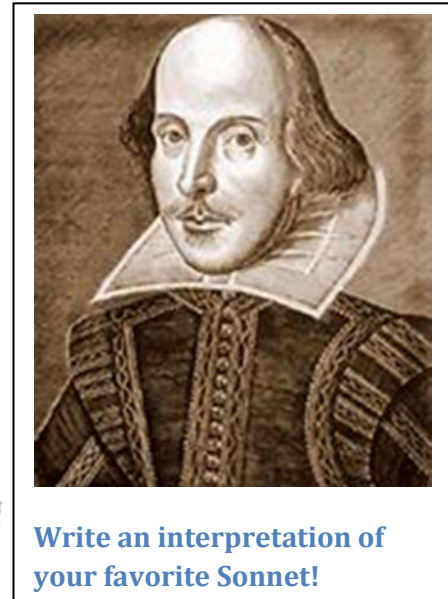


Task 7

- Use the feedbacks you have received from your teacher and classmates to create a literary interpretation of the sonnet you have chosen
- Aim at combining your own personal thoughts and impressions with the knowledge you have gained from the feedbacks and the class discussions.



Write an interpretation of your favorite Sonnet!

Peters Interpretation von Sonnet 130:

Sonnet 130

A personal Analysis

Final Version

Sonnet 130

*My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.*

I read a couple of Shakespeare's Sonnets before I came across Sonnet 130, that immediately attracted my attention when I read it. In other sonnets like sonnet 116, where Shakespeare tries to explain the nature of love or in sonnet 73, in which the difficult relation between age and love are central, Shakespeare puts an enormous effort in creating metaphors to express the crucial aspects of love. I remember the metaphor of glooming, emphasizing fading youth in sonnet "In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire That on the ashes of his youth doth lie..." or love described as "an ever-fixed mark. That looks on tempests and is never shaken; It is the star to every wandering bark..." In this sense Sonnet 130 is different. Instead of creating impressive metaphors he makes use of already existing ones and turns them ridiculous. This is what makes the sonnet rather to a satire than a love poem. It is obvious that Shakespeare plays a joke on the conceptions of love poetry, which were common to Shakespeare's day but are still present in our minds nowadays. By taking the highly idealising comparisons between nature and the poets' lover literally rather than figuratively he makes use of a very current satirical method to drag them in the mud. "My mistress' eyes are like the sun" becomes "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun", "her lips are red as coral" becomes "Coral is far more red than her lips' red", "her breasts are white as snow" becomes "If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun" The interesting issue is that even though the poem actually relies on a single kind of joke for its first twelve lines it never gets monotonous. This is due to the effective rhetorical structure of the sonnet. In the first quatrain the speaker spends one line

on each comparison between his mistress' beauty and a counterpart (the sun, coral, snow, and wires). In the following eight lines he expands the description and spends two lines per comparison. Though there are another four descriptions based on the same joke the poem remains varied not only thanks to the modified structure but also because of the content that shifts from the description of the body to the description of other characteristics as her voice and her walking "*I love to hear her speak, yet well I know That music hath a far more pleasing sound; I grant I never saw a goddess go: My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground;*" Finally the couplet makes the speakers' s point clear and neatly tops the sonnet off. The good rhetoric did not miss the target as I really had to laugh when I read the sonnet. However, I think that Sonnet 130 hides a social criticism behind the humorous facade. It is this double entendre that fascinates me in this Sonnet. Furthermore it confirms a parallel to the Romeo and Juliet play. There it is mainly Mercutio who fulfils an ambiguous function. Mercutio's constant jokes and teases are very funny at the first moment but they hide a clear criticism. With his words he taunts romantic sentiments and blind self-love that exist within the play. He mocks Romeos self-indulgence just as he ridicules Tybalt's pride and adherence to fashion. Moreover he believes that specific people are responsible for his death rather than some external impersonal force. He resists the established rivalry and avoids cursing all Montagues and Capulets. To come back to the comparison with Sonnet 130 it can be noted that here the social criticism against established conventions is also a central aspect.

Concerning the social criticism against the idealized picture of beauty in Sonnet 130, it is striking that it has not lost its actuality. Humans still try to shape an idealized and idolized picture of beauty. The only difference to the past is that we have other means than poetry to communicate the picture. The unrealistic comparison between women and nature has been displaced by the unrealistic comparison between women and the computer-enhanced models in publicity campaigns. But the consequences are worse than in Shakespeare's day if we think of rising numbers of people, who want to live up to the image of the ideal female beauty and end up in anorexia or other eating disorders. Of course Shakespeare did not foreknow this development but he already questioned the addiction to idealizing the picture of beauty.

Kommentar

Romeo und Julia wurde zur gleichen Zeit in der Klasse behandelt. Dieses Wissen hat Peter bei seiner Interpretation in die Waagschale geworfen.