

A comparison
between
remembrance and
resquiescat essay
sample



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Remembrance is a very passionate and sexual poem; this is partly because that it is an elegy for a lover so the love that would be causing her grief would be a passionate love, and partly because of the way in which Emily Bronte chooses to express her grief. The tone is very mournful, but also contains an ardent intensity; at times, she also becomes a little defensive, but the main tone is definitely that of sorrow. This sorrow is expressed in a very sentimental way; she seems to exaggerate her feelings and over-romanticise.

On the other hand, the love that Oscar Wilde had for his sister had nothing to do with passion or sexual feeling; he even says that 'she hardly knew she was a woman,' implying that she knew nothing of maturity. The tone of Resquiescat is summed up in two clauses of the first stanza, 'Tread lightly.... speak gently'. These both convey a mood of peace and tenderness.

Therefore, Emily Bronte felt a sexual love for her lover and in this poem is lamenting his death, even though it happened fifteen years before, while Oscar Wilde is coming to terms with the death of his sister for whom he felt a much softer and more poignant love.

In Resquiescat, Oscar Wilde uses very simple language and constructions. The whole poem is set out in a simple, minimalist format, and the rhyme scheme also follows a simple and consistent A B A B pattern with a regular number of syllables to a line; six syllables, then four alternated (except the last line). All of this together is used to convey the simple, but very deep love that he feels for her. The simplicity also shows the purity of virginity that this girl had. He uses some revealing symbolism, such as describing her as 'Lily-like, white as snow'. The lily is an emblem of purity and death, and the idea

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of this white, virgin snow also suggests purity. There is also a definite sense of incompleteness that climaxes with the final line, in which the regular beat of each line is broken, and we are left hanging on to nothing. This abrupt ending conveys the sudden shock of her death.

Remembrance is much more complicated grammatically, and it is a longer poem so contains more substance. However, the main theme is that she is addressing her dead lover and asking him if she has been faithful enough. It is all extremely romanticised; the setting is gothic, the years that pass are called 'wild Decembers', and the grave is under deep snow, far away, on the northern shore. She uses a lot of repetition to convey her absolute dedication to his memory, for example in the fifth stanza, the first two lines begin with the word 'No', and then the words 'All my life's bliss' are repeated in the last two lines. This also adds emphasis to what is being said.

Both these poems are about dead people, in which the poets come to terms with the loss of someone important to them. However, while Remembrance is in the first person, past tense, and is directed toward her dead lover, but is mainly for herself, Requiescat is in the third person, present tense, and is more easily appreciated by someone who knows nothing of the dead person. This idea that it is easier to appreciate Requiescat relates to the whole poem; the language used is simpler, and the description of the coffin, and the stone rings bells for every funeral.

On the other hand, Emily Bronte describes, some wonderful, far off place, 'over the mountains, on that Northern shore' which is great to romanticise about, and does illustrate her point that where he is, is a long way from her

both physically and metaphorically, but for someone feeling the terrible loss of death, it is not easy to relate to how this place, and her feelings. However, this is because Remembrance is less about the loss that she would have felt at his death, than about the remembrance and consecration of his memory. It is much more descriptive of her feelings as well; it shows that she felt desolate at his death, but then learnt to live a joyless life. She says that she longed to be with him so much that her soul

wish(ed) to hasten

Down to that tomb, already more than (hers).

She also felt a terrible guilt that she does not think about him enough, and that is really the main theme of the poem; all the way through she is describing to him why she cannot think about him more. She felt despair, whom she personifies, and uses alliteration to emphasise and connect the word 'destroy' with 'Despair' in stanza six.

However, Oscar Wilde does not state his feelings explicitly, in fact, for almost all the poem, he detaches himself from it by describing her, rather than how he feels, except for in stanza four, when he says that he 'vex(es) (his) heart alone', which suggests his sense of aloneness while coping with her death. Another great contrast to Remembrance is when he says 'she cannot hear lyre or sonnet' so is suggesting that it is pointless to write a poem for her, and so only useful to help him come to terms with the loss, whereas she is speaking directly to her lover. However, she could be, and indeed probably is, speaking to him entirely for her own benefit.

I think that the differences and similarities are summed up in the fact that in Remembrance, Emily Bronte says:

All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,

All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

Whereas Oscar Wilde says:

All my life's buried here.

Heap earth upon it.

The small difference between ' All my life's bliss', and ' All my life' shows that Remembrance is much more sexual, while Requiescat is slightly melodramatic, because he is suggesting that he wants to be dead, but more effective in showing how desperately sad he feels. The fact that he says ' Heap earth upon' his life shows that he is prepared to let the memory of her go into the ground, and so he can mourn, and not let her dominate his life, even if she did mean everything to him. But Emily Bronte has obviously not done this for her lover, and has hung onto his memory, so that even fifteen years later, she is still haunted by him.

The idea of the progression of grief is important in both poems; Oscar Wilde begins by saying " speak gently, she can hear the daisies grow", but moves on to realise that " she cannot hear Lyre or sonnet". This shows that he has progressed, and that his grief has developed. Emily Bronte also progresses, but as her poem is in the past tense, this is less vivid; she describes how she

“ weaned (her) young soul from yearning after thine” and so progressed from “ tears of useless passion” to the next stage of grief.

I think that Requiescat is a more effective elegy because he manages to convey a genuine sense of sorrow and melancholy, but for me Emily Bronte fails to really make me pity her because she has over-dramatised her feelings of sorrow, and guilt, which really should not dominate her life in such a way after fifteen years. I also find that the simplicity and subtlety of that Oscar Wilde employs is more effective in conveying his feelings, and he makes his poem easier to relate to.