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The Representations of Illness in William Shakespeare's Selected Sonnets

Hikmat Khalaf Hussein AL Hussein*

English Department, College of Arts, Tikrit University

Hikmat_dikhayl@tu.edu.iq

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Abstract

Poets usually employ a variety of literary devices to convey their intended messages without explicitly disclosing them, despite the fact that poets compose their poems for specific purposes and subjects. Nevertheless, William Shakespeare composes his sonnets with the intention of combining the images of love and disease into a crucible, reflecting the characteristics of his era. This amalgamation creates a cohesive poetic picture for the reader by using metaphor and allegory to express the poet's desired message. One of the most notable techniques is Shakespeare's use of illness imagery to convey love's suffering. The aim of the study is to examine a number of poems written by the renowned English poet William Shakespeare in order to explore how he utilizes illnesses, their symptoms, and their causes to convey love, suffering, and death. It focuses on evaluating selected poems from Shakespeare's sonnets, extracting metaphorical imagery, and examining their relevance to the historical context of their composition. The research came to the conclusion that Shakespeare used allegories, metaphors, and direct imagery in some of the works chosen for this analysis in order to chronicle and describe certain illnesses that were common throughout the Elizabethan period.

Keywords: William Shakespeare, sonnets, illness, allegories, metaphors, and Elizabethan period.

* **Corresponding Author:** Hikmat Khalaf Hussein, Email: Hikmat_dikhayl@tu.edu.iq

Affiliation: Tikrit University - Iraq

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تمثيلات المرض في سونيات مختارة لشكسبير

حكمت خلف حسين الحسين

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية، كلية الآداب، جامعة تكريت

المستخلص

يكتب الشعراء غالباً قصائدهم لغايات وموضوعات محددة لكنهم يوظفون الاجهزة الادبية المختلفة للتعبير عنها دون الافصاح بشكل مباشر عنها. على اية حال، يكتب وليم شكسبير قصائده السونيات بقصدية ترسم ملامح عصره وتعكس صور العشق والمرض وتدمجها في بوتقة واحدة. هذا المزج يُخرج للقارئ صورة شعرية متجانسة من خلال توظيف الاستعارة والمجاز لنقل المعنى الذي يقصده الشاعر. ومن ابرز تلك الاساليب ان يوظف شكسبير صور المرض للتعبير عن الحب وعذابه وآلامه. تهدف الدراسة الى مراجعة قصائد مختارة للشاعر الانجليزي المعروف وليم شكسبير من ناحية استخدامه للامراض واعراضها ومسبباتها للتعبير عن الحب ومايتلوه من ألم وموت. تعتمد الدراسة على دراسة قصائد مختارة من سونيات شكسبير واستخراج تلك الصور المجازية وتحليلها بالاعتماد على كيفية انها ترتبط بالزمن الذي كتبت فيه. وقد توصلت الدراسة الى ان شكسبير قد وظف الصور المباشرة والاستعارة والمجاز في بعض من قصائده المختارة لهذه الدراسة في توثيق وتسجيل بعض الامراض التي كانت منتشرة في العصر الاليزبيثي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: وليم شكسبير، السونيات، المرض، المجازات، الاستعارات، العصر الاليزبيثي.

1. INTRODUCTION

Historically, medicine and literature have been intertwined. Hence, medication and poetry have maintained a strong relationship. Individuals experiencing illness must articulate their condition and seek treatment options. Illness, health, disease, and cure are influenced by cultural frameworks; thus, the experience of illness is understood within both organic and cultural contexts. For ages, medicine and literature have been combined. Medication and poetry have had a cement relationship. Persons who are ill are required to describe their experience of illness and search for remedy. In certain ways, illness, health, disease and cure are framed by culture; therefore, the organic practice of an illness is inferred within a context that is not only organic, but cultural. Sickneses have always been used as figurative language to reveal that the world is dishonest or unfair. In the Elizabethan age, there were five main ailments: - Smallpox, Typhus, Bubonic Plague, Malaria and Syphilis. These diseases were spread so rapidly because of overcrowded -

population, an abundance of sexual activity, and unhygienic living quarters. During the Elizabethan time, the writing of poems is a part of the education system amongst the educated people. The English sonneteers receive their lexicography through Sidney, Watson and others; though they are eventually derived it from Petrarch. For that reason, a number of poems of different poets appeared in this period. Philip Sidney employs the traditions of classical verse poetry in his sonnets. The difference mainly turns around the poet's thoughts of love and in which way his poem should be well-defined. The later times represent the Elizabethan age with Shakespeare and his version of the sonnet. Whereon, specific images and subjects are regarded as the essential source in the sonnets of the Elizabethan poets for the purpose of expressing their emotions and thoughts.

Among these poets, Shakespeare symbolizes the development of the sonnet in the Elizabethan age and the movement from conventional visions of love into the views of expressing love through vague metaphorical techniques. Shakespeare's life still a matter of mystery because of the lack of documented facts about its details. That is why scholars, who interested in Shakespeare's sonnets, are divided into two groups; the first one reads them from the point of view that his sonnets as his own autobiography, and the second group interprets them as lyrical poems which are written for special concerns. This mystery about Shakespeare's sonnets are also obvious that the 154 sonnets are said by the speaker, almost the poet, through using the pronoun "I" which ensures the fact that Thomas Heywood refers to Shakespeare as publishing his sonnets "in his own name" (Duncan-Jones, 86). And this speaker addresses, in the first 126 poems, a fair young man; whereas in the same way, the rest of the verses, sonnets 127–154, are assumed to be chiefly about a single "woman colored ill."

Love as a form of illness is a favorable trope of courtly love. Shakespeare's poems contribute in a broader social mediation in which an expanded attention in the body spurs the necessity to employ them in relation to diseases that may affect them spiritually or physically. Shakespeare has a universal status in using all types of figurative language in both of his plays and poems. His sonnets are mainly embodied in metaphor, simile, and symbols. Thus, this essay aims at exploring the representation of illness in some selected of Shakespeare's sonnets along with how changes in medical knowledge have influenced the expressions used in Elizabethan sonnets. Shakespeare does numerous variations on a typical form of the metaphor and infection in the heart of the lover by means of using different words that are related to medical and cure. Illnesses are of two kinds: the sore but remediable, and the probably deadly, particular diseases. Sickness imagery is used to signify a concern for societal direction, and healthiness to some degree, everybody is supposed to know about.

And since, poetry is related to love and medication to illness, this leads to another relationship between love and illness especially for poets from ancient ages and for those who follow them. Physicians for medication and poets for poems are becoming perceptive of the catastrophes of human life. Both clusters come through different events and cases of sickness, pain, dying, demise, and other significant trials in life. Similarly, remedy and literature are expressly connected, for they both narrate what is perceived. Pain of love does not differ from pain of disease, both are sorrows for body, though the positions may differ; but the pain is similar to the literary point of view which is called lovesickness. The poet offers a complete depiction of the signs of lovesickness and describes love as an illness with all the related symptoms of a bad fever. So, love is

considered as a kind of illness that needs to be cured. (Garner, 2018). Down to the time of Shakespeare (1564-1616), Sontag states:

[...] The Elizabethan metaphors—which complain of some general aberration or public calamity that is, in consequence, dislocating to individuals--the modern metaphors suggest a profound disequilibrium between individual and society, with society conceived as the individual's adversary. Disease metaphors are used to judge society not as out of balance but as repressive. They turn up regularly in Romantic rhetoric which opposes heart to head, spontaneity to reason, nature to artifice, country to city. (73)

In the period of Shakespeare, the word “physician” is used to call a doctor. Dealing with ailment, they are asked to dress special sartorial that is invented to guard them from getting sick. They masticate an herbal vegetable and covered themselves in vinegar to look after themselves from being got infection of illness while checking patients. Shakespeare is a part of that society at that time. Consequently, Shakespeare's literary works can be observed as reflections of his lifespan; and thus mirror the politics, religion, culture, philosophy, morals, and the scientific knowledge of his time. However, what concerns in this study, is the reflection of culture (literature), life (illness), and science (medicine) (Merriman, 148). Shakespeare, in most of his literary works, makes a use of figurative language in expressing emotions that aroused from illness. However, this study aims at examining the use of imagery, simile, metaphor and symbol in Shakespeare's sonnets; 34, 35, 76, 97, 111, 118, 147, 154, and 140, to convey the themes of love, pain, devotion, repentance and forgiveness through the implication of illness along with other medical terms, employing such words as fever, nurse, disease, ill, physician, patient, potions, infection, sickness, cure, pain and health. Shakespeare's engagement with these terms raises not only awareness for various physical ailments prevalent in 16th century Elizabethan England, but he also stylizes rendition of these ailments representing in this his unique poetics of illness and healing.

2. THE REPRESENTATION OF ILLNESS IN SHAKESPEAR'S SONNETS

Though the affair of Shakespeare with young lady begins with sonnet 127, some critics believe that it was a little bit earlier than that as it appears in sonnet 34 (Rowse, 71). According to Vendler, Shakespeare's sonnet 34 begins with line 6 as it is a continuation of sonnet 33 to admonish the addressee, the poet changes the use of metaphor from the metaphorical-as-literal use which is obviously used in sonnet 33 to the metaphorical resumption tolerates astonishing changes as follows:

- A. Medicine (salve, heals, wound, cures, physic);
- B. Pain, both social and emotional (disgrace, shame, grief, loss, sorrow, relief, bear[ing] [a] cross);
- C. Religion (repent, cross, ransom);
- D. Sin, meaning ethical offense (offender, strong offence, ill deeds);
- E. Wealth (pearl, rich, ransom);
- F. Love. (180)

The above division of the sonnet interprets the way by which Shakespeare arranges his sonnet in an interconnected sequential manner that enables the reader understands it in a way with an event sequence linked to an antecedent story. Similarly, in this sonnet, Shakespeare seeks to draw a map to arrange his metaphoric expressions so as to fit them with unpleasant experience. He builds a strong relationship with each relevant word of the illness to be connected as the above sketch of each reign tells (Vendler, 180). In addition, it is to be noted that the poet metaphorically signifies both the medicine and pain in the octet and expresses the sin and love in the sestet. Thus, the implicit interferences stimulate the surprising changes of metaphor starting from quatrain 2 till the end of the sonnet in order to construct a reply to the implicit feelings and emotions of love.

The metaphor of the sun for the beloved and its relationship to the storm-threatened and then storm-beaten lover is constant in 33 and 34, but when in 34 the beloved breaks through the clouds to smile on the speaker, the reversal of attitude is mirrored in a reversal of the application of terms in which the incident has been described: in the metaphor the beloved's displeasure fell upon the speaker as rain; at the end of the poem the beloved's contrition is demonstrated in tears (Muir, 77). From the very beginning of the sonnet, the poet uses the "sun" as a metaphor of useless medicine that may treat only the surfaced wound rather than the scars or the deep ones as a reference to the deep grief of the poet (Senna, 39). In line 7, sonnet 34, Shakespeare presents the word "salve" which referred to as a medicine, through which there is no physical disease can be healed, but it is related later to the next line where the poet connects it with other three words "heal, wound, and cure" to signify that anyone can think of being cured from any disease by using such medicine; however, not this wound, as the speaker says, that causes all this disgrace, is not to be easily healed. Burrow defines "salve" as "a healing ointment for application to wounds or sores" he thinks that the sun in the sonnet refers to the salve which may not preserve the reason behind the main cause of his disgrace, but it may only desiccate the tears of the poet. Similarly, Iyengar argues that the word "salve" that has been used in the sixteenth and seventeenth century refers to an external motion applied by surgeons for wounds which occur outside of the body (401). The word "salve" is used in sonnet 34 mainly to signify two important points; these are : physical point that is related to the face of the speaker as in "To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face," (34,6) that may have the external use of potion on the face of the speaker as a medicine for recovery on one hand, and the metaphorical point which is associated with the idea of being used- as it is known also at that time- for external use only which definitely interprets the disadvantage of it to heal the wound of the speaker "That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace" (34,8), for it is obviously mentioned as "disgrace" that would not be easily healed by a "salve".

In the same way, the poet's moral superiority is evidenced throughout the poem; in fact, his only "sin" seems to be an excess of love which has caused him to authorize the friend's faults and to salve his "amiss." In sonnet 35, Shakespeare too uses the term "salving" in line 7 to suggest metaphorically as a ransom or a way to forgive him through the medical or pharmaceutical aspect of language (specifically the language of praise) that it may work as a lotion or cream to mitigate the friend's offense (Allan, 67-68). By using "disgrace" in sonnet 34, Shakespeare recommends a spiritual rather than a material hurt, it could be the humiliation grieved by the poet. Duncan-Jones states that the word

“disgrace” in Shakespeare’s sonnet 34 “[has been used] in an identical position in 33 and 34 draws attention to the close linking of the two” (178). Once more the poet links the spiritual and material pain along with remedy to signify metaphorically the pain of the poet and the useless medicine of the young man by using the word “shame” as a spiritual disease and the word “physic” as the medicine which may be referred to as “repentance” that cannot be considered as the treatment of that deep pain. Grief in the sonnet, metaphorically, stands either for an ailment or a physical wound, illness and intellectual agony, or sorrow (448). To signify repent, Shakespeare uses the word “tear” as a metaphor of a medicine that has no impurities as the pearl which is made of natural material. He makes use of this through portraying the penitence of the young man’s tears as recompense for his loss, injury, or suffering. Hence, the tone of the sonnet shifts from that of outraged injury at the beginning to pardon at his tears at the end. (Callaghan, 114). Likewise, in sonnet 140, the poet uses simile to convey his pain, how the woman should treat him “as testy sick men, when their deaths be near”, which is similar to a dying gentleman who merely needs wrong reassurances from his physician about his ailment, he wishes the woman to fabricate her love for the poet (Senna, 99).

In addition, to continue with the same sonnet and related another medical word which is “physic”, Iyengar further observes:

[...] Shakespeare’s age saw the development of the word’s meaning from an ingredient in cooking, medicine, or any kind of work, to a substance specifically used for healing disease or in order to create some sort of physiological effect upon the body [...]. (290)

Therefore, for Shakespeare, this word is used as a medicine to be taken either oral treatment or as an ointment to be rapped on the skin; but metaphorically, it represents the ethical or spiritual treatment that are often useless as that in sonnet 34, line 9 “Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief”, because his sadness cannot be comforted by expressions of relief alone. Yet, in line 9, the poet uses the word “physic” to mean consolation (especially for this position) as it is followed by the word “grief”, which means as a result to refuse the repentance of the addressee. Iyengar contends that “Shakespeare uses the term physic in both a literal and a figurative sense [...]” (344). Pequigney connotes the word “physic” in line 9 as “medicine” to the grief of the speaker who suffers from physical “wound”, he thinks that repentance does not fit to this physical wound of the speaker; yet, he produces another remedy which is “tears” to follow the repentance as if they will act either as the physical medicine to clean the wound or metaphorically to relief the sorrow of the speaker (110). Furthermore, Iyengar proclaims:

Tears came from either the eye itself or from the whole body; their origin determined how harmful they might be and whether they needed any treatment. Too much weeping was a known cause of blindness, because it dried out the crystalline humor and could crack the eye-strings”. (183)

In sonnet 34, Shakespeare appears not only as a poet or a lover, but also as a doctor for his depiction of deep details of the conditions of a patient. He portrays a map of the condition of the lover or the friend, illness, and the medicine offered by the addressee to treat the speaker. Metaphorically, Shakespeare acts as doctor who knows how the symptoms of illness appear on the patient for the first time, how it develops by the time, what is the best medicine for the patient, and what kind of medicine the patient needs. In

line “8,9,10”, the poet declares the symptoms of patient (the speaker) as “disgrace, grief, and loss” to signify the pain of the soul of the speaker. Similarly, in sonnet 97, line 14, Shakespeare metaphorically uses the word “pale” to describe the symptoms of the patient in order to signify the condition of the lover (Miall, 5). Likewise, in sonnet 118, line “3,4” Shakespeare uses the words “maladies unseen, we sicken, to shun sickness, and when we purge” to identify the illness of the speaker which is related to love and spirit that can be seen in the word “purge” to “purify” the soul of his friend or lover from any impurities. This has been proved in line 7 of same sonnet when the poet uses the phrase “sick of welfare” to signify the sickness of souls metaphorically, but it is said that the closest implication which makes more sense that “the love was a state of perfect health, and those metaphorical drugs intended to ginger up the love affair were not cures at all, but poisons” (A.E.B, 485–486). Likewise, in sonnet 111, Shakespeare uses the word “potion” as a kind of ointment to treat the strong infections. The word “potion” defined by Iyengar as “a concentrated amount of a therapeutic substance, macerated and rolled into a ball and sometimes combined with oil, vinegar or some other ingredient in order to make it hold its shape, to be swallowed whole.”(353). For Burrow “Potions of eisel” is a:

[...] medicinal drinks based on vinegar; bitter cures. Vinegar was a frequent ingredient in recommended cures for the plague, which struck London severely in 1592–4 and in 1603, both periods which have been associated with the composition or revision of the Sonnets. (602)

By doing so, Shakespeare exercises simile to resemble the bitterness of potion of eysell to the toughness of his friend or lover. He is going to drink that potion to signify repentance and forgiveness. This may also reflect the widespread awareness of the people of the Elizabethan age of the different types of medicines at that time (Senna, 81). Vendler states that Shakespeare metaphorically, at this point “[suggests] that no cure is to be found for this plague, which, unlike the “real” plague, will not yield to medicinal eisel” (471). Merriman claims that “infection fuses the medical imagery with that of the dyer’s hand, since its Latin root *inficere* means literally ‘to dip into, to stain’” (145-60). In sonnet 111, Shakespeare also uses the metaphor of “pity” as a remedy for the speaker’s sickness who is infected with lovesickness. In another religious trend, metaphor once again associated with the Catholic practice of confession, the poet begs the youth to give him a “penance” and begs for his pity as a cure for his tainted condition (Callaghan, 139). Consequently, “even that undesirable thing your pity is enough to cure me” (Burrow, 602).

Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye
Even that your pity is enough to cure me. (111, 13,14)

A number of scholar’s assert that what makes Shakespeare’s sonnets the greatest poems, they are linked to the important and massive use of images, for instance, Walter Cohen contends “[Shakespeare’s] sonnets [...] faithfully confirm to a highly structured set of formal requirements that often seem to constrain artistic creativity (Greenblatt, 1915). Mc. Laughlin states that simile is being the simplest form of figurative language which is used to compare two explicit terms; however, in poetry “the similes are based on odd or extreme comparisons”. (Schiffer). In sonnet 97, line 8, for instance the poet uses simile in two implicit and explicit positions to signify pain. He uses the “womb” of a widow to liken it with the coming of autumn to a field (Hess, 48). Here, he seems to be aware of this case concerning the womb of a widow woman after the death of her husband which

shows the acquaintance of common people to the organs of human being on one hand, and the condition of the organ “womb” is an internal organ of the woman after the death of her husband on the other hand (Senna, 73-74). In line 14 of the same sonnet, the poet uses the word “pale” as a metaphor to describe the leaves of trees which might have been used metaphorically at the time as one of the symptoms of the patient. The word pale is related to the weakness of the patient and the poet metaphorically uses it to signify the weakness and the pain of the speaker (Schiffer).

Shakespeare in sonnet 118 conjures journeys of new metaphors and psychological subtleties from the stereotype. He uses simile to compare and contrast between the physical desire and the spiritual love. He searches the notion that craving is a bodily desire, submit to glut and lust diversity; whereas love is a disease whose therapy may be as depraved as the illness he has contracted, which in turn appears undoubtedly venereal. In terms of nutritive and medicinal similes, mainly the metaphor of purging, the exercise of having a medicine or other substance which causes vomiting. In search of the diversity characterized by bitter nutrition and medicine in order to improve his craving for the youth and to recover his health, the poet has searched for the corporation of those who offer a clear distinction to the young man as a way of doing in advance and avoiding conflict, “illness,” in their association. There are inferences of promiscuity and sexual infection and the disagreeable medicines it requires. Announcing himself to be “diseased,” the poet is annoyed in his selection of remedies: “To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding.” Responding to the youth’s passionate withdrawal from the association, the poet reacts excessively and finds that the cure to his sick heart is inferior than the original illness of unrequited love. Where originally there was no disease, now there are “faults assured,” nevertheless only after the fact does the poet comprehend his fault: “But thence I learn, and find the lesson true, / Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.” Mutual love between the poet and the youth is in weakening (Senna 86). The poet has taken the lesson and that the couplet stanza as Callaghan affirms “acts on two senses of disease: first, that the poet became bored with the young man, and secondly, that the poet’s love for the young man was itself a disease” (141). Additionally, in this sonnet, he uses simile to signify love and pain at the same time just as saturated persons attempt different dishes or “compounds,” like patients purge or evacuate their bodies to recover a strong state of health and to fix the unseen balance of wit, so the poet was replete or overflowing with the sweetness of his lover and attempted, preventively, to eat something bitter, something detrimental to the body. “Sick of welfare,” seeking a transition, the speaker sees innovation and appropriateness in voluntarily seeking illness instead of waiting to fall ill naturally, or to fall out of love with the passage of time. His intentional scheme, to escape potential loneliness or disappointment by finding new loves before stasis or ills, applied “medicine” to a stable relationship, since he himself was “ranked,” foul or rotten, and found healing not in goodness or integrity, but in lies and sickness. But other lovers—the compound medicines he has used in favorite to his good health, sweet love—has poisoned him rather than purging or purifying him (Iyengar, 147). Since, Gildon finds that the health of the medicinal product is insufficient (a) reduced to the condition of the medicinal product needed; (b) subject to medical intervention, a condition that had previously been stable, grades of goodness buffeted, gorged with goodness, the illness would have wished to be healed by disease (Burrow 616).

In sonnet 153, the poet employs a remedy to signify his pain of love as that of the remedy of patient as the fountain absorbs heat from the flames, the water serves as a soothing potion for "strange diseases"—for instance, love sickness. However, in his mistress's eyes, the poet finds the best cure for his love, as Iyengar states "Alas, the illness the bath cannot cure is the speaker's own; he needs a still-hotter spring, the fiery pools in his mistress' eyes" (59). The poet continues the same image in sonnet 154, as he narrates a tale similar to that one in Sonnet 153. Cupid falls asleep and a nymph steals his "heart-inflammatory brand." He quenches the brand in a cold well, yet the poet, who has come to the well to find relief from his love for the mistress, continues to suffer: "Love's fire heats water, water cools not love." The poet's illness is incurable, as it is already known by all. Thus, the poet again uses the medicine that does not cure the patient at this point as metaphor to signify his condition with his love saying that it is incurable lovesickness (Senna 106).

In sonnet 147, Shakespeare uses both simile and metaphor to signify his love to his mistress. It seems that the theme of Sonnet 147 is erotic love, and Shakespeare inscribes of this love metaphorically, comparing it to a disease or a fever. He uses metaphor of illness to signify his permanent love in which he is against all causes, rejects to obliterate or "cure." He uses the word reason, in the form of a physician, abandoned him because he could do nothing more to save him from the despair of loving the mistress. Again, he admits that the immortality of his soul is beyond reach: "Desire is death. /Past cure I am now reason is past treatment." His thoughts are now going madly, articulated in terms of "frantic mad," "ever more unrest," "madmen's," and at random." Despite his ability in the final couplet to differentiate between his perceptions of his relationship with the woman and the outcome of that relationship, his degrading tone suggests that he has gone too far to recover self-confidence (Senna, 103). The remedial or medicinal imagery of sonnet 147 likewise suggests remarkably adequate, the discourse of this sonnet exemplifies the dual nature of the *pharmakon* (the Greek word which has two opposite meanings - "cure" and "poison".) which might have been used as a metaphor that is resembled to Derrida's concept of *pharmakon*, that creates a play of binary similar to that of writing as both remedy and poison. Critics say that when Shakespeare writes of "the ill" and "the disease" it is obvious that he is denoting sexual craving in general, and to desire for the dark lady in particular and When he writes of "reason" he refers to "physician to his love (Allan, 63). Similarly, in sonnet 76, Stephen Booth supports this view:

The juxtaposition of methods and compounds, in the context of a possible need for a cure for barrenness, activates the specifically medical meanings of both words: a "method" was the specific systematic treatment proper to a specific disease~ 0 ED gives this from 1541: "Every kynde of disease hath his owne Methode." A "compound" was a compound drug, a remedy made by mixing two or more "simples," two or more herbs or elements. (23)

Shakespeare uses metaphor to compare between the writing and medicine, but at this point he refers to medicine to signify his devotion to his beloved. His reference to "methods" and "compounds" in line 4 evokes Plato's portrayal of writing as a *pharmakon*, or medicine.

3. CONCLUSION

To some extent, diseases during the Elizabethan age are similar to the diseases of the contemporary age. It also found that most of the diseases, their symptoms, and their remedies are known to common people as well as poets. It has also appeared that somehow most of the medicines are poisoned and incurable. Shakespeare used words that are understood only by a means of dictionaries or by critical views of being related to medicine, such as “reason” which meant “doctor”. In his sonnets, diseases have been used more widely than other images to signify pain, love, and repentance, whereas medicine has been used to signify forgiveness and devotion.

Shakespeare made use of different types of love, including love for a young man as an illness, but this is an indisposition incapable of healing; rather, an effort to cure this disease would be poisonous. While Shakespeare’s sonnets concluded with a hopeful message about the poet’s reaffirmation of his love for the young man, they also conveyed a sense that when love becomes effortless and palpable, it forces the poet to seek solace in other forms, such as sweetness and vomit, which are too close to each other for poetic comfort. All of which, according to the time they were written, have been drawn on dietary habits of the time and health regimens that included purgatives and laxatives, which convey the personal and unsavory truth of the poet’s body—vomiting, defecation, and addiction. For all that, these are relatively benign diseases—common diseases with regular though painful cures—because Shakespeare referred to them sometimes as curable and dreadful illnesses.

Finally, it can be asserted that the implicit meaning of Shakespeare’s sonnets was significantly enhanced by the use of figurative language. It, in the Elizabethan and contemporary eras, has been employed to indicate an additional and intended meaning. This is a reference to the common diseases, which he associated with diseases of the heart. By this, he meant diseases of love and infatuation, as well as the symptoms and pains that ensue, which kill the heart and grieve the adored.

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