy brows like budded Bellamoures” in this line bellamoures, a flower which named after one of Spenser's own characters in the Faerie Queen and emphasize a ‘fair lover’. “ Her lovely eyes like Pinks but newly spread, Her goodly bosom like a Strawberry bed”: pinks are again flower carnation; and her ‘goodly bosom’ like strawberries which shows perfection as they are considered as having ‘perfume with the bud of the sweetest flowers, delights the eye, the taste and the smell. But in the next line he describes his lover neck as a columbine flower which represents foolishness and desertion. “Her breasts like lilies, ere their leaves be shed” in this line Spenser returns to the core theme by describing his beloved's breasts like lilies which mean purity and beauty, considering their mythical origin of coming from Hera's own breast. The last three lines “her nipples like young blossomed lessemynes, Such fragrant flowers doe give most odorous smell, but her sweet odour did them all exce” say the lover's nipples are like jessemynes, another name for the jasmine flower known to its potent perfume. It is known that the author is describing the smell of the various parts of his beloved, in the flowers that he chooses to label the smell, he ends up showing characteristics along with those smells, thus truly describing her personality more than just her face. She is proud and beautiful or takes pride in her beauty (gilliflower/carnation), she loves and respects her lover (red rose) and is portrayed as a ‘fair lover’ (bellamoure). She is in the possession of a perfect bosom (strawberry) with white breasts (lily) and elegant nipples (jessemyne); however the use of the columbine within this poem, irrelevant of which body part it describes, does not fit in with the sentiment of the remaining flowers; a neck like a bunch of columbines is puzzling.

When it comes to Drayton, he not only use flora for lover, but also he describes other personalities like warriors with different plants. For example, his Stanza 6 of “Nymphal V” represents the emotions felt by the conqueror. The first floral symbol appears in the third line, “the laurel onely to adorne”;

this indicates that the warrior feels glory and victory. The second symbol appears in the ninth line, “most worthy of the oken wreath”; the oak tree represents nobility and bravery. The third symbol appearing in the twenty-second line, “the olive wreath possesses”; the olive tree means peace and security. Author describes him like that because when protagonist come, people feel themselves secured. The fourth floral symbol appears in the tenth line, “the lover with the myrtle sprays”; myrtle is synonymous with flower Aphrodite symbolize love and beauty. To combine all these floral symbols, it can be argued that in this poem, it appears that the focus is about a well-seasoned warrior, passionate in his craft and revels in the nature of war and battle.

In his Stanza 9, Drayton tries to create language of flowers as much as he can and find common link between their meanings. The first line “Here Damaske Roses, white and red” refers to not just roses, but red and white damask roses; the combination of red and white roses can signify unity or conflict between people. Moreover, roses like Damask mostly describes the fragrance of love and specific love which needs petals of both white and red roses. “Amongst these Roses in a row, Next I place Pinks in plenty” in this lines Drayton use pinks which are another name of flower carnation representing pride and beauty of his lover. Next line “These double Daysyes then for show” means that his lover is innocent like daisy flowers. He says that his dreams of her are quite pleasant in the sentence “The pretty Pansy then Ile tye”(pensy flower). Then he clarifies his emotions like faithfulness , pensiveness by using flowers like violet and cowslip. “The pleasant Primrose downe Ile prick” by this line he is going to be like primrose and being always by her side throughout the stages of her life. The poem imitate his devotion to flower honeysuckle and follow her being as the marigold which a flower follows the sun. The flower lily means chastity and virtue, so he hope that his lover has these characters “The Lilly and the Flower delice, For colour much contenting”. So he describes the characters with flowers which he doesn't want that his lover has in these lines: “The Daffodil most dainty is To match with these in meetnesse; The Columbyne compar'd to this”. Daffodil represents selflove, columbine means foolishness. “To place them in their order: Sweet-Williams, Campions, Sops-in-Wine”: The final three flowers, sweet-williams, champions and sops-in-wine, send the original message of love. Sweet-Williams for ‘sweet smiles that displays all its beauty and delicacy’; champions for ‘youthful love’ and can also symbolise ‘falling victim’ to love; and sops-in-wine are yet another name for the carnation and therefore a triple dose of love and pride. Thus it can be understood that

the poet is telling us about the woman in his dreams, through using a lot of flowers. The author uses so many flowers in order to show how his lover should be and he hope that he can find this kind of woman.

DISCUSSION

The majority of the flowers used in the selected poems of Drayton and Spenser do, mostly, match with the opinions and context intended in the poem, the youthfulness of campions, the pensiveness of cowslips, the faithfulness of violet, these all describe positive romantic feelings and characters of their beloved one. They paint a beautiful picture, not only in perfume, but in characteristics as well. When putting emphasis on the two metaphors of the columbine and daffodil, the flowers used in these poems illustrate some important characteristics, such as fidelity, beauty and perfect excellence, to be found in the pursuit of a female companion; it could be considered that with these poems, both Drayton and Spenser are describing their perfect woman, who is suitable for the role of lover, if not wife. It is possible then that the usage of the columbine and daffodil demonstrates the fact that no one, even the object of their affections, are perfect in every sense. As the poets have said that this should not prevent the realization of such feelings and we should all learn that accept people the way they are, flaws and all.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is that in The Early English poetry not only flowers, but also various trees conveyed different meanings. From early periods till now this flora is second to none aid for poets which comes in handy in giving voice to untold emotions. As above analysis, one can understand that without doubt flora can symbolize various human character, emotions and ,even, their attitudes, physical actions with metaphorical meanings.

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