

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *SONNET 19*

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Abstract:

William Shakespeare is known as a great poet not only in English literature but worldwide. It means that he is not only famous for his plays, but his poetry is having highest artistic values as well that needs to be explored and to deeply analyze the hidden facts and beauties of imagery, emotions, and figures of speech. Sonnet 19 is one of Shakespeare's best sonnets he wrote. Each sonnet of Shakespeare is a clear picture of the life of that time and a mirror of his perspective and emotions. Sonnet 19 is one of Shakespeare's famous ones with using the included elements of poetry scholarly. He talks about the power of time in Sonnet 19 and compares it with the power of his love for his lover and challenges the time that its 'devouring' power can't be able to influence his strong feelings of true love toward his lover. Till the end of the play, the poet expressed some of the criminal actions of time that 'devouring' natural beings and make them powerless. However, the poet warns it about his passionate love for his lover that it will not be threatened by anything even the 'devouring' time and that expresses the powerfulness of the poet's strong emotions. Lastly, all the possible aspects and elements of poetry-related have been tried to be explored in Shakespeare's Sonnet 19 in this critical article.

Key Words: *Sonnet 19, critical analysis, rhyme scheme, figurative language.*

Introduction:

William Shakespeare is not only known as the greatest dramatist of the Elizabethan period but a great poet of his time as well. His greatest non-dramatic poetry is in a group of 154 sonnets, which are without rival as the highpoint of the outpouring of sonnets in Elizabethan English Literature. In addition to the richness of language use and imagery, all of Shakespeare's sonnets have an unusual depth of thought, emotions and feelings, the beauty of life and the morality of man. Within that, if someone reads his poetry critically, it can be found that his work was somehow limited to strict classical idioms, however; he greatly used much of literary sources and enriched his literary works than any of his contemporaries. Though, it is clear that he exposed not only the natural ability and talent that he had, but his linguistic ability, using complex poetic imagery and metaphor, and a scholarly composition of the plot and other elements in his plays are all the things that made him a unique literary figure in the field of literature. Most of his sonnets have been organized in a narrative order that each of the sonnets consists scholarly usage of metaphorical dialogues between the poet and the speaker of the sonnet, as in *Sonnets 18 to 126* are mostly focusing on the themes of love, beauty, friendship, immortality, mythical phenomenon. . . . In the part of the structure of his sonnets, they are mostly imitated of having the imitation of Petrarchan sonnets, but actually, he popularized this sonnet structure and worked greatly for it.

Concisely, most of the literary figures recognize the artistic power of his sonnets equally when compare with the plays he composed. Within that, his scholarly works can not only be valued in the part of his poetry, but his plays much more need to be appreciated as well. However, it has been just focused on the usage of figurative language and other poetic devices in *Sonnet 19* in this critical article.

Sonnet 19:

Sonnet 19 is one of Shakespeare's famous sonnets formed with the same structure as all of his sonnets have as (ABAB CDCD EFEF, GG). He uses various types of emotional, metaphorical and

imaginative beauties and higher artistic principles in all of his sonnets. It means that when someone reads Shakespeare's sonnets one by one, each one consists of its particular beauties and attentive usage of imagery and other elements that are vital to be used in a poem. In *Sonnet 19*, he used figurative language extraordinary and particularly; imagery, apostrophe, sound devices, metaphor, myth, exaggeration and so on... Each line of the sonnet can give readers a new sight, and one can enjoy each line separately. In *Sonnet 19*, William Shakespeare used classical idioms as usual and the natural beauty of nature skillfully. Finally, the overall structure of *Sonnet 19*, usage of figurative language, sound devices, imagery, myth... are the things that are deeply and critically analyzed in this critical article.

***Sonnet 19* text and rhyme scheme:**

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws, (A)
 And make the earth devour her own sweet brood; (B)
 Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws, (A)
 And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood; (B)
 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet's (C)
 And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed time, (D)
 To the wide world and all her fading sweets; (C)
 But I forbid thee one most heinous crime: (D)
 O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow, (E)
 Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen. (F)
 Him in thy course untainted do allow (E)
 For beauty's pattern to succeeding men. (F)
 Yet do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong, (G)
 My love shall in my verse ever live young. (G)

The rhyme schemes of the *Sonnet 19*, for each line, have been indicated with the alphabetical order in front of each line. It means that line 1 rhymes with line 3, line 2 rhymes with line 4, line 5 with line 7 and so on... The sonnet form is based on the common sonnet structure of William Shakespeare. There are 4 stanzas in the above sonnet as of his all sonnets form. Three of them at the beginning are in quatrain (ABAB) form, and the last one is a concluding couplet (two lines in the same rhyme), in which the assonance of the vowel sound in the repeated 'thy' (line 13) with the repeated 'my' in (line 14) emphasizes the contrast between time as destroyer and the poet expresses himself and his love as someone, whose love will remain young in his verse, which means that within the 'devouring' time; destroys all the things in life, but will not be able to destroy poet's young/fresh love for his lover. For its farther understanding, let's analyze the *Sonnet 19* of William Shakespeare line by line critically.

The summary and analysis of *Sonnet 19*:

Lines 1-2: actually, there seems an apostrophe (a direct address to a nonliving entity, mainly; natural forces or an absent thing) in all the sonnet to the *TIME*, to be known as a powerful one that destroys many living beings even the ones with a great power. Time 'devours' all the things in life, and poet chooses an animal; lion, the king of the forest, whose power will not be limited, but it is time that destroys lion's power of paws and becomes older and powerless. It means that there will be the time that a lion will not have the ability to hunt deer or other innocent animals anymore.

Lines 3-4: in line 3, as poet indicated the power of time in the earlier lines that destroys lion's power: he mentions another powerful animal in the forest; the tiger, and states that the keen teeth of the tiger will also be broken and will be 'plucked' by the power of time. In line 4th, the poet indicates something new; not a natural, but a mythical phenomenon, *Phoenix*, an Arabian mythical bird believed that it could live 5 hundred years, and then said to burn itself to death periodically and emerges from the ashes as a new phoenix; according to most versions only one phoenix lived at a time, and it regenerates itself every 500 years. Within that, Colin (2002) introduces this mythical bird as "A mythical bird, of gorgeous plumage, fabled to be the only one of its kind, and to live five or six hundred years in the Arabian desert, after which it

burnt itself to ashes on a funeral pile of aromatic twigs ignited by the sun and fanned by its own wings, but only to emerge from its ashes with renewed youth, to live through another cycle of years.”

Briefly, the poet indicates that neither the power of lion/tiger nor mythical long-life bird can be able to be escaped from 'devouring' time; but time will take their strengths and will become powerless.

Lines 5-7: in these lines, poet indicates something different from the ones stated in the earlier lines of the sonnet; 'glad and sorry seasons', so it means that the seasons make individuals, birds, animals and at all, living beings, happy. For instance, Spring/Summer with its beauty of flowers and pleasant weather and sad like Fall/Winter because of their hard weather conditions, but the unlimited power of time can also destroy them. Within, FALL/WINTER seasons which are associated with difficulty can also be the same as the 'glad' seasons. It means that each season is going on and replaces with a new season of the year and is unable to remain for a long period, so it's because of the time does not let them do so.

In this case, in the next, 6th line, poet indicates that time is 'swift-footed' that means going on very fast and quickly, and no one/nothing can be able to make it stop from passing. It means that it is just going on and performs its powerful acting of 'devouring' and making powerful beings powerless in its duration. Furthermore, all the living beings in nature should taste the power of the time including; 'fading sweets' which are all the things that created the world beautiful as birds, trees, flowers, animals... should taste and will lose their power and beauty toward time.

Lines 8-10: in these lines, the poet suddenly changes his way from the above lines of the sonnet. Here, he mentions that it is clear that 'devouring' time can do anything it wants; to make powerful beings powerless, to make beautiful things (as flowers) ugly (when they become witty). However, one thing that time should be cautious about it, and the action time does will be regarded as 'heinous' action, and this cruel action will be counted as a crime by the poet. He indicates, that within time can make flowers witty, but it should not 'carve' his lover's forehead 'brow', which means that time should not make his lover older and she will always remain young in poet's love and of imaginations of his love for her.

Lines 11-12: in these lines, the poet repeats that the time should leave the beautiful pattern in his lover's face, for remaining her young. It states the higher quality of emotions of love that poet used in this sonnet and indicates that the lover can sacrifice himself toward anything/anyone for his lover, even the 'devouring' time with its unlimited power of 'devouring' all the things in this world.

Lines 13-14: in these lines, poet points out his power and warns time that it will not be able (with the power that can destroy 'devour' anything) to ruin his love for his lover. He forces that his lover will live forever, and will stay beautiful and young.

Briefly, it is clear that William Shakespeare stated the importance of time that we don't know how the time passes, so all the living beings should be attentive to the time because it destroys our youthfulness and active status so we should use time effectively. Within that, William Shakespeare talked about the beauty of his lover in a great way and exposed it by using his colorful imagery, emotions and the highest level of talent in poetry.

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