

## The Anti-Platonic love in the Sick Rose

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### Abstract

Plutonic love refers to a kind of love that has no relationship with the sexuality that is completely free of it. In Plato's dialogue the Symposium it has been examined that how love began and how it has evolved—both sexually and non-sexually. It has been discussed that two kinds of love are Vulgar Eros or earthly love and Divine Eros or divine love. In Wikipedia the extensive definitions have been summarized to show how they are completely different and how each treks its own way. Vulgar Eros is nothing but mere material attraction towards a beautiful body for physical pleasure and reproduction, which Plato does not agree. Divine Eros begins the journey from physical attraction i.e. attraction towards beautiful form or body but transcends gradually to love for Supreme Beauty. This paper also tries to shed light on the Anti-Platonic love that both Marvel and Blake have it done through symbols and other literary devices in the frame of their work.

**Keywords;** Love, Innocence, Imagination, Fancy, Reason, Experience, Corruption

### Discussion:

William Blake was a poet during 1757 to 1827. He didn't go to school but rather he stayed home and studied lots of books in literature as most of his time was dedicated to reading of Shakespeare's and Milton's works. He spent his life as a rebellion against orthodox Christianity and expressed his liberalism through revolt against the God of the Old Testament and dominion of abstract reason (Abjadian 211). As an English romantic poet he could pull away from age of Neo-Classism what is known as philosophical rationalism to exploit the romantic feeling and

even to intensify it to its flux. In Abjadian's book it has been cited that Grieson has named the movement "Rejection of old Forms;" it is a spiritual and philosophical movement in which words become symbols. (206) He revealed the philosophical and mystical undercurrents through his work. His poetry is characterized by simplicity and spontaneity. His poems reveal his belief in liberty and social equality in society and between the sexes.

His *'Songs of Innocence and Experience'* show the two contrary states of the Human soul. Blake was a mystic and visionary, but his thinking is sharp and independent. So his books are centered upon man's fall and the history of the fallen world. He was greatly influenced by French and American revolutions. Blake is sometimes considered a forerunner of the 19th century 'free love' movement. Here in his poem Blake uses an old poetic conceit like *carpe diem* to make the most of present pleasure.

In the poem *the Sick Rose* Blake talks about reality that in this world innocence may not go beyond but is destroyed by world of experience. In the part of poem it has been shown that innocence is almost always destroyed and even can be easily corrupted by the worm. Blake has done this with a very specific purpose, pointing out some words to accentuate them so that the reader pauses a little longer to interpret exactly what they each mean to the poem. The rose is earthly love with its potentialities of innocent fulfillment but the worm is the wicked instinct, possessive and predatory, batters on and corrupts earthly love (Pishkar 335).

In the first line of the poem he uses words like "rose" and "sick" till he somehow addresses the rose to be sick which shows a bleak and lurid statement of the real world. It also implies that the illness that has been imposed on the rose is not curable and can blemish her too. In the third line the poet goes in to the depth character of worm as a cunning man which slyly creates a world of darkness to attack the rose without her knowledge.

In the second stanza the anti-platonic love intensifies. The poet uses the words that show the negative aspect of love that has no purity in both the poem and real world. Words like “bed,” “joy” and “destroy” which do not comport literary with an actual flower, together with the sinister tone, and the intensity of the lyric speaker’s feeling, presses the reader to infer that the described object has a further range of suggested but unspecified reference (Abrams 395) which move slowly but stably toward highly sexualized direction. And according to Allison Rocheleau the worm has found the rose's bed and holds the thought of his dark secret love. Nothing good can come of a dark love that destroys life and causes a howling storm. This is the reason why the rose is so sick: the worm's dark love has destroyed it (2).

In this poem Blake wants to make us for real but variety of interpretations. One interpretation is that the rose by itself represents love and innocence the same as the platonic love without any indulgence and impurity, while worm shows nothing except for decay and corruption what is known as anti-platonic love. In another way the rose is eaten away by the worm and her life is both ravaged and devastated.

The poem also has religious interpretation that shows an earthy love what is known as anti-platonic love that destroys the purity of life. It is a slight stretch, but is worth noting because of the worm (snake) reference. The worm could represent the devil, while the rose could represent innocence of Eve, and the Garden of Eden. The devil corrupted Eve, and therefore ruined her life forever. She was cast away from God's perfect world because she sinned (Rocheleau 3).

The last but also a remarkable interpretation which shows the destructive earthy love is its existence between man and woman. Woman always in history were of second status and Blake as a man was a person who always wanted to be defensive against tyranny and saw the status of the woman in society as children who are oppressed. He even condemns the women and those as

the oppressed who have no revolutionary power to defend themselves. His implications of sexual imagery are discernible. The rose is a classic symbol of feminine beauty and love, but this beauty or love is being despoiled by agent of masculine sexuality: the worm, symbol of death, of decay and also of the phallus. In short Blake's poem is a vaguely disturbing parable of the death instinct, which is closely conjoined with sexual passion. The sharp juxtaposition of 'crimson joy' and 'destroy' suggests that Eros, unmitigated by high spiritual love is the agent of evil as well as of mortality (Guerin and et al 174) so the beautiful and lovable woman is sick because the man with his secret and false love tries to seduce and blemish her honor. It is a kind of disorderly and not completely mutual love that the man offers. The words "crimson joy" show a non-divine act or relation that Plato denies but by him they are to be considered as a sexual relationship between both sexes that are socially immoral. The woman is delighted and by half ashamed to accept. The other words like "flies in the night / in the howling storm" connote to the rose that has been assaulted against her wish. Her innocence and reason have been dominated by the world of experience and the margin of love has been broken by the light of impure love that is the Anti-platonic love penetrates their soul. This proves Blake's idea that love is not always a beautiful thing. The woman is slowly dying because of the dark love that the man has for her, and it seems that she will never realize it.

Conclusion:

In the *Symposium*, Plato presents the love of wisdom as the highest form of love and philosophy as a refinement of our sexual urges that leads us to desire wisdom over sex. That is, we do not seek wisdom by first suppressing sexual desire and other distractions but rather by refining that desire and training it on a higher purpose(Sparknotes). Blake also showed in his poem that love is not always beautiful if it is not refined. Innocence also doesn't take too long because as

Blake believes it must go through another stage, which it is called experience. This stage is not safe and is done through some sort of hurt which in the poem is Anti-Platonic. Moreover; love and passion which for romantic poets have positive interpretation sometimes go in wrong directions or at least never meet right expectations. Finally not only does the poem show the world of imagination and fantasy but also the world of real which love can be destructive too and can enforce its energy on a wrong way that is not according to Plato's approach about love of wisdom.

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