

The idea of love in the "sonnet 116"

Literature



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Sonnet 116 is about love in its most ideal form. It is praising the glories of lovers who have come to each other freely, and enter into a relationship based on trust and understanding. The first four lines reveal the poet's pleasure in love that is constant and strong, and will not "alter when it alteration finds." The following lines proclaim that true love is indeed an "ever-fix'd mark" which will survive any crisis. In lines 7-8, the poet claims that we may be able to measure love to some degree, but this does not mean we fully understand it.

Love's actual worth cannot be known - it remains a mystery. The remaining lines of the third quatrain (9-12), reaffirm the perfect nature of love that is unshakeable throughout time and remains so "ev'n to the edge of doom", or death. In the final couplet, the poet declares that, if he is mistaken about the constant, unmovable nature of perfect love, then he must take back all his writings on love, truth, and faith. Moreover, he adds that, if he has in fact judged love inappropriately, no man has ever really loved, in the ideal sense that the poet professes.

The details of Sonnet 116 are best described by Tucker Brooke in his acclaimed edition of Shakespeare's poems: [In Sonnet 116] the chief pause in sense is after the twelfth line. Seventy-five per cent of the words are monosyllables; only three contain more syllables than two; none belong in any degree to the vocabulary of 'poetic' diction. There is nothing recondite, exotic, or metaphysical in the thought. There are three run-on lines, one pair of double-endings.

There is nothing to remark about the rhyming except the happy blending of open and closed vowels, and of liquids, nasals, and stops; nothing to say

about the harmony except to point out how the fluttering accents in the quatrains give place in the couplet to the emphatic march of the almost unrelieved iambic feet. In short, the poet has employed one hundred and ten of the simplest words in the language and the two simplest rhyme-schemes to produce a poem which has about it no strangeness whatever except the strangeness of perfection. (Brooke, 234)