Analysis Of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 30

Many, both professional and amateur, critics analyze William Shakespeare’s sonnets with a fine-tooth comb. From the manipulation of iambic pentameter and rhyme scheme to the combination of mismatched words, Shakespeare’s sonnets are interpreted in various different ways. “Sonnet 30”, is a popular one among critics, for most believe it to be a great metaphor, one between love and financial struggles. However, though there is evidence for such an idea, the true meaning of the poem is inherently clear. The narrator in this poem is not comparing monetary misfortunes to his love, but rather discussing his sorrow and affection towards his two lovers. The poetry seamlessly grants us the inside of the narrator’s mind. Shakespeare uses his classic sonnet format to emphasize this, as he shows despair and regret of adultery toward his first lover in the quatrains, but shifts to a lovely non-remorseful tone directing towards the mistress in the couplet. Disregarding the format, the language of the poem is indicative that this is addressing two lovers. The emotional narrator takes on double perspectives as he is empathetic towards both people. Though the thought of by many as a uniquely subtle financial metaphor for love, William Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 30” is a tribute to the narrator’s mistress.

The format of “Sonnet 30” allows Shakespeare’s true meaning comes into the light. Shakespeare had a particular way of organizing his sonnets, as they all had three quatrains and a couplet, where the shift in tone would occur. The sonnets were also all written to be precisely ten syllables per line, as to meet the requirements of iambic pentameter. In this specific sonnet, Shakespeare uses the format to his advantage. Throughout the majority of the poem, lines 1-12, the narrator describes feelings during his “sweet silent thought”, where he collects all of his shameful emotions towards his original lover. In these twelve lines, the narrator confesses that he “moan[s] the expense of many a vanished sight”, meaning he weeps at the death of their relationship due to his cheating (line 1). He goes on to list his pities, only to mention he found a mistress or a “precious friend hid in death's dateless night” (line 6). The sonnet carries on in this manner until the couplet or last two lines. In these lines, Shakespeare would often shift the sonnet into a different gear, both summing up his poetry and leaving it open. Here, Shakespeare ends with the lines “But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,/ All losses are restored and sorrows end” (line 13-14). This ending is undoubtedly directed towards the narrator’s mistress. The change of tone at this moment is overwhelmingly expected by Shakespeare and his readers. The shift from a sorrowful and empathic voice to a gentle and optimistic viewpoint indicates the change of persons. This shift is transparent to the reader, as it is obvious the narrator is addressing another person of interest, the mistress. Shakespeare engages in the format in an ironic and intelligent fashion, one that drives the narrator's emotions into the readers.

Beyond the format of Shakespeare’s work, is the physical literature. Shakespeare is known for his quirky combination of words and phrases that present a depth image. The narrator’s feelings are emphasized and drawn out in the first twelve lines, with words such as “moan”, “grieve”, and “woe”. Beautifully crafted but haunting images of this man crying are also showcased throughout the first twelve lines with phrases such as “then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,” (line 5). While depicting this image and invoking these feelings, Shakespeare also is able to craft a story. Many critics become distraught and form connections to the integration of otherwise formal words, such as “cancelled” and “paid”. While these words

provide evidence to an interesting theory, the literary work in the sonnet speaks for itself. Each line can be interpreted to fit with the idea that the narrator cheated on his significant other but has fallen in love with that adulteress. Particularly, lines 2-4, 6-9, and 12 address the broken, but once very real relationship, between the narrator and his committed significant other. In these lines, he struggles with the idea that they were once in love, but due to his actions, he has now caused it to end. The narrator is obviously distressed about the conclusion of his relationship but does recognize that it was an unhealthy one. The last two lines address solely his mistress. As he thinks upon all of the trouble and homewrecking he has caused, going back to thinking about just her lifts his spirits. Shakespeare's crafting of the narrator's emotions is so much more complex than a poem about financial and marital distress, it is an overly empathetic man who both feels pain and love for the women in his life.

Shakespeare's "Sonnet 30" is a magnificent manipulation of format and word choice. Throughout this sonnet, Shakespeare creates a riveting plotline all while delivering blistering pain-filled emotion and clarity for the reader. The narrator of this sonnet addresses his two lovers: his original and dysfunctional significant other to whom he loved but cheated on and his mistress. To label the sonnet as simply a financial and credited metaphor would be Ludacris and daresay insulting to Shakespeare's work, as even the simplest of readers can see their so much more weaved throughout this poem. Shakespeare's "Sonnet 30" is a misunderstood statement about the narrator and his two unrequited lovers.