

Sonnet 116 By Shakespeare

Posted on January 21, 2020

One of the most unanimously admired of the Shakespearean Sonnets is the Sonnet 116. It provides an anthologized and oft-quoted definition of love. It defines love in a diversified manner. It presents romantic love as a never-changing, never-fading, flawless passion because if it is otherwise, then no man has ever loved. This paper is yet another endeavor to analyze this sonnet as they say: *"The more one thinks about this grand, noble absolute convincing gesture, the less there seems to be of it."* (Booth, Stephen)

Shakespeare presents love in *Sonnet 116* as an incongruity of its given hypothesis *"... love does not love"* (116.2). "Sonnet 116" is a century's old avowal of the conviction and the endurance of love, and yet the tone is astonishingly negative. The reader learns what love is not more willingly than learning what love is; confusing?? The complicated logic of opposing messages adds to the confusion. The strangest concurrence makes it maybe one of the least comprehended in the 154-poem sonnet sequence by Shakespeare and turned out to be a perpetually favorite anthological poem.

The sonnet is a masterful mixture of literary techniques nevertheless, irony, unlike metaphor, which crafts a contrast between two contrasting objects, summons veiled or an absent sense, and it is this nonexistence that is the effect of the overt logic of repudiation that launches the poem, *".. love is not love"* (116.2). If taken, the utterly uncomplicated statement entails a paradox whereby the personal assertion is contradicted nevertheless, offering no clue as to what real love is, and per se, the overstated words emerge as barren, indistinct and hollow. Correspondingly, the hyperbole of the couple is tremendous, and it simply vouchers for the intensity of the feelings of the speaker. No verification is furnished to support the legality of his verdict as, on a factual point, it is preposterous, seeing that the reader cannot suspect what has been written. As there is no cohesion between the experience of love and the different acts of writing, the comparison turns out to be illogical (Des Barreaux, Jacques Vallée). Nevertheless, the sonnets by Shakespeare are emotionally compelling for this age also as they answer the unsure and paradoxical nature of the reader.

It is effortless to divide the core argument of this poem into the different parts of the sonnet. The first quatrain articulates what love is not (it is unchangeable). The speaker (who has been termed by many as Shakespeare himself in this sonnet as opposed to other sonnets in the poem) declares that love, *"the marriage of true minds,"* is faultless and ageless; *"impediments"* are not admitted, and even if the loved one changes it does not modify. The second quatrain pronounces love through a metaphor about what it is as a permanent guiding star, which is non-bewildered by storms. The speaker calls it a lighthouse to lost ships, a "wandering bark" that is prone to storms but never falters. The third quatrain more explicitly elucidates what love is not; *"time's fool"* that is, it does change with the passage of time. The speaker depicts yet again what love is not by stating that it is not vulnerable to time. Love does not alter with changing hours of the day and weeks of the month despite the fact that

beauty grows fainter with time. The rosy cheeks and lips can fade away, but love "*bears it out even to the edge of doom.*" The couple makes a turn and proclaims the certainty of the speaker that love is what he says it is. He further challenges that if his proclamations regarding love can be proved wrong, then he must never have written these words and declares that no man can ever have been in love. The rhyming scheme is given below in parenthesis using lower alpha.

"Sonnet 116^[1]"

"1st Quatrain."

"Let me not to the m.arriage of true minds (a)"

"Admit impediments. Love is not love (b)"

"Which alters when it alteration finds, (a)"

"Or bends with the remover to remove: (b)"

"2nd Quatrain."

"O no; it is an ever-fixed mark, (c)"

"That looks on tempests, and is never shaken; (d)"

"It is the star to every wandering bark, (c)"

"Whose worth's unknown, although his height is taken. (d) "

"3rd Quatrain."

"Love's not Time's fool, though. rosy lips and cheeks (e)"

"Within his bending sickle's compass come; (f)"

"Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks, (e)"

"But bears it out eve. to the edge of doom (f) "

"Couplet."

"If this be error and upon me proved, (g)"

"I never writ, nor no man ever loved. (g)"

Works Cited

Booth, Stephen. *Sonnets*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1977,

Burt, Stephen, and David Mikics. *The Art Of The Sonnet*. Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press Of Harvard University Press, 2010,

DES BARREAUX, JACQUES VALLÉE. "FOUR SONNETS." *The Philosophical Forum*, vol 42, no. 4, 2011, pp. 437-443. *Wiley-Blackwell*, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9191.2011.00401.x.

1. (Burt, Stephen, and David Mikics) ↑