

Specific reference
should be made
essay



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Shakespeare's Sonnet 116 is a typical Shakespearian sonnet. It was written in the sixteenth century love poem, which presents the poet's view of true love in three quatrains and an affirmation of his belief in a concluding rhyming couplet. This poem depicts the unwavering nature of true love.

The speaker tells us that real love cannot be tarnished or destroyed by time, and is everlasting. In the opening lines, the speaker makes this clear. He tells us that true love is the "marriage of true minds". He tells us that there can be no impediment to true love and that nothing can dissolve its strength or change its innate quality, "...

Love is not Love, Which alters when it alteration finds, Or bends with the remover to remove." Shakespeare is trying to explain to us that, in his opinion, true love cannot be affected by outside circumstances. It would seem that real love cannot change over time, and can never be taken away, even if one of the partners dies. In the next quatrain of the poem, the speaker begins to tell us what love "is" by telling us enthusiastically "Oh no! it is an ever-fixed mark.

That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wandering bark" Shakespeare is trying to make us see that no matter what pressure true love is under it will not change. He shrewdly uses the metaphor for love as the North Star and the lovers as the wandering bark being tossed by life's experience. The North Star is the constant guide for seafarers, guiding them through the darkest of nights to their homes and never faltering from its purpose. In the same way true love will keep lovers on the path to togetherness. By using this metaphor, Shakespeare makes the poem more

relevant to the Elizabethan reader, familiar with the importance of a ship at sea being guided home to a safe harbour.

The North Star lead sailors in their “ barks” out of the tempests they faced, as true love leads a couple out of any difficulties they have in their relationship. In the last quatrain, Shakespeare concentrates on the ever-present issue of Time harming Love. He vehemently denies that Love can be destroyed by Time. Shakespeare personifies both Love and Time in order to emphasize this battle or struggle between the two, reasserting that Love cannot be betrayed by Time, “ Love’s not Time’s fool” Love is not ensnared by time, it cannot fade over time, and it is eternal.

The sensation of love cannot be affected by the mere degradation of our physical selves. Shakespeare compares time to the grim reaper, which is fabled to appear to people who are about to die, and carry them to the afterlife. This being is always said to have a sickle, which is a tool for cutting corn.”...

rosy lips and cheeksWithin his bending sickle’s compass come” Shakespeare uses enjambment effectively here, to run one line into the other, so that we follow the sweeping action of the sickle as it cuts down youth inexorably. He tells us that we must place our faith in timeless love, “ Love alters not within his brief hours and weeks, But bears it out even to the edge of doom.” Here the speaker is telling us that true love will continue right until the end of the world. In the final couplet, we are told that this perception of love must be a certainty.

Shakespeare tells us that if he is wrong about this, then no man has ever loved, and he has not written this poem, further emphasizing the fact that he is right about love,” If this be error, and upon me proved, I never writ, nor no man ever loved” In Andrew Marvell’s poem “ To His Coy Mistress”, the persona mocks the fourteenth century literary convention of courtly love. Courtly love was seen to be the means by which a chivalrous lover would pledge love and honour to his beloved in an idealized relationship where the love was left unrequited. The man would write poems for his rather distant beloved, often married to someone else and praise physical features with lavish exaggeration. The man would compliment her eyes, her rosy cheeks, her lips, and her breasts for she was subject of his flattery. In this poem, the speaker is using this well-known literary device to seduce his shy mistress because he wants her to make love with him at the present moment.

She apparently is not giving into his undoubted charm. Marvell himself seems to be at a distance from the poem, looking in on another man’s fascination with this beautiful woman, as the poem is called “ To His Coy Mistress”. The speaker begins by telling his “ mistress” that if he had all the time in the world he would be more than pleased to spend all eternity courting her in the proper formal manner,” Had we but the world enough, and time, This coyness, Lady, were no crime.” Marvell tells his beloved that he would spend time with her anywhere in the world, from the exotic banks of the “ Indian Ganges” to the humble locality of the “ Humber”, if only he had the time to spare.

Marvell uses Biblical references to emphasize the vast expanse of time he would take to pine for her. He refers to the Flood, which occurs in the Old

Testament of the Bible, the point of time when he would begin his courtship, and The Conversion of the Jews, in the Bible's New Testament when she might deign to agree to his request."... I wouldLove you ten years before the Flood, And you should, if you please, refuseTill the conversion of the Jews"

Our speaker makes a subtle hint that his growing passion is worth noting.

The double entendre would not be lost on an amused Elizabethan audience," My vegetable love should growVaster than empires, and more slow" He reassures his reluctant mistress that he would be prepared to spend much time gazing at her every beautiful feature," An hundred years should go to praise, Thine eyes and on thy forehead gaze; Two hundred to adore each breast; But thirty thousand to the rest" He is deliberately mocking at the literary convention of courtly love here. Such hyperbole is amusing and cannot be taken seriously. Marvell is deeply complimentary to his beloved and tells her she deserves much praise," For, Lady, you deserve this state" However he completely undercuts this statement by saying," Nor would I love at a lower rate" This brings to mind money, and it makes it seem as if their love is some sort of transaction between the two. In the second stanza of the poem, the urgency of our young lover's ardour increases. His views are in complete contradiction of to those of Shakespeare in Sonnet 116. There is no mention of eternal love in Marvell's poem.

He tells his mistress they must make love now, or it will be too late; she will have grown old and he may not find her desirable object of his love anymore. He compares Time to a mythological charioteer, Phoebus, who sweeps across the sky each day as the Sun God. Time will take away her beauty and with it youthful love," Time's winged chariot hurrying near; And

yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity. Thy beauty shall no longer be found”
The eternity of Shakespeare’s poem is not a “ desert” but Marvell is emphasizing the images of death into his poem. He tells his mistress that if they are not to be together now, it may never happen,”
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound, My echoing song: then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity, And you quaint honour turn to dust, And into ashes my lust”
According to the speaker, there is no point in preserving virginity in a cold grave.

These distressing images are designed to convince his lover to act for the present and enjoy the pleasure she will receive from doing so,”
The grave’s a fine and private place, But none, I think, there do embrace.”
In the final stanza, Marvell puts emphasis on acting now. He knows they both have the same desires, and brings his argument to a conclusion. He highlights his ‘ Lady’s’ perfection and claims she is ready for his love,”
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew, And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires”
He tells his mistress of his desires, comparing the two of them to “ amorous birds of prey”.

This brings to mind the destructive power of eagles and hawks, who ravage their prey in the lust for gratification
He conceals the sexual act thinly in another funny double entendre,”
Let us roll up all our strength and all Our sweetness into one ball, And tear our pleasures with rough strife, Through the iron gates of life.”
Marvell superbly ends his poem with another witty remark. He tells his subject that although they cannot defeat time and make it stand still, they can make it fly, enjoying pleasure as they do so,”
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run”
As you

can see, these two poems take completely different views to the theme of love and the use of the genre of love poetry in very different ways.

Shakespeare looks at true love and its everlasting nature in his poem, telling us love will endure, whereas Marvell upends the tradition of courtly love to argue the case for instant gratification of sexual desires.

Both poets explore the theme of love in completely different ways, and offer the reader an engaging view of both.