

Critical analysis of william Shakespeares sonnet 116 essay sample

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The purpose of this essay is to critically analyse William Shakespeare's Sonnet #116. Throughout this essay I will be referring often to text of the poem William Shakespeare's " Sonnet 116" exploits conventional sonneteering (Kerrigan , 1986, 1995: 11) to speak of his perception and judgement of love. The sonnets structure, three quatrains and a couplet echoes the poets' content further emphasizing his notion that true love is constant. The tone of the poem expresses great amounts of final conviction, asserting the poets beliefs that he indeed knows what love is and what it is not. His ingenious use of metaphors and poetic features convey his realistic declaration that true love weathers all storms.

The first quatrain introduces the subject of the poem ' True Love'. The speaker informs the audience, true love is not how others see it or is it the establishments view. Love does not depend on time, or place, on beliefs, or the sex of the lovers. Love does not change or cease just because we notice our beloved has changed nor can it be taken away by death or severed by separation. The language used in the first two lines of the poem: Let me not to the marriage of true minds/ Admit impediments... focuses our ears on the first metaphor of this sonnet ' marriage' drawing our attention to Christian marriage services by echoing The Solemnization of Marriage from " The Book of Common Prayer" (online: 2003, 10 April: 8) " that if either of you know any impediment, why ye may not be lawfully joined together in Matrimony, ye do now confess it". The ceremony is specifically designed to marry two people for all the right reasons. In most cultures it is taboo to marry a close relative, or someone of the same sex.

However, Shakespeare refers to this union of matrimony to 'the marriage of true minds' proposing a spiritual union between two souls whose bond forms a mutual appreciation and tolerance for one and other. Soul mates whose love exists deeper than the physical union of two bodies and are not affected by the obstacles, which states impose to prevent the union of marriage.

Platonic love, which exists between two friends or relatives who are significant and cherished in the lives of one and other. Love is the essence of this poem. The symmetry of syntax and sound patterns within the final three lines of the quatrain: Love is not love / which alters when it alteration finds / Or bends with the remover to remove, creates a pleasant echo of the 'o' sound enhancing the feelings of love. The use of alliteration in the opening line emphasizes that the persona would not stand in the way of true love. So what is true love? Shakespeare's use of negative words may well at the end of this quatrain place one on the defensive, however his clever use of syntax and imagery leave us not on the defensive but instead leave one to ponder the question.

The second quatrain has the speaker virtually reprimanding the audience, hitting them with his most strongest and memorable imagery: I'll tell you what true love is. True Love is immoveable, its steadfast, its strong. No jurisdiction can place judgement to declare one is truly in love. Love needs to be experienced; it needs to survive any storm. Love is an ever-fixed mark / That looks on tempests and never shaken' Imagine any prominent land mark like the pyramids of Egypt or the spires of coastal churches which were used as beacons to guide a ship at sea, which are not effected by the ruthlessness

or severity of thunderstorms and hurricanes but stay fixed to guide the beaten vessel. True Love will not be shaken by the ' storms' which couples, families or friends encounter daily.

Financial pressures, work pressures, arguments that arise through differences in opinions or conflicts of interest, pressures which at times appear so immense that it feels like nothing, will see them through. True Love will not succumb to these impediments. True Love has unshakeable foundations which brotherhoods and marriages can be built on. It will guide loved ones like the North Star guides lost boats at sea. It will help loved ones assess their struggles and discover how they can surmount these barriers to continue with their journey together. The poet claims we may be able to measure love to some degree but loves true worth is unknown we don't fully understand it. What makes us forgive? What makes us be wise to our differences? What makes us adore and cherish?

What makes us want to spend the rest of our lives with one another? True Love is the only answer. You cannot fight true love no matter how hard you try. Jane Austin showed through her characters Elizabeth and Darcy in the Pride and Prejudice that true love is a force that can be conquered even under the most difficult circumstances. Shakespeare's skilful use of metaphors and nautical references throughout this quatrain attributes love to being like a sea. One can get lost in it, tossed around in it and in the most severe cases one may even be killed. On the contrary love can be peaceful, enjoyable and a sanctuary from the rest of the world.

The third quatrain intensifies the poet's argument declaring love is the only thing that can stand up to time. Shakespeare has personified love and time in this quatrain. By personifying time he has created a tyrant who possesses a major threat to love. The harsh diction chosen in lines nine and ten exaggerates the power time has on beauty and youth, creating the image of a burly grandfather clock hacking at a flourishing harvest so it will no longer bask in the warmth of the sun. The speaker is declaring that love will stand up to time it will not be made a joke of. Love will not recoil as time ages the loved ones appearance or alter when personal growth changes the beloved's character. Love will endure any test time puts to it. Love cannot be measured by hours or weeks even when life's judgement day has come ("the edge of doom"). This brings me back to the marriage vows taken from "The Book of Common Prayer"(online: 2003, 10 April: 8): 'Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live? These vows have one pledge that they will love each other until they are parted by death but Shakespeare is proclaiming that True Love will not be told when it will stop, it is constant it has no limits.

In the couplet and as a final attempt to convince the audience that he indeed knows exactly what true love is Shakespeare has the speaker present himself to the audience as a poet. Declaring that since I have written of True Love, then what I assert must be true love. He testifies on his craft like a defendant in a court of law ('if this be error and upon me proved'). For if the audience (the jury) rejects his claim that love is constant and accept that

impediments do in fact change the way one loves, than he has misjudged love and surrenders anything that he has ever written. For if a poet, a sonneteer who is an expert in their craft can be proven to be wrong than no man has truly ever loved. Often we claim that if an expert in a certain field is unable accomplish a task given to them, than there is no chance of anybody else being able to accomplish it either.

Shakespeare is an expert sonnet writer. He is able to create his sonnets to sound biographical. If this sonnet is an account of his true feelings about love and the elements that are needed to shape a loving relationship, than they do not comply with the conventional ideas of love of his time. Marriages in Shakespeare time were often arranged by parents to substantiate eminence or trade. A man might seek a wife to give him status or perhaps to legitimate an affair that may produce an heir. Often it was a women's dowry not her love that was the prize most sought by suitors. Since Shakespeare was married he could relate to the conventional ideas of marriage but since he was removed from his wife he may also have experienced another form of devotion, which asserts his final conviction that true love weathers all storms.

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