



Re-examination of Shakespeare's Lyrical Cycle: New Criticism and Sonnet 66

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Abstract: *This work presents an overview of the style and technique which William Shakespeare used in order to create his own form of sonnet sequence. In other words, this article presents a detailed analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 66 through the lens of the American New Critical approach. It means that the precise fourteen-line structure of the sonnet is examined, and such a structure reflects the Bard's themes and ideas inside of the sonnet. The article gives an analysis of particular features of the American New Criticism and the people who contributed to the creation of such a literary criticism. Furthermore, the article explains the notion of how the language used reflects the meaning behind Sonnet 66. Also, the article explains the ways in which the Bard influenced other poetry writers, such as Laza Kostić, as well as the manner through which he was able to insert elements of his poetic craft into the famous Shakespearean dramas.*

Keywords: *William Shakespeare, Sonnet 66, Iambic pentameter, New Criticism, Laza Kostić*

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1. INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare, who has been mythologised in the English history, language and literature through many centuries, still remains one of the most prominent and mysterious figures within the English canon. When English literature is taken into account, Austen, Milton, Keats, Spenser or Coleridge are just some of the names which are closely associated with English literature, however Shakespeare's name vividly stands out among the crowd of writers or poets. Shakespeare's writing opus encompasses numerous plays and several longer poems, as well as his famous sonnet sequence. Firstly, this paper will analyse certain features of the so-called Shakespearean sonnet sequence, thus emphasising the notion of how this writer managed to formulate his own style when it comes to the creation of 'little songs'. Afterwards, this article will present the characteristics of the American New Criticism, as a literary theory which will be applied in order to analyse *Sonnet 66* line by line, focusing on its form rather than on its content. Also, by analysing the form of the sonnet, its meaning will also be interpreted, because the form of the language will be the reflection of the 'story' behind the poetic work.

As the very name implies, the New Critical approach will deal primarily with the formal aspects of Shakespeare's poetry, examining the rhythm, rhyming scheme, syntactic structure, (iambic) metre used, as well as different metaphors or literary devices, figures of speech which the Bard used in order to convey his worldviews, dissatisfactions or general opinions on the reality which surrounded him during the Early Modern period in England. The stylistic features of Shakespearean sonnet sequence will also be analysed, taking into account the meticulous use of the so-called iambic pentameter, as a prosodic and poetic features, found commonly among Shakespeare's 154 sonnets. The article deals with the general longing for death that the poetic persona desires in order to depart from the cruel and corrupt world which surrounds him. Moreover, it deals with the manner in which Shakespeare uniquely brought to light all the evils which one might have encountered during his own lifetime, and how the unworthy have been given the status of prominence, whereas those of more calibre, integrity or potential have been downtrodden by those who hold power or some other form of authority. Finally, this article will describe some of the ways in which Shakespeare's lyrical cycle influenced other authors, such as Laza Kostić, or even how the Bard was able to transmit some of his poetic gifts onto his other literary pieces, mainly his dramatic literary opus, such as with the examples of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Romeo and Juliet*.

This paper will emphasise the practical use of New Criticism in Shakespeare's lyrical cycle, more prominently *Sonnet 66*, and will examine the relationship between the form, the structure of the sonnet and the meaning which the author implemented into his writings. As the Bard's words carry particular meaning, the followers of the American New Criticism focus more on the poetic language used

in order to interpret the paradoxes, ironies and other literary metaphors. In other words, the writer's lexis reflects the meaning of the content. Through close reading of *Sonnet 66* it becomes apparent that even particular prefixes carry important semantic connotations, relevant for the understanding of Shakespeare's artistic language. However, it should be noted that New Criticism may not be the most prominent of literary theory present in the 21st century, yet scholars who apply it are able to better decipher the author's messages if the language used by the same author is closely studied. Therefore, this paper will explain how the language in its own form (i. e. metre, rhyme, line number, etc.) can be used adequately to interpret Shakespeare's dissatisfaction with his own society and the deep lamentation which the speaker is expressing.

2. SHAKESPEARE'S 'LITTLE SONGS'

From Elizabethan times, three most prominent types of sonnets have been used in Europe: Petrarchan, Shakespearean, and Spenserian sonnets. Many of the sonnet sequences which appeared after the Tudor period, in England, have actually been modelled after those kinds of poetic pieces. In essence, Shakespearean sonnet can be defined as: "A lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme" (Abrams, 1999, p. 290). On the other side, Shakespearean sonnets are exquisitely sentimental in their theme: they interweave aspects of love (requited or unreturned), passion, lust and deep yearning, but also possess different addresses which are still disputed by contemporary scholars of Shakespearean studies. Whether Shakespeare felt some bisexual or homosexual tendencies towards a young man who is described as vividly fair, or whether he cheated on his spouse, Anne Hathaway, with an unknown woman, described on the other hand as having black hair and dark skin, truly remains unknown even to this very day. Also, the precise identity of the beautiful young man is rather unsubstantiated, even though there are some suggestions that the aforementioned persona could have actually been his close friend and his 'poetic Maecenas', the Earl of Southampton. There is a third (speculated) addressee, as well, who is occasionally described as being an anonymous 'rival poet' of the Bard. It should be noted that the thematic features of Shakespeare's lyrical cycle are not the only fascinating aspects of his writings nor are the already-mentioned addressees the only interesting points of his sonnets.

The Earl of Southampton can be perceived as the person who promoted Shakespeare to actually widen his entire writing opus, in which case, poetry became an essential part of Shakespeare's writings (Bloom, 2008, p. 312). The Bard's plays, as particular forms of entertainment for everyone, encompass certain features of Shakespeare's lyrical genre and style, thus many formal characteristics of his poetry can also be traced within his dramas. The prominent form which Shakespeare used in order to actually breathe life into these poems

are of extreme interest to different literary theorists. Primarily, his style is unique, his sentence structure recognisable, his metre perfected and it is possible that there is not a single person within the continent of Europe who has not at least once heard a line from any Shakespearean sonnet at one point or another in their lifetimes. Therefore, it is obvious how much the writings of this Renaissance and Jacobean poet influenced world literature prior and post 1616. This article will approach Shakespeare's *Sonnet 66* from a new, critical perspective. In other words, the article is going to closely examine and exemplify numerous elements which are closely knit with the creative foundation of this particular poem.

It should be noted that *Sonnet 66* was relatively 'ignored' by different scholars from the English-speaking countries. In other words, not many scholars generally focused on that particular sonnet, with a notable exception of Helen Vendler, especially in the 21st century. However, there are other authors who tried to capture and interpret the meaning behind *Sonnet 66* both in terms of its content and form. Taking into account a more contemporary timeframe, Pfister (2010, p. 40) explains in his article that this sonnet was used by artists in order to 'ventilate' their anger directed towards totalitarian systems, particularly during WWII, but their anger was also directed towards all those who wanted to corrupt or silence art, as such. In the same regard, the Bard heavily criticised those who would tongue-tie art. Pfister observes the style of the aforementioned sonnet, whereas this paper similarly analyses the formal aspects of Shakespeare's language, which in turn depicts the writer's description of the community around the speaking persona.

Besides Vendler's work dubbed *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* and Pfister's analysis of the importance of *Sonnet 66*, Natalya Borisovna Zubareva also wrote an article examining the features of language used in *Sonnet 66*, as well as in other Shakespearean writings. Zubareva explains the basic word and sound structure of *Sonnet 66*, as well as the metrical importance of his poetic craft. Zubareva (2017, p. 687) also explains in her article that: "With only small degrees of variation, Shakespeare primarily used a metrical pattern consisting of lines of unrhymed iambic pentameter, or blank verse, to compose his plays. At the same time, there are passages in all the plays that deviate from this and use forms of poetry or simple prose". The author in this particular case does not necessarily focus on *Sonnet 66* through the prism of New Criticism, yet she closely examines the linguistic patterns, musicality of words, the use of metre and rhythm, and these elements are of extreme importance for the followers of the American New Criticism. Thus, certain similarities can be found between the works of Pfister and Zubareva, as well as this paper. It becomes apparent that New Criticism, as a literary theory, can greatly contribute to other researchers in the process of analysing the Bard's poetic verse and his creative linguistic patterns.

3. FORMALIST APPROACH TO SONNET 66

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone (Vendler, 1999, p. 307).

This article will present a new critical analysis of one of Shakespeare's most controversial and universal sonnets. The New Critical approach applied in the sonnet analysis will focus primarily on the form of the short poem and the language used. The American New Critics focus on the language used in literature, poetry because they saw it as: "... providing an almost mystical experience of coherence in which opposites - language and meaning, spirit and matter, content and form, the particular and the universal - are reconciled" (Ryan, 1999, p. 4). Therefore, it is apparent that literary language, as such, can contribute to a more objective analysis of a given work, whereas it can also tie different binaries together in order to create meaning through the sonnet's form. Some of the names which are closely associated with the Anglo-American New Critical movement are I. A. Richards, William Empson, T. S. Eliot or even Cleanth Brooks. Brooks, for example, carefully studied, observed and examined poetic pieces, such as Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and thereby he would be able to find particular paradoxical images within poetry, and those images spoke of opposites such as: "... fluidity and stillness, the ideal and the ordinary..." (Ryan, 1999, p. 5). The very language applied in poetry differs from the ordinary speech used in everyday communication, and taking into account Shakespeare's mastering of such poetic language, it is obvious that the Bard knew how to apply his language/linguistic capacities in order to present a clearly understandable flow of unmistakable emotions through which he would convey his deep sorrows and regrets because of all the atrocities he had been experiencing during his own lifetime. However, in addition to Shakespeare's own talent in creating verse, the (poetic) language which the New Critics would examine can actually be found other literary or non-literary texts, as well, and this is due to the fact that:

"By the very nature of the human being, the ordinary citizen in the ordinary day speaks much of what we might call incipient poetry-he attempts to

communicate attitudes, feelings, and interpretations. (Unfortunately, most of this poetry is bad poetry.) And poetry in this sense is not confined to the speech of the ordinary citizen. It appears also in editorials, sermons, political speeches, magazine articles, and advertisements." (Brooks, Jr. & Warren, 1938, p. 7)

Certain integral parts of *Sonnet 66* which are of great interest for the American New Criticism are rhythm and metre of this particular 'little song'. In other words, if the form of the sonnet and the metaphors used are the main focus of New Critical analysis, then it is suffice to say that particular aspects of its form are also of vital importance for one such analysis of this Shakespearean sonnet. "Rhythm and its specialized form, metre, depend upon repetition, and expectancy. Equally where what is expected recurs and where it fails, all rhythmical and metrical effects spring from anticipation. As a rule this anticipation is unconscious. Sequences of syllables both as sounds and as images of speech-movements leave the mind ready for certain further sequences rather than for others." (Richards, 2004, p. 133)

In a similar fashion to the Russian Formalism, the followers of New Criticism examine the language of a given literary work and thereby they derive the meaning from the written piece, and those essential parts which are observed through close-reading are certain tropes and metaphors, which Shakespeare used in his literary opus, for example, as well as different symbolisms, literary ironies and paradoxes. By doing so, secondary meaning(s) are derived and such meanings cannot be examined by the means of "... simple, straightforward denotative speech" (Ryan, 1999, p. 5).

It becomes apparent that certain words and/or images are capable of presenting different meanings which Shakespeare hid underneath the basic structure of his sonnet sequence and the analysis of *Sonnet 66* can be adequately applied. Finally, it should be noted that the American New Criticism can be applied to any Shakespeare's work, regardless whether the literary piece is one of his famous dramas or his shorter or longer poems, because the meaning in either halves of his writing opus can be derived from the manner in which the Bard created his extraordinarily famous plays or poems, as such.

Among 154 Shakespearean sonnets, there is one which stands out, possibly, more than any other. The poem is dubbed *Sonnet 66* and it presents the writer's contempt with his own Renaissance world, but it also perfectly depicts the contemporary period. It would appear that not much has changed from the Early Modern period to the age of Post-postmodern and that presents a particularly gloomy picture of the human society. The aforementioned sonnet presents the speaker's dissatisfaction with the community of his own age, but if one tries to truly understand the world of Shakespeare and the world of Tudor/Jacobean England, one ought to understand the circumstances which

influenced the Bard to write such a poetic piece. Oscar Wilde claimed in one of his essays:

“And he who desires to understand Shakespeare truly must understand the relations in which Shakespeare stood to the Renaissance and the Reformation, to the age of Elizabeth and the age of James; he must be familiar with the history of the struggle for supremacy between the old classical forms and the new spirit of romance, between the school of Sidney, and Daniel, and Johnson, and the school of Marlowe ...” (The Critic As Artist, 2007)

Therefore, it is obvious that in order to understand the content of Shakespeare's plays and his poems, one ought to consider the socio-cultural background which vividly influenced the thematic and formalistic features of his works. The poetic persona is openly describing the world of the Elizabethan era, presenting the utmost dissatisfaction with the entire society, as such. *Sonnet 66* is presenting the entire line of different individuals that readers can 'get acquainted with' once they start analysing the short poem.

The very first line presents a particular type of a 'prologue', in which case the phrase 'all these' encompasses different aspects of Shakespeare's society which will be described further on within the sonnet lines. Every sentence seems to present a particular victim of the society, whereas after the seventh line, the victims get accompanied by their own victimisers. In other words, it becomes evident who the actual perpetrators are. "Who makes art tongue-tied? *Authority*. Who controls skill? *Folly*" (Vendler, 1999, p. 308). The poem could be divided into two major parts; the first half, after the opening two sentences, presents the speaker's lament. The lament is obviously growing inside of the speaker. The pain, disillusionment and suffering are just some of the displeasures that the poetic voice is actually experiencing and is, therefore, in a vivid lament due to all these uncouth occurrences that the society is going through. However, in the second half of the sonnet, starting from the seventh line, it becomes apparent that the speaker is transforming the lament into determination. Pragmatically speaking, the poetic voice is still experiencing some degree of pain and displeasure, yet now, the poetic voice starts calling out the perpetrators openly, therefore bringing the accused into the light (Vendler, 1999, p. 308). Shakespeare speaks about the dichotomies of the society, on one side there are those who are downtrodden, whereas on the other, there are those individuals of power and of wealth who oppress the aforementioned lot. The poetic voice seemingly gains more power, more courage and more willingness to openly talk about the trouble of the world. Moreover, since Shakespeare's discourse gradually changes, the sonnet could entwine two kinds of Shakespeare's own voice. Alike polyphony, the first voice is resentful, bitter, yet vividly sad, however the second kind of the voice is more determined and more willing to (possibly) try to change the order of things, lest the entire society collapses underneath the pressure of the people who are destroying the true values.

If there were a complete balance created within this poetic piece, then the first octave would possibly present the unaccompanied persons, while the third quatrain would depict the innocents alongside the wrongdoers. In the final line of the octave, we see a single sentence combining the victim and the victimiser which entering too early, whereas the final quatrain possesses a single 'victim-only' line, which is actually the line number eleven. Also, it should be noted that if there were a particular balance between the octave and the final quatrain, then the past participle would control the octave and the present participle would be found in the final quatrain. Nonetheless, Shakespeare masterfully uses the past participle which enters the sestet, evidently portraying the Shakespearean version of a literary volta (Vendler, 1999, p. 309). Also, the Bard could have presented all the undermined individuals in the first octave, isolating them in order to have them dominate the whole octave, but he likewise decided to present the victims accompanied with those who have been climbing the ladder of society due to some evil undertakings. Thus, Shakespeare could have been gravely concerned with two particular types of injustice(s), one being the undeserved social position and other one being the destruction of the less fortunate individuals who did not manage to obtain, use and abuse any sort of power (Vendler, 1999, p. 309).

Furthermore, Shakespeare presents an almost perverse form of evil which is noticeable in his society. Primarily, when the phrases from the fourth to the seventh line are analysed, it becomes clear that there are many adverbs which Shakespeare employed in order to present the deterioration of the social order: unhappily, shamefully, rudely, wrongfully. These adverbs seem to be juxtaposed with the non-existent normality of the social hierarchy, in which case they seem to overpower it and completely annihilate everything which is good or virtuous. Also, the pervasion of the social order seems to be reflected in a number of prefixes which Shakespeare used with his adverbs and adjectives: un-happily, for-sworn, mis-placed, dis-graced, dis-abled. "The corrupt society is being measured against an independent morality firmly held to be self-evident" (Vendler, 1999, p. 309). Figuratively speaking, Shakespeare juxtaposes the worthy and the unworthy. From the third line, once he starts introducing the main subjugated persons, he presents the notions of how someone, who is genuinely worthy of good fortune, is robbed of that honour, but also how the lowest of the low have climbed up the social ladder (undeservingly), and so on. Therefore, almost every line describes dichotomies, binaries, two opposites in which one is a victim while the other part is the victimiser. The virtuous, the good, the truthful, the strong, the honourable and all those other people who share good qualities will be, eventually, subjugated to all manner of different evils. In the final couplet, the poetic voice is actually contemplating suicide, just as in the first two lines, whereas the speaker makes it clear that it is only because of love that the voice decides to stay among the living and not cross the threshold of death. In other words, the poetic voice is reluctant to take his own life: "... And who, under such conditions, could justify leaving his love – somewhere in the

procession – alone” (Vendler, 1999, p. 310). If Shakespeare did contemplate suicide at a particular juncture, alike the protagonist of his magnum opus Prince Hamlet, then he certainly decided to stay alive due to the fact that his loved one (whoever the anonymous addressee may be) would be left all alone, unprotected and vulnerable in such a world where true values are no longer appreciated.

There is a possibility that Shakespeare used certain Christian parallels with the seven cardinal sins. The deadly sins open up the entire poem, whereas the internal, cognitive, emotional and spiritual sins appear to be more complicated and thus are more serious than particular earthly sins connected to greed or lust (Seven deadly sins, 2010). The entire culmination can be observed once the spiritual or intellectual sins are mentioned, but taking into account that Shakespeare was an artist himself, there is no doubt that the Bard of Avon heavily criticised the censorship of art. The art ought not to be tied down by anyone and should not be subdued to someone’s whims. The art should transcend the ideas of subjugation, the very role of art should never be lost under the evils of the world. Should the speaker become tongue-tied, as the sonnet implies, then the dire repercussions would be reflected on the eloquence of the poet. In addition to his literary devices, his metaphors, Shakespeare’s specific syntax perpetuates the idea found within the very first line. The poetic voice seems to be weary, perhaps even exhausted, due to all the evils which he had witnessed. The middle part (lines three to ten) of *Sonnet 66* commences with a conjunction ‘and’. Since that conjunction is repeated on so many occasions, it presents the notion that the speaker is actually tired. The eloquence of this ‘little song’ is deteriorating, due to his tired condition, the poetic voice is influenced by the same phenomenon which Shakespeare is criticising. The lyrical voice is obviously becoming tongue-tied. Every line seems to be anticlimactic due to so many identical lexemes being repeated and the ‘exhausted sonnet’ can only be reinvigorated once the readers start focusing on the imagery of different persons in the poem and thereby connect them to the people of the contemporary era. That is to say, numerous aspects of Shakespeare’s own age can be easily identified with the world of the 21st century (Vendler, 1999, p. 310).

In addition to numerous literary devices which Shakespeare inserted into *Sonnet 66*, the form of Shakespearean sonnets remains one of the most interesting parts of his short poems. Shakespeare’s sonnets, his ‘little songs’, share (almost) identical features. It is apparent that Shakespeare remained faithful to his form, but moreover his form presents an artistic language which can be either completely flamboyant and complex or utterly straightforward and understandable to both the royals and commoners alike. His 154 sonnets are short poetic pieces which are comprised of 14 lines. *Sonnet 66* has three quatrains, ending with a couplet, and as it is evident with *Sonnet 66*, the first two lines and the ending couplet are usually somewhat connected. Quatrains are often used in English literature and such four-line stanzas are connected to numerous metres and rhyming schemes (Abrams, 1999, p. 295). This sonnet possesses a regular

rhyiming scheme, in a similar fashion to the rest of the sonnets in Shakespeare's book, whereas the scheme is: abab cdcd efef gg. Metre, as such, can be defined as: "... the recurrence, in regular units, of a prominent feature in the sequence of speech-sounds of a language" (Abrams, 1999, p. 159). The type of a metre which Shakespeare used is dubbed 'iambic pentameter'. The Bard of Avon used iambic pentameter masterfully, presenting the high degree of skill when it comes to writing such five-stress iambic verses.

The 'iambic clothing' of Shakespeare's *Sonnet 66* incorporates universal messages, worlds of different epochs which come together and start sharing similar features. Through his iambic stanzas, Shakespeare managed to depict many individuals, standing side by side, being influenced by the society which they inhabit. His poetic characters possess universal traits which can be found in every person, no matter what age he or she may belong to. Thus, it is no wonder that Shakespeare successfully tackled the minds and creative strings of different playwrights and poets all over the globe. For example, many poets mimicked the Bard's use of iambic pentameter, which can also be observed in his dramatic opus. A famous Serbian poet of Romanticism called Laza Kostić glorified Shakespeare to such an extent that he wrote a particular hymn which celebrates Shakespeare as the 'flower' of God's creation on earth. "He was the first to translate Shakespeare directly from English into Serbian, by using the iambic verse for the first time. He has written the ode to Shakespeare in the glory of the English bard" (Laza Kostić and Shakespeare – the strongest connection, 2010). Therefore, it is obvious that the Bard of Avon successfully influenced other poets who even were not even from the English-speaking territories. Among many others, Kostić modelled his poem, his ode, after Shakespeare's own skill when it comes to creating verses and the Serbian poet was, to a particular extend, rather successful, even though his poem was not even written in the English language. Taking into account certain features of Shakespeare's use of iambic pentameter, it is apparent that the same metre was used in Shakespeare's tragedies, comedies and other works. For example, the story of the tragic love between Romeo and Juliet incorporates different instances at which Shakespeare applied his iambic pentameter, but one of the most exquisite examples of that can be read in the lines: "But, soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun" (Yarbrough, 2014). This romantic quote beautifully exemplifies how useful iambic pentameter actually is, even in his tragedies. On the other hand, the last speech of Puck which ends the entire play of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* can serve as one of the examples wherein Shakespeare used iambs, yet not applying the regular form of iambic pentameter. "The first two lines of the speech are fairly clearly written in strict trochaic tetrameter, and the last two lines are written in iambic tetrameter. However, most of the lines in between contain only seven syllables. This allows the lines to be interpreted as either iambic or trochaic tetrameter" (Lee, 2011). Therefore, it is apparent that Shakespeare managed to insert confusion and uncertainties into the theme and form of his dramatic pieces. Since *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy overflowing with confusion and

misunderstandings, the very plotline reflects the ambiguity in which Shakespeare manages to create his verse.

William Shakespeare was can be perceived as the greatest writer of the Elizabethan and Jacobean England due to the fact that his writing craft presents universal characters, settings and didactical messages which remain eloquent for every period of history. Even if his entire dramatic opus was disregarded, the number of his poems and his sonnets would still make him one of the most prolific authors of his own age. The Bard himself remains a mystery to this very day, and likewise does his lyrical cycle. In essence, this paper shed new light on *Sonnet 66* which has frequently been overlooked by other authors and it presented a new framework in which the same poem could be analysed. That is to say, this paper combined the techniques of New Criticism and thus helped in the promotion of *Sonnet 66*. The paper observed *Sonnet 66* and associated it with the world of the 21st century, stressing the importance of the artistic language and the universal themes which the Bard successfully incorporated in the aforementioned poetic piece. This paper contributed in drawing more attention to Shakespeare's lyrical cycle, primarily *Sonnet 66*, among the newer generations of Shakespeare scholars by focusing on its unique linguistics features and by stressing the universality of the themes.

Through his sonnets, Shakespeare addresses his readers, through the poetic personae he speaks with anyone who is willing to analyse his poems. In that regard, Shakespeare is similar to one of the ancient deities; he is alike Janus, a Roman god who possessed two faces. He speaks of sorrow, of lost ideals and of earthly evils by presenting once face, but also gives particular notions of hope with his second face in order for his readers to understand that there is still some good in the world that ought to triumph. William Shakespeare presents numerous dichotomies, he presents opposites and diversities to all those who are immersed into poetry. Therefore, *Sonnet 66* can be observed as a medium which Shakespeare used because he wanted everyone to know what the dangers of a corrupt society are, but that sonnets also presents an entire stage of individuals who pass through each era. The form of his sonnet serves as a mirror for its content, whereas every line talks about ills and good fortunes in a world where true values no longer apply. In that sense, Shakespeare's sonnets transcend any boundaries and tackle the important issues of every person, regardless of their background or their class status.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper depicted the formalist analysis of *Sonnet 66* through the prism of the American New Criticism. The article explained certain features of Shakespeare's sonnet sequence, but also the primary ideas which guide the followers of the American New Critical approach. Moreover, New Criticism focused on the

formal use of the poetic language, the basic structure of *Sonnet 66* in order to understand the meanings behind Shakespeare's words. By exploring the linguistic patterns and the language which William Shakespeare used in his poetic craft, one is able to better comprehend the amount of irony, paradox and tension which are required for the analysis of Shakespeare's 'little songs'. This paper explored the deep lament and dissatisfaction which the speaker is expressing, and the manner in which Shakespeare employed language to create paradoxes between those unworthy individuals who take power and those in the society who are used and abused by the former category. The poetic voice, suffocated by the overwhelming grief, even begins contemplating suicide, yet realises that his beloved one would be then left alone in such a cruel world, unguarded and that thought is something which prompts the speaker to stay alive. In the concluding part of this article, readers observed the influence of Shakespeare's lyrical style outside of the Anglophone sphere. The Bard's writings style, his use of iambic pentameter was also greatly praised by Laza Kostić, who modelled his own poetic pieces after Shakespeare's lyrical craft. Kostić did not only exalt Shakespeare's dramas and poems but was also fascinated by the originality in his approach, and thus employed the rhythmical patterns, the metre and literary devices in his own poetry, similarly to Shakespeare during the Renaissance era in England. Lastly, the paper depicted some of the key poetic formal elements which Shakespeare masterfully transmitted from his lyrical cycle to his dramatic works, including both tragedies and comedies.

It should be noted that even though New Criticism is no longer a predominant literary theory in the 21st century, particular elements, such as close reading, do remain vital for the understanding of different literary texts. Furthermore, the American New Criticism closely focuses on the formal outline of a certain literary text, because the language reflects the inherent meaning behind it. As observed in *Sonnet 66*, the speaker's words in a linguistic sense actually uncover deep emotions hidden beneath the lines of the text. By observing the sentence structure, the morphological usage of negative prefixes, and the paradoxes which Shakespeare creates, such an approach grants more emphasis on the language of the author which in turn contributes to a better understating of the writer's message. William Shakespeare was a master of words, as he was able to convey universal ideas throughout various epochs and such ideas were both significant in his era, but likewise remain rather relevant in the 21st century. The language, the use of irony and tension in the speaker's voice presents a whirl of scenes which in turn create a mosaic depicting corrupt society that Shakespeare was a part of. Thus, it becomes apparent that the poetic language reflects the meaning of *Sonnet 66* and vice versa; both sides are entwined. *Sonnet 66* no longer has to remain overshadowed by other, more prominent 'little songs', but rather it can find its well-deserved place in the Bard's lyrical cycle, and furthermore it can be fully appreciated by a larger number of researchers.

The significance of New Criticism is not lost and in close reading of artistic texts, it remains apparent that when discovering the 'magic' of the author's language, one is actually able to fully grasp the writer's thought or emotion. New Criticism contributes to the field of Shakespearean studies by emphasising the relevance of the Bard's lexis, indicating that the poetic voice speaking is actually the voice of the original author, and through his artistic language, different researchers can 'dissect' his poetic lines to reveal the original messages behind them. Such a formalist approach can help the readers analyse the stress, tone and rhythm of the author's emotion and in essence discover the writer's perspective on certain matters. Thus it is important to mention that the American New Critical approach can be applied to any number of William Shakespeare's literary pieces, and such a literary theory can be used in further studies among the researchers who decide to examine his dramas, narrative poems or his sonnet sequence. By applying the New Critical approach, one can obtain a more objective or scientific perspective on the relation between the artistic language and the content of any given literary genre.

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