

William Shakespeare Sonnet 116

" Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds "

According to Betty Gilson interpretation (2001) , Shakespeare's sonnet, "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds," expresses his strong belief that true love exists—and if it doesn't last, it's only because it wasn't true love from the beginning.

He starts his poem almost imploring of but also demanding from the reader, "Let me not to the marriage of true minds/Admit impediments" (495). It's almost as though he's expecting the reader to agree, right away, with his beliefs about love. For the poet, love represents a strong bond that can't be altered by an exterior cause, or influenced by an outsider.

The poet's tone switches to a protesting one—when exclaiming, "Oh, no!" (496). He then proceeds by defining love as an "ever-fixed mark,/That looks on tempests and is never shaken" (496)—in other words: love conquers all.

For the poet, love guides people in love as a star guides a boat through unknown waters: "It is the star to every wandering bark" (496).

For true love, time is not a threat to temporary beauty and youth. Love will survive even when beauty and youth are long gone: “Love’s not Time’s fool, though rosy lips and cheeks/Within his bending sickle’s compass come” (496). Also, he suggests that true love will only grow stronger over time. Although people get older, love will remain strong until the end of time, defying all of nature’s laws.

Shakespeare ends his poem stating that he would never write again if he were wrong about true love—and this would also mean that any disbeliever never knew true love. He leaves the decision-making in the reader’s hands. How can one disapprove of Shakespeare’s beliefs? Through his beautifully written sonnet, Shakespeare does a great job of persuading the reader that true love exists.

Works Cited

Shakespeare, William. "Let Me Not to the Marriage of True Minds." *Angles of Vision: Reading, Writing, and the Study of Literature*. Eds. Arthur W. Biddle, and Toby Fulwiler. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992. 495-496.

