

Compare and
contrast george
herbert's 'love' with
donne's 'holy sonnet'
essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The very opening word of John Donne's "Death be not proud" is "Death", he is directly challenging death, whereas Herbert's first word is "Love". This creates a binary opposition as the two words are complete opposites. There is also a clear difference in the rhyming schemes. John Donne uses Petrarchan sonnet as it is the normal conventional scheme. This conveys Donne's defiant and determined attitude as he knows exactly what he wants and how he feels. This is shown through the imperative Donne uses in the opening line "Death be not proud".

Also we see his boldness and defiant tone when he uses strong stresses at the beginning "mighty" and "die". As opposed to Herbert who uses the simplistic 'a, b, a, b' rhyming scheme portraying his anxiety of what he feels. We see his insecurity when he says "yet my soul drew back". When using the conjunction "yet" we see his uncertainty of his own feelings. Donne scarcely uses any Latinate words; he uses more Anglo-Saxon language. He also uses more colloquial, monosyllabic words.

As opposed to Herbert's "love" that seems to be in more of a sophisticated context. We also notice how "Love" creates a more intimate feel; this is depicted through the length alternating and by the three stanzas as opposed to the Donne's one stanza sonnet and also as the poem is dialog between two people. Also we see the intimacy as it is an extremely visual and dramatically illustrated poem especially in the first stanza. Donne later begins to pity "Death" as he uses the adjective "poor" to describe death. Once Donne has said this we see that the tension disappears and he relaxes as he starts to use imagery. Paradox Donne and Herbert share similar attitudes.

We see this portrayed in the way that both men use abstract nouns "Death" and "love" two powerful entities that can not be proved. We see Agape (unconditional love) through Herbert's "love" via the semantic field of religion. This is clear to see when he uses the nouns "Soul" and "sin". The very opening line of "love" suggests Herbert is talking to Jesus "Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back". Throughout the poem we notice many religious connotations. We see a clear reference to Genesis in the Old Testament, about God's creation when Herbert says "Who made the eyes but I".

This creates the feeling that Jesus is now speaking which links in with the final stanza as it reiterates the religious connotations in the rhyming couplet at the end "You must sit down" says Love, "and taste my meat". Through this metaphor this signifies the 'Last Supper' transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the blood and body of Jesus. The ending line of Donne's Holy Sonnet prompts us of St Paul's letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthian-16, vs. 54-56).

Here we begin to see the similarity between the two men and their religious values as Donne is reiterating the religious theme from Herbert's "Love". Donne breaks the iambic pentameter towards the end of the Sonnet when he says "Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men". On the other hand Herbert keeps the rhythm of the poem the equal. Donne also uses ellipsis in two instances of his Sonnet "Much pleasure; than from thee much more must flow" and "Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery".

Also Donne uses the inferior pronoun “ thou” when approaching death, however Herbert uses the objective personal pronoun “ me” to describe the effect of love on him. The poet in fact personifies death, speaking directly to Death as if it were a person. He accuses Death of having absolutely nothing to boast about because, in the end, Death has no power whatever. Although Herbert seems accept love and does not challenge it “ So I did sit and eat”.