

William shakespeare's sonnet 71



**ASSIGN
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William Shakespeare is one of the most well-known writers of all time. His sonnets are timeless and his plays are performed again and again. Much of his history is known, but can also be considered a little cloudy. He seemed to be a sarcastic man not necessarily loved by all. I enjoy his plays, but personally love his sonnets best of all. Knowing the controversy surrounding his life, "Sonnet 71" offers a slight insight into all of that. "Sonnet 71" is part of a sequence of sonnets that talk of the love surrounding a young man, then describes a love triangle, and then ends with the talk of a mysterious dark woman.

"Sonnet 71" is a typical fourteen line sonnet with a ten syllable iambic pentameter; a five stress line. Sonnets were usually written this way to emphasize the end of the line, or last syllable. Although all so far is described close to an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, Shakespeare actually started his own form of sonnet writing. It became known as the English variation or Shakespearean rhyme. The rhyme scheme of "Sonnet 71" is: abab, cdcd, efef, gg. This is quite different than an Italian rhythm which is generally: abba, abba, cdcd, ee. Shakespeare took the sonnet format and made it his own.

Each quatrain can mean something different and the ending couplet usually produces the meaning behind the sonnet. The fact that the sonnets describe a beautiful man was also what made Shakespeare's writings so different. Most writers spoke of women and rarely men as the subject of affection. Although a woman is spoken of later in the sequence, the first half of the sonnets is dedicated to the praise of a man. In "Sonnet 71" the purpose

seems to be the love he has for a young man and how he wishes to protect that man from sadness if the author should die.

It speaks of the relationship the poet has with the world and how much he cares for the young man. Line 1 states, " No longer mourn for me when I am dead" (Shakespeare 71. 1). The opening line is a somber statement that immediately has the reader thinking of death. The poet is speaking to the young man mentioned in his previous sonnets. Lines 2 and 3 speak of hearing the bells toll, which announce a death of a member of the church, and of how the man should inform the world of the poet's death (Shakespeare 71. 2-3). Also, the bells will take part in announcing to the world the passing.

Line 4 states, " From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell" (Shakespeare 71. 4). Shakespeare's description of the world as vile leads me to believe that he viewed the world as corrupt and disgusting. He was not pleased with his environment. When speaking of dwelling with worms, it is perhaps in reference to his corpse being buried in the dirt. The next quatrain shows the love the author has for the man. He does not want to think of his love mourning for him because that would mean the young man was unhappy. He tells him to remember him not, because he loves him so (Shakespeare 71. 5-6). It reminds me of a selfless love.

Shakespeare values the other person's happiness more than himself. Instead of being grieved over and become a treasured memory, he would rather he be forgotten than inflict pain upon those he loved. It is a humbling concept and makes me ponder the thought of how many people truly love like that.

Lines 5-8 are my favorite. The next lines, lines 9-12, speak of the future. The poet describes a time when he will be compounded with clay, in other words, turned to dust. When this time comes, he does not want his name even repeated by his love, rather he states, " But let your love even with my life decay" (Shakespeare 71. -12).

It is about moving on and forgetting the dead. He is requesting the young man to let his love die, just as the writer has. The couplet at the end of " Sonnet 71" offers a whole new insight, or meaning, to the stanza.

Shakespeare changes his tone and describes the previous vile world as wise. He states, " Lest the wise world should look into your moan, and mock you with me after I am gone" (71. 13-14). He thinks the people of the world will only make fun of the young man for mourning him or will mock their relationship. It is interesting that Shakespeare would think the man may be mocked, but not comforted.

This could mean that Shakespeare did not think highly of himself and figured no one would mourn him, or maybe he lived a secluded life and had only a few close friends. His reference to the wise world is the opposite of his previous description of vile. Wise could be sarcastic for all-knowing and may indicate that they would not understand the young man's grief or it could mean that his death would be known to all, allowing the world to look in and see the young man's " moaning" (Shakespeare 71. 13-14). Shakespeare's sexuality has been in question since historians started researching him.

He was married and did have three children, one of whom was conceived out of wedlock. His wife was also eight years older than him. Many people

believe that Shakespeare was homosexual and that these sonnets describe that love for a certain young man. Others think the sonnets speak of a devoted friend whom he loved dearly. Either way, the relationship may have been misconstrued during Shakespeare's lifetime as well. Lines 13 and 14 may refer to this relationship, whether of intimate love or friendship, and how without understanding that relationship, society may mock the man's pain over the death of the poet.

Regardless of his sexuality, "Sonnet 71" speaks of death and how when one man puts another before himself, true love is portrayed. The poet loved the person enough to forget his own ambitions or legacy to secure future happiness for that same person. It shows how the world can be a cruel place and mock pain instead of helping to rid it. William Shakespeare was a gifted writer, clearly evident in his numerous plays and sonnets. With both blessing my bookshelves, the sonnets continue to be my favorite. "Sonnet 71" is a love letter from beyond an eventual grave and offers a few details of Shakespeare's loyalty to those he loved.