

A Valediction Of My Name In The Window – John Donne – Analysis

John Donne, the greatest of metaphysical poets with a sensual and strong style was against the easy flowing poetry persistent in the Elizabethan age. Donne was especially a master in the use of vibrant language and metaphors that are strong and unique. A Valediction of my name in the window is such a representative of the Donne's inventiveness consisting of ironies, paradoxes, abrupt openings, etc. Above all, the poem consists of a strange harmony that makes the reader ignore the faults in rhythm and submerge them into a world of metaphysical conceits, wit and metaphors.

The poem A Valediction of my name in the window is from one of the major works of John Donne – **Songs and Sonnets**. The poem consists of eleven verses/stanzas with six lines each with the rhyme scheme of ABABCC. It has less of a wit when compared to his other poems of the 'Valediction' series such as "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" and "A Valediction: Of the Booke", but it has a serious account of love.

I

The poet etches his name on a glass with a hard object and believes that his name will be as firm as the object (glass) itself. He believes that the name will gain more value by the seeing of his lover and brings its value higher than precious diamonds.

The idea of writing the name on the window is the poet's effort to keep his name forever remembered. This gesture marks his efforts to preserve his name eternally on the world and especially in the mind of his loved one (because they are parting, which will be revealed later).

II

The poet feels that the glass of the window is as honest as him and reflects truly the face of his lover. As the name is etched on it, the rules of a glass are changed and whenever she looks upon the window she will see his name (along with her reflection) resulting in the unification of the pair.

John Donne expresses his intensity of love by remarking that the powers of nature also cannot undo what a heart does to another. The powerful imagery sets the poet's name as an eternal memory and it will come to the fore whenever she looks at her reflection in the window. This suggests that there is some hidden intention for the poet to mention that it is the window that can make them one leaving to confusion about their current relationship.

III

The poet states that neither showers nor tempests can undo a single dash or point of his name on the window. He declares that he will be forever faithful as the name etched on the window and expects the same from his lover. He wants her to remain constant and take the example of his name to gain inspiration from it to remain honest and transparent.

John Donne through the lines indicates that the name is just not a name, but he is leaving some part of him so that she will be in his presence forever. As he does something as an act of true love, he expects her to be as obedient as him and remember his act through the name.

IV

The poet says that if the interpretation about a mere etching in the window is too robust and imaginative, then he asks her to keep the name intact as a memento of a death's head. This indicates that lovers are also mortal and he wants to consider the signature as his own anatomy.

After elaborately explaining the importance of the name in the window, the poet comes down to reality by stating that one might feel that the deep learning about the name is hard to understand. Death's head is a mischievous inclusion and at the same time a dark inclusion. It represents the sexual adventures of a couple and also the tradition of keeping or preserving the executed man's head as a memento.

V

The poet describes his lover as Paradise and emphasizes that all his souls belong to that Paradise, where he longs to cherish and grow. He compares his body to that of the house by comparing his bones to rafters, muscles, etc. to the tiles of the house.

John Donne reflects to the concept of Aristotelian doctrine, where the human beings are deemed to have three souls – the vegetative soul, the sensory (sensitive) soul and the immortal (rational) soul. Therefore, he uses the plural for 'soul', which enabled him to describe every aspect of his emotion through the Aristotelian concept. He compares the architecture of the house to his anatomy resembling that he wants to indicate that time can change the external appearance but it is the internal frame that marks a man.

VI

The poet believes that when the stars are in the ascendant, then the engravings like the one he has done will be blessed with righteous powers. The influences of the stars will further increase on the engravings as the stars reach to their supreme position.

VII

Further, the name was etched at a time where both love and grief were elevated to the highest level in the two. Therefore, the heavens will see to it that the flow of feelings will increase, especially love and grief. This helps her to be more loving and sadder at the same time. These two states make her what she is and she must accept her fate and be faithful to those states of minds. She is expected to mourn for the death of the poet every day until he returns.

VIII

The doubt of the poet, either due to parting or due to some revelations, is revealed clearly in this stanza. Whenever she open the window carelessly to gaze at a rival (suitor to the poet's lover) who is trying to win her heart, then the trembling name (trembling as the window is opened forcefully opened) will be alive and her actions will affect or offend the living spirit of the poet.

IX

The maid melted by the persuasion of the page of the rival and tempted by the offerings made by the rival laid a letter on her pillow. She even tries to pursue to encourage response and try to subdue the anger. In such case, when the lover feels thawed towards the rival, then the poet says that the name in the window will appear on the signature instead of the rival's and remind her of the love they shared together.

The name, once again, acts a powerful means to express the pain the poet is going through during the separation. During the times of parting, the lover hopes that the partner will stay forever faithful but as time flows he or she will think of the partner meeting someone else. This is represented by John Donne perfectly through the condition of the maid rather than showing doubt on his lover directly (which is not the case in the next stanza).

X

The poet says that when the persuasions become strong and she tries to perform any acts of treason by replying to the letters to the rival, then the name in the window will influence her mind to address it to the poet rather than the rival. Due to the influence she will write his address on the paper instead of his rival's according to the poet. Further, she will do it as an involuntary action indicating that the poet believes that both of them love each other intensely that every action they perform will remind each other.

XI

In the final stanza or verse of A Valediction of my name in the window the poet returns to reality and states that neither signature nor the glass are substantial to represent the firmness of their mighty love. He reveals that he is near death, meaning that they are ready to part and live separately which is the time when lovers forget about the true nature of love and the purity with which the heart shares the passion of each other. He asks her to consider all his words as murmuring of a man who is dying and explains that it is common for dying men to babble on their death bed. Therefore, at the end the poet reignites hope that all his doubts are mere babbling and show that he is truly admiring her.

John Donne through powerful metaphors and sublime subjects moves this poem to greater heights. There are many references from the Greek traditions to the planetary motions and they all fit to the argument of the poet. A Valediction of my name in the window is an ingenious poem with a lot of dramatic intensity, imagination and human love. All the efforts made by the poet are to regain the interest of his lover, which in a way is moving and lures the reader into understanding every line carefully. It is poetic masterpieces like these that have put John Donne as the leader of the metaphysical poets.