Question 1. Critically analyse Donne's poem "The Sun Rising".

Ans: The first conceit, the extended metaphor in “The Sun Rising,” is the speaker’s treatment of the Sun as pedantic, annoying interruption. In the first stanza, the speaker chides the Sun, telling it to go wake up schoolboys and hunters. The speaker, in bed with his lover, does not want to awake or have to leave the bed. Then to underscore his point that the Sun is an unwelcome intruder, the speaker notes the Sun’s (and...) The first conceit, the extended metaphor in “The Sun Rising,” is the speaker’s treatment of the Sun as pedantic, annoying interruption. In the first stanza, the speaker chides the Sun, telling it to go wake up schoolboys and hunters. The speaker, in bed with his lover, does not want to awake or have to leave the bed. Then to underscore his point that the Sun is an unwelcome intruder, the speaker notes the Sun’s (and Time’s) irrelevance because their love is beyond the confines of time. Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime, Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time. (9-10)

In this dramatic monologue, Donne uses apostrophe, a figure of speech in which the speaker addresses an abstract idea, absent person, or personified object. In this case, the speaker addresses the personified Sun. The poem is narrated in the present tense as the Sun rises. This poem is an example of hyperbole, an exuberant exaggeration of the speaker’s love, the second extended metaphor.

The rhyme scheme for all three stanzas is ababcdedee. Some of the lines are short and this accentuates the speaker’s monologue of scolding the Sun. The increases the intensity of his voice and establishes the Sun’s personification. In the second stanza, the speaker flatters the Sun, but follows up by mocking its supposed power, claiming he can eclipse the Sun’s light with a wink. In the speaker continues his mockery and continues praising the love between he and his mistress. He claims that his love is so grand that all the spice, wealth, and royalty of the world “here in one bed lay.”

In the third stanza, the speaker’s glorification of his love with his mistress reaches new heights. The poem has two extended metaphors. One is the personified Sun as an annoying and pretentious interruption. And, ironically, the speaker is also pretentious in the praise of his love which he claims is, at least metaphorically, worth all the value in the world. She, his lover, is “all states” and he is “all princes.” And there is nothing else. Everything else is just a copy of themselves.

The speaker finally invites the Sun to shine on them. One could argue that the speaker is overdoing the glorification of his love. One could also argue that he is just so in love that he doesn’t want it to end; he does not want to be reminded of the passage of time (which is the Sun’s job, rising and setting). For the speaker, the entire world is their bedroom. If the Sun shines on them in that room, it shines everywhere. Their love is a world all by itself. Since this love is timeless, it cannot be disturbed by the Sun’s indications of the passage of time. In this respect, the speaker is not merely flaunting his love in spite of the Sun. He is praising the richness of the intimate experience.

Question 2. Discuss the themes of Shakespeare’s Sonnets.

Ans: There are 154 Shakespearean sonnets. They were not written as a coherent narrative but rather as individual poems, and thus, although there are certain themes that recur across several individual sonnets, there is not the sort of thematic unity one would find in a sonnet sequence intended as an organic whole. The sonnet as a form, especially as developed by Petrarch, was often associated with the theme of love. Shakespeare is no exception to this, and the majority of the sonnets have love as a theme. This theme can be handled in many ways. Some of the sonnets praise the beloved directly and others indirectly. Some suggest that love can bring joy even when the narrator is surrounded by misfortune. Others emphasize that true love endures through age and involves a deep spiritual connection rather than just superficial physical attraction. The love poems are mainly addressed to a young man but some are also addressed to a woman. They include themes of jealousy, unrequited love, and requited love. Some of the poems also address the nature of time and human mortality.

Themes

Different Types of Romantic Love

Modern readers associate the sonnet form with romantic love and with good reason: the first sonnets written in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Italy celebrated the poets’ feelings for their loved ones and their patrons. These sonnets were addressed to stylized, lionized women and dedicated to wealthy noblemen, who supported poets with money and other gifts usually in return for lofty praise in print. Shakespeare dedicated his sonnets to “Mr. W. H.,” and the identity of this man remains unknown. He dedicated an earlier set of poems, Venus and Adonis and Rape of Lucrece, to Henry Wriothesly, earl of Southampton, but it’s not known what Wriothesly gave him for this honor. In contrast to tradition, Shakespeare addressed most of his sonnets to an unnamed young man, possibly Wriothesly. Addressing sonnets to a young man was unique in Elizabethan England. Furthermore, Shakespeare used his sonnets to explore different types of love between the young man and the speaker, the young man and the dark lady, and the dark lady and the speaker. In his sequence, the speaker expresses passionate concern for the young man, praises his beauty, and articulates what we would now call homosexual desire. The woman of Shakespeare’s sonnets, the so-called dark lady, is earthy, sexual, and faithless—characteristics in direct opposition to lovers described in other sonnet sequences, including Astrophil and Stella, by Sir Philip Sidney, a contemporary of Shakespeare, who were praised for their angelic demeanor, virginity, and steadfastness. Several sonnets also probe the nature of love, comparing the idealized love found in poems with the messy, complicated love found in real life.

The Dangers of Lust and Love