

The nature of love in sonnets

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Write an essay on the nature of love as it is represented in two sonnets from the reader. Why do you think the sonnet form lends itself to talking about love? During the 13th century, literature was mainly focused on love. It is evident in Spenser's and Shakespeare's sonnets because they believed in true love. Sonnets were created as a way to express feelings about life issues including love put into words. This essay talks about how the sonnet form lends itself talking about love.

It goes on a brief explanation of what a sonnet is; from where it originated from, and yet a detailed understanding of sonnet forms. I also talk about two sonnets extracted from the reader - (sonnet 2 William Shakespeare, 1609) and (- Amoretti 78 Edmund Spenser, 1595) this essay also explains why they loved writing sonnets and to whom it was dedicated to. The sonnet comes from the Italian word, "sonnetto" which means "little song". Originally in the thirteenth century, sonnets were first sung in Italian courtyards expressing romantic love.

Around the 1200's, they were written by Dante and Tasso in Italy, followed by Du Bellay and Ronsard in France before it was introduced and translated in English by Thomas Wyatt in the early 16th century. Basically, the traditional subject of the sonnet has primarily been love because they were written to express feelings of love. Famous writers such as Shakespeare, Petrarch and Edmund wrote their greatest sonnets about love. Why? Because they wanted to impress their mistresses with their great poetic skills.

Back in that time, sonnets were used as a statement of their deepest feelings and love was a big part of them. The sonnet is a lyrical poem; it

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consists of fourteen lines. It has a regular pattern of rhyme called a rhyme scheme and has a specific structure called the iambic pentameter, a term for poem patterns in which each line has 10 syllables beginning with an unstressed syllable and a stressed syllable followed by another pair of unstressed and stressed syllables until there are five pairs of syllables. There are three major types of sonnets I will be talking about and they are as different from each other.

The first type is called the Petrarchan sonnet also known as the Italian sonnet was created by a Sicilian poet Giacomo da Lentini but was named after Francesco Petrarch because he mastered sonnets perfectly in the 14th century better than Giacomo himself. He fell in love with a young woman he saw at the church. Laura, whose name he was to immortalize in his sonnets, inspired him to write "the Canzoniere" a collection of love poems consisting of 365 sonnets about her, his true love. Petrarch wrote his sonnets about love.

It was the first sonnet form to be written in the English language. The pattern of this sonnet is normally divided into two parts: the octave and the sestet. The octave is the first eight lines that have two quatrains and where the theme or problem is described which have the rhyming scheme of ABAB ABAB; on the other hand, the sestet is what solves the problem normally is the last six lines and it has three possibilities such as CDECDE or CDCDCD or CDCDCD. It usually has a pause between the octave and the sestet called the turn or "Volta" often being the 9th line.

The second type of sonnet, the Shakespearean also known as the English sonnet was developed by the Earl of Surrey in the 16th century. It was

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named after William Shakespeare because he was the first to write in this form composing great sonnets. He wrote 154 sonnets and most of them were related about love. The Shakespearean sonnet is known to be very easy and simple to write; it is made up of three quatrains and a couplet at the end written in the iambic pentameter with the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, no wonder it is easy to remember and also follows the alphabetic order.

What makes it different from other sonnet forms, is that it is written and printed without a pause in-between the lines. In this type of sonnet, the rhyming lines in each stanza are the first and third and the second and fourth. In the couplet ending, both lines rhyme and follow the same rhyming pattern in all of his sonnets. Shakespeare's love sonnets are indeed very personal addressing a lot of issues in life. It was believed that he wrote some of his sonnets for a young man which he describes beautiful; some thought if he was homosexual. Well that is something we might never know.

Love for Shakespeare was beautiful; he was passionate about love and the sonnet form was a way for him to express his feelings. Through them, he was able to pass personal messages about life issues including, love. How hard it is to mention to whom his sonnets were dedicated to; some say his first 126 were for his love of a young man that questioned many of his sexuality. Of course there was a possibility that he cheated on his wife, Anne Hathaway and wrote some of his sonnets about the women he had his affairs with. Let's have a look in his sonnet 20 from the reader (William Shakespeare 1564-1616 from sonnets): it is known to be one of the best of his 154 sonnets. It has caused a lot of confusion mainly because it shows a deep love for

another man describing him with womanly features - a beautiful looking man. This man, who he could have created has earned Shakespeare's love, though he points out in the last lines " Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure" that it is a spiritual and not a physical love. " Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion", can such a man-woman exist? This master-mistress is meant for women by the nature's " application" of the male genital organs.

When he says " An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling" clearly shows that he thinks men are more honest and intelligent than women. It also suggests that a person's ability is tied in with their appearance, and can even suggest that a person having both manly and womanly features is the most beautiful to him . According to my readings this sonnet is proof of Shakespeare's homosexuality; others believe he just wanted to explain the universal nature of love. Now on with the third and last sonnet form, the Spenserian sonnet, named after Edmund Spenser one of the greatest poet in the English literature.

Well, it is similar to the Shakespearean sonnet form with three quatrains and a couplet, written in iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. Some think that this type of form is quite difficult to understand especially new students as it is a mixed of the Petrarchan and the Shakespearean form that creates a stronger link between quatrains, and in a way of a more song-like tone. This fits since the word sonnet means " Little Song" in Italian. Spenser is well-known for " Amoretti", a collection of love sonnets he wrote for his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle after their marriage.

In his sonnets, Spenser talks about the love he has for his wife and what she means to him. One good example is the sonnet 78 from the Amoretti sonnets: Lackyng my love I go from place to place, Lyke a young fawne that late hath lost the hynd: and seeke each where, where last I sawe her face,beholds her selfe in me (Amoretti 78, Edmund Spenser, 1595) In Sonnet 78 (amoretti 78 Edmund Spenser), he feels a separation from his fiancée deeply, wandering “ from place to place, lyke a young fawne that late hath lost the hynd” (lines 1-2).

He suffers over her departure and spends his time going to the places they spent time together: “ And seeke each where, where last I sawe her face” looks at how much she reminds him of her presence, and instead to turn his eyes inward, that he might “ Behold her selfe in mee” (line 14). Spenser's sonnets detail the admiration and the agonizing aspects of love. He uses very complex words in this sonnet maybe intending to show his writing skills or just the language he used in his sonnets. What would our lives be without love? Which would be their meaning?

Without friendship, love experiences, would it be worthwhile to live? The language of love can be expressed in so many ways, through talking, through words maybe that's why sonnets were created for; sonneteers wanted to impress their great writing skills and love was the best topic in the sonnet. Nowadays the sonnet is rather sung through songs, most songs you listen to is about love, people may not notice it but my opinion is sonnets are a beautiful way to communicate to the reader and will live forever. As you

can see, sonnets have played a vital part of the early renaissance in literature.

They have been used to talk about specific topic such as religion, politics but were mainly focused on love because it was firstly written about love. Sonnets are considered to be love poems even though afterwards some other writers wrote about their choice of topic. Shakespeare and Spenser were passionate about love and even received love; writing sonnets was a way for them to express their unattained feelings and to immortalize their great work through the sonnet which will live on onto many generations. They thought of love being something beautiful and magical. 1610 words