

Havisham Essay

Carol Ann Duffy's "Havisham" is a dramatic monologue which gives voice to one of Charles Dickens most famous and eccentric characters, Miss Havisham. After being abandoned at the altar, Miss Havisham spends years filled with rage and hatred for not only her former fiancé but for all men. The title of the poem "Havisham" draws the reader's attention to her unmarried title and her status as a spinster. The poem is extremely thought provoking as it shows the power of love and how quickly that love can turn into hate. The theme of the corrosive nature of hatred on the human psyche is emphasised as Miss Havisham has been left in the past and her mental state has deteriorated.

The first line in Havisham immediately introduces the source of the characters emotions of hate and love. "Beloved sweetheart bastard". The poet makes use of an oxymoron to indicate her emotions for her previous fiancé changing from love to hate. The minor sentence emphasises this and shows the short space of time from which her love turned into hate. Duffy also uses bilabial alliteration to accentuate Miss Havisham's hate for her fiancé. The grudge she holds has made her go insane and this is shown in the structure of the poem. The poem consists of 4 unrhymed stanzas each which lack rhyme but include plenty of enjambment. The disordered structure of the poem replicates her wild and illogical thoughts. She has mentally broken down and has been left in the past and is always thinking about him. The corrosive to her psyche as she is unable to progress with her life and is a constant state of depression, hate and love.

Havisham feels intense hatred for the man who abandoned her at the altar in stanza 1 and this hate is eating away at her. She expresses this hate when she says

Not a day since then
I haven't wished him dead"

She is stuck in the moment of her pain when she was so brutally abandoned. This is an all-consuming hate and is mentally damaging. The fact that she wants her fiancé to die indicates the violence entwined with her hatred. This really shows the immense fury and rage bottled up inside her and emphasises the corrosiveness of hate on the human psyche. Her devotion to this hate is shown in the next line

"Prayed for it so hard I've dark green pebbles for eyes"

Duffy makes use of assonance on "hard" and "dark" which intensifies her praying and makes it seem more sinister. She is praying for the harm of her fiancé as she is jealous of his lack of care for their relationship. This is emphasised as the colour green is generally associated with jealousy. A metaphor is also used here as pebbles have a coldness and hardness about them and this shows that her eyes are cold and unforgiving. All her joy and warmth has been taken away from her and all that is left is cold dark shell of her previous self, clearly showing the extremely corrosive nature of hate and rage.