

Poetry Explication

Sample Student

ENG130 – Introduction to Literature

Colorado State University – Global Campus

Elizabeth Skwiot

Month day, 2015

Poetry Explication

In the poem “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” by Sir Walter Raleigh (1600, p. 1025) the poet manages to keep an optimistic tone while discussing a sensitive topic. Through the use of alliteration and assonance Raleigh presents a speaker that has the ability to sound positive even though the overall message is not positive. The poet’s repetition of both consonants and vowel sounds moves the reader along with a positive tone that promotes optimism. The use of repeated words and phrases adds to the optimistic tone and overall message by emphasizing key points. Additionally, the rhythm of the poem helps to keep the tone upbeat which heightens the overall message of love and optimism. Using iambic tetrameter gives the poem a natural feeling rhythm that creates a positive outlook throughout. Sir Walter Raleigh’s use of alliteration, assonance and repetition in iambic tetrameter gives “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepard” an optimistic tone while discussing love.

The poet’s use of alliteration throughout the poem presents a flow that makes it easy to read. Repeating the same consonant sounds in a single line gives the poem a pleasing effect that keeps the tone upbeat. Reading the lines “flocks from field to fold” and “my mind might move” (Raleigh, 1600, p. 1025) helps the reader continue towards an optimistic ending where love feels possible. The continued use of alliteration draws away from the sadness of the message by giving pleasing repetitive sounds to the reader. The upbeat tone from the alliteration makes the reader feel as if anything is possible. The repetitive consonant sounds keeps the reader in a pleasant place while thinking of love. The flow that this creates while being read keeps the reader in an optimistic mindset that makes them feel as though everything will turn out alright regardless of the outcome.

Another technique the poet uses to help keep an optimistic tone is assonance. The repeating vowel sounds help make the poem stay positive without even really noticing that it is happening. “Vowel sounds tend to be comparatively weak and unempathetic, so assonance is a subtle effect that usually works without calling attention to itself” (Hall, 2006, Para. 2). As the poem moves through line by line the repeating vowel sounds help to keep the flow by making sounds stick out without drawing too much attention to them. The first stanza uses the words world, love, young, tongue, move and love which when read in context help emphasize the message by casually drawing attention to the sounds. Also, the speaker uses repeated long “o” and long “u” sounds (Raleigh, 1600), especially at the end of each line, to help draw out the final word adding to the optimistic tone. The long vowels draw out the word making it feel mystical and upbeat, similar to when someone is deeply in love and talking about the person they love. Each time the reader reaches one of these vowel sounds it causes them to slow down and emphasize the sound. This effect causes the poem to remain optimistic by regulating the tone and pace of the reader positively.

The poet uses repeating words and phrases to help emphasize the message of optimism over the prospect of love throughout the poem. Repeating the same phrase in a poem tells the reader that the line is important and that the line is crucial to the message of the poet. Shane Ochoa (2014) says that “Repetition is a way to produce deeper levels of emphasis, clarity, amplification, and emotional effect” (para. 2). The poem uses repetition to let the reader feel that love is possible by repeating key phrases. The poet says “To live with thee and be thy love” (Raleigh, 1600, p. 1025) in the beginning and repeats the phrase at the end to let the shepherd feel optimistic about the outcome. Repeating this key phrase stresses the importance of the

phrase and the meaning behind it. The poet uses this line twice and one similar to it as the last line of the stanzas distinguishing it as a key line to the message.

Lastly, the poet uses the rhythm of the poem to help keep an upbeat tempo that remains optimistic in nature. The use of Iambic tetrameter throughout the poem keeps a tempo that encourages the reader to keep moving along. The rhythm provides no unnatural stops during the reading which makes the poem feel happy and optimistic towards love. The poet starts by saying “If all the world and love were young/ And truth in every shepherd’s tongue” (Raleigh, 1600, p.1025) which feels very positive when read because the meter goes from unstressed to stressed syllables repetitively. This meter causes the reader to go from low to high from the beginning of the poem through the end and makes each phrase seem happy and optimistic by causing the reader to continually raise the tone of every other syllable. The poet keeps this rhythm throughout the poem which makes the optimism about love stay positive even though the message is not necessarily so. The reader feels optimistic that everything in the poem may happen so they can be together because the rhythm keeps the happy and positive tone.

Sir Walter Raleigh presents a speaker in “The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd” (1600, p. 1025) that manages to keep an optimistic tone about love throughout the poem. The use of repetition manages to emphasize the optimism by stressing important phrases. The use of alliteration and assonance gives a pleasing tone that is easy to read and helps move the reader along positively. The rhythm of the poem adds to the overall optimism by using a meter that is pleasing to read and that makes the reader continually stress every other syllable. Using the elements described the poet successfully is able to keep the reader optimistic about love and the outcome regardless of the message of the poem.

References

- Hall, M. (2006). *Assonance, consonance and alliteration*. Retrieved from <http://meadhall.homestead.com/assonance.html>.
- Ochoa, S. (2014). *Repetition in poetry: The many ways to create poetic intensity*. Retrieved from <https://blog.udemy.com/repetition-in-poetry/>.
- Raleigh, S.W. (2013). The nymph's reply to the shepherd. In Kirsznner, L.G. & Mandell, S.R. *Compact literature: Reading, reacting, writing (eighth edition)* (pp. 1025). Boston, MA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.