
Remember By Christina Rossetti And Sonnet 14 By John Donne

The topics of love & death are very relevant in the poems "Remember" by Christina Rossetti and "Batter my heart, three-persona'd God" by John Donne. In both poems, the authors express different kinds of emotions such as fear, selfishness, and dominance to illustrate the emotions. In Remember, the persona has fears of being forgotten by her lover. She also portrays selfishness where she demands to be remembered. In addition, she wishes to dominate her lover's life. Conversely, in Batter my heart, three-persona'd God, the author feels the same emotions where he expresses his fear for the afterlife, his selfishness for making God responsible for getting him to eternity, and finally for God to dominate his life.

In Sonnet 14, the persona has fears of the unknown. The persona fears not going to eternity as he says, "Batter my heart, three-persona'd God; for you as yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend" (Donne, 1633, line 1-2). He is asking God to batter his heart and be the one to break the bond that he has developed with his evil desires. The persona desperately wants to change his ways to the right way which in his mind is God's way. He does not want the fear of not ending up side to side with God to linger anymore. He actually wants God to take action rather than just guiding him. He uses alliteration in the fourth line "you force to break, blow, burn, and make me new." The persona wants God to make him new and wants to be the worthy afterlife. Every Christian's ultimate goal is to be the chosen one who gets the honor of getting to heaven, and the persona is desperately seeking that. When he says "overthrow me and bend your force..." he is telling God to bend his ways and make use of His power so that he can take him out of the darkness he is in and make him new. The idea of him wanting God to use his powers to make sure he is in salvation and a new person and not the speaker himself is ironic. Usually, it is us humans who seek God to guide us on the right path and pray we end up in eternity. In fact, it is mentioned in the bible that God's followers will go through a lot but God will always be with them (Isaiah 43:2, NIV). As Jesus Christ gave his life Christians are expected to go through some kind of turmoil before they reach eternity. However, the persona's perspective is that God should be the one who takes him out of his evil ways and it is Him that should change his ways so that he is a new person. It is not the persona himself that has to do that but God. The speaker uses a simile in line five when he says, "I like an usurp'd town to another due..." (Donne, 1633). He uses a simile instead of a metaphor when he says like an usurp'd town and creates the thought that himself and town are similar. That means the speaker understands how unrealistic his requests are. He is aware that what he is asking from God is, in fact, unrealistic and unless God somehow fulfills his needs, it will not happen. In some way, the persona is someone who desperately wants God in his life, and everything that God has to offer but his earthly desires are stopping him. He wants to let God in his life but is unsuccessful. Conversely, in the poem Remember, the speaker is fearful of been forgotten by her lover. She uses Juxtaposition in the poem's first line, "remember me when I am gone away" (Rossetti, 1862). She wants to be remembered even when she dies. She uses personification when she says "gone far away into the silent land" (Rossetti, 1862, line 2) emphasizing that if she is separated from her lover, he never forgets her. Her fear of been forgotten is so serious that the idea of her been not remembered is absurd in her eyes. In the eyes of the speaker, her lover should remember her when he is separated from her and that she is everlasting to him. In some way, one can pity the speaker based on how much she

dedicated her life to making sure he does not forget about her or that she is not a distant memory. In the fifth and sixth lines, she says, “remember me when no more, day by day you tell me of our future that you plann’d.” (Rossetti, 1862). If he ever forgets about the speaker, she tells him again to remember her. Even though he might be unable to tell her of their future, she still reminds him to remember her. In a way, the thought of been forgotten is not an option for the speaker. In her eyes, she does not desire to be a memory in his life but rather be the protagonist of his life. However, in the ninth and tenth lines, she says “yet if you should forget me for a while and afterward remember, do not grieve” (Rossetti, 1862). The speaker says he can forget about her for a while but has to remember her eventually. She uses a metaphor in lines eleven and twelve on how she is scared that he will, in fact, forget her, and if he does, how she will continue to live even if she dies. The poem Sonnet 14 where John Donne fears the unknown and begs God to change his ways to resemble God so that he can be part of the chosen ones to end up in heaven and compares with Remember Christiana Rossetti where she fears of been forgotten by her lover. Even after death, she does not want the thought of her not been remembered by her lover. In both poems, fear is very valid in how both speakers seek desperate methods so they can rid of the fear they are carrying.

In the poem Remember, the speaker’s selfishness of demanding not to be forgotten where she tells her lover that she must remember her for eternity shows selfishness and greediness. When she dies, she leaves her lover the responsibility of remembering her and tries to make it a priority in his life. This is her way of manipulating her lover in that she will always be present in his life regardless of whether she is alive or not. In lines 7-8 of the poem, she says, “only remember me; you understand” (Rossetti, 1862). This serves as a very selfish and bold statement that preaches that her thoughts and her needs are more superior than his and as long as she plays any role in his life whether dead or alive, she will be pleased. Today, this kind of mentality would be considered a very unhealthy and controlling one. It’s like she has developed a fear that her lover wouldn’t remember her unless she reminds him of every minute of the day. In comparison, in the poem Batter my heart, three-persona’d God by John Donne, selfishness is portrayed where he makes God responsible for making sure he gets eternity and is a new person. In his thoughts, no matter how much he tries to put aside his earthly desires, he keeps on failing. Therefore, he believes it is up to God to make sure he is a changed man. It’s very selfish of him that he is asking the creator to select him, get rid of his earthly desires and make him in order to go to eternity. This is like bashing others in the same faith who are struggling like John Donne and asking God to not worry about others but him only. In lines 11-12 in the poem when the persona says, “divorce me, untie or break that knot again, take me to you, imprison me, for I,” (Donne, 1633), he is giving God two options which are either breaking the knot he has with Satan or break the knot he has with God. That is selfish to God because he is giving Him the responsibility of either saving one of his children or going against his principles and rescuing just one individual.

In the poem Remember, the speaker wishes to dominate her lover in thinking that she is unforgotten and she must be part of his life whether dead or not. She wishes to influence him in thinking that if she is not remembered, his life would be meaningless. In her thoughts, she cannot accept the reality of her not been remembered by him and gives him the option as mentioned in the poem in lines 9-10. She says, “Yet if you should forget me for a while and afterward remember...” (Rossetti, 1862). He can forget about her for a while but eventually has to come to his senses and remember her. The speaker seeks to have every influence she can over her lover’s thoughts and making sure he remembers her throughout her life and death. In contrast in Sonnet 14, John Donne wants God to dominate his life and have full influence and

power over his life. He says in line 13 “except you enthrall me, never shall be free” (Donne, 1633). He is asking to enslave him and have full control over him. He seeks God’s dominance in his life and keeps on failing to have that dominance. He gives God his trust and hopes God will take him away from sin and guide him to eternity where he can live to God’s dominance forever. In both poems, dominance plays a different role where one is seeking dominance while in the other, one seeks to dominate her lover.

In conclusion, Fear, Selfishness, and Dominance are some of the themes displayed in the poems Remember by Christina Rossetti and Batter my heart, three-persona’d God by John Donne. The persona in Sonnet 14 has a fear of the unknown. He fears not going to eternity. In Rossetti’s poem, the persona fears being forgotten by her lover. The persona in Donne’s poem shows selfishness by giving God the task of making sure he is a changed man and its god's responsibility to make sure he is a changed man. On the other hand, the persona in the poem Remember portrays selfishness in that she wants her lover to remember her always. In the poem Remember, the persona wants to dominate her lover while the persona in Sonnet 14 wants God to dominate his life.