

The presentation of  
the queen's emotions  
in 'i grieve, and dare  
not show my disco...



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

" I Grieve, and Dare Not Show My Discontent" is a three-stanza poem written by Queen Elizabeth I that allegedly features Francis, the French Duke of Anjou as her beloved. Throughout her reign, Queen Elizabeth I entertained many suitors to get what England needed, including English nobles and foreign princes, but this poem evidences the fact that her relationship with the French Duke appeared to be different, and that there was more to their relationship than mere political interest. In 1579, the Duke and Elizabeth met secretly but the news of the death of a friend cut the Duke's visit short. Elizabeth, saddened at his quick departure, wrote this poem to express her emotions. However, her sentiments concerning the union were complicated because there was great opposition in England about her marrying a man who was not only of French origin but Catholic as well. It is obvious that the poem speaks to the inner conflict within her regarding what is expected of her as a queen and what her heart truly feels. Therefore, the question here is: how have the Queen's emotions been presented in this poem?

The opening stanza begins by defining the clash between Queen Elizabeth I's internal emotions and her public display through the use of antithesis. In the first two lines, the speaker's grieving nature is contrasted with her discontent and her love is contrasted with her hate. The utilisation of phrases such as ' dare not' and ' forced to' seem to suggest that she was coerced into displaying the particular emotions mentioned, and that they were contrary to her own. Hence, these phrases can be used as a way of distinguishing between her personal self and her public self. Besides that, the initial caesuras employed in the first three lines of the poem also serve as a type of boundary between her two selves. The lines are skillfully

segmented into a ratio of 1: 4; with the first part describing her mental state and the latter describing her public persona. It clearly depicts how the speaker is struggling to limit her private feelings so that she will be able to prioritise her duties as a monarch instead. The contrast between the speaker's two personalities is further sustained through the usage of the words 'mute' and 'prate' as an illustration of how her emotions were the polar opposite of her public reaction of indifferent silence. 'I am and not' insinuates that the speaker feels like she is her own person, but also is never allowed to be because of her duty. On the other hand, the words 'freeze' and 'burned' gives the indication that the speaker was emotionally hurt despite being the one who was responsible for the cold treatment towards her beloved. In the last line of the stanza, the reader gets the impression that the beloved has been rejected by the speaker. An alternate interpretation could be that the speaker has decided to reject her private self in favour of her public self. Essentially, in the first stanza, there is a strong hint of the idea that as Queen, she is in effect two different people whose thoughts and dreams are at odds with each other.

In the second stanza, the Queen's emotions are presented as an inescapable burden. Her 'care' could be a possible reference to the anxiety that she was facing. The phrases 'follows me flying' and 'stands and lies by me' and the word 'shadow' help personify this negative emotion as a relentless stalker that simply would not let the speaker go. However, the phrase 'flies when I pursue it' makes it clear that confronting this oppressive 'stalker' is not an option for the speaker. Her inability to escape this metaphorical 'stalker' could signify that she had to experience constant grief and suffering. The

usage of the word 'rue' also continues the negative slanting of her emotions throughout the stanza. Alternatively, the word 'care' could also be used to mean the speaker's carefulness or duty over her kingdom. In this interpretation, the 'shadow' comparison means that her duty is unavoidable and follows her in all aspects of her life. With either understanding, the final couplet of the stanza leaves readers with a distinct idea of how upset she is as she is unable to be free of 'him'. 'Him' could either refer to her beloved, her duties or her anxiety. Should it refer to her beloved or her anxiety, the word 'it' in the final line of the stanza could possibly refer to her romantic feelings for him, and the phrase 'the end of things' would mean the end of their relationship. However, if 'him' points towards her duties towards her kingdom, the phrase 'the end of things' would mean either her death or the end of her reign as she will only be free of her duties by then.

The turmoil of the Queen's emotional state is presented as having reached a form of resolution by the issuing of an ultimatum by the end of the final stanza. The phrase 'gentler passion' suggests that the speaker desires a reduction in the intensity of her feelings, and she justifies this desire by appealing to the reader in the following line that she is emotionally vulnerable. The presentation of her fragile emotional state is done through the metaphorical transfer of qualities when the speaker compares herself to 'melting snow'. Besides that, the sibilance obtained through the words 'soft' and 'snow' create a soothing effect which helps to further humanise the speaker, thus allowing the reader to sympathise with her. She proceeds by personifying love and pleads it to be horrid to her as a form of kindness.

Alternatively, the word 'love' could also refer to her beloved. The antithesis

provided by the usage of the words 'cruel' and 'kind' presents the paradoxical idea that if the speaker was treated unkindly either in the aspect of romance or by her beloved, it could be seen as a form of mercy as she would be spared from the crushing pain of unrealised mutual affection. More antitheses can be found in the fourth line of the stanza through the phrases 'or float or sink' and 'be high or low', and this cements the idea that the speaker will not tolerate living in a state of in between. In the concluding couplet, Queen Elizabeth I takes charge by making a final offer: either let her experience the intensity of romantic love to the fullest extent or let her end her life without any stirrings of romantic love at all. This provides a stark contrast to the helplessness of her situation as presented in the second stanza. The word 'content' found in the second last line is a direct contrast to the word 'discontent' as well, and this indicates that the speaker may have started the poem feeling upset but has now found inner peace.

Overall, the speaker's psychological state is skilfully described through the usage of literary devices such as personification and metaphors, with the most prominently used device being the antithesis. This helps to display the emotional fluctuations of the Queen when she was put in a position to choose between her public duties and her private desires. In fact, it can be said that the poem is about her decision to choose between two suitors: the first suitor being Francis, the Duke of Anjou, and the second suitor being her country, England. Should she decide to marry the duke, she would then no longer be truly committed to her position as a leader; yet should she decide to turn down this possibility, she would very likely go through life without having tasted what even the basest of her citizens have enjoyed : martial

bliss. The poem, therefore, represents her sadness and disappointment as her feelings of romantic love were unfortunately in the way of her obligation towards her country. In conclusion, through the masterful use of various literary devices in the poem, the poet is able to successfully articulate the Queen's feelings in a time of emotional turbulence.