

RUMINATIONS OF RILKE’S LOVE SONG

Rilke’s ”Love Song” is quite sharp and precise since it has a poetic substance. The jist of the poem is that the subject does not want merely to merge with the beloved and in fact is deeply reluctant to do so. But instead, the subject wants to be attached in a different way to the beloved. He wants to be a string on a violin so that the beloved becomes another so that the bow produces a harmonious music with both strings vibrating together.

This is an interesting poem because of the sharpness of the decisions here are both poetic search for a perfection in romantic love. I am not so interested here in turns of phrase that are appealing and rhyme and meter. I am much more straightforward about whether he actually has some substance here that could be valuable to eight billion people today.

The issues thus arise of whether romantic love is better off without this seeking a merge, and to what extent any merge is possible, and in practice what does it mean to be separate strings in a violin that vibrate in harmonious fashion together.

We know that Rilke’s philosophy of romantic love was different than many others in that he considered good lovers to be guardians of each others’ solitude.

Nice support for Rilke’s idea that *autonomy support* is actually of universal importance to romantic relationships is available.

Table 2 Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Support Received and Given on Relationship Satisfaction

	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Step 1	.042	.002				
Gender				-.042	-.913	.362
Marital status				.009	.187	.852
Step 2	.400	.160	.158 (<i>p</i> < .05)			
Autonomy support received				.394	9.364	< .05
Directive support received				-.089	-2.117	< .05
Step 3 (when support given is reported by the provider)	.442	.195	.035 (<i>p</i> < .05)			
Autonomy support given				.165	3.431	< .05
Directive support given				-.152	-3.091	< .05
Step 3 (when support given is reported by the recipient)	.445	.198	.027 (<i>p</i> < .05)			
Autonomy support given				.206	4.614	< .05
Directive support given				-.059	-1.382	.168

The three steps represent the order of entry for the variables. Marital status is coded ”1” for the married couples and ”2” for the cohabiting couples; *n*=494

1. THE POEM

How can I keep my soul in mem so that it doesn’t touch your soul?
How can I raise it high enough, past you, to other things? I
would like to shelter it, among remote lost objects, in some
dark and silent place that doesn’t resonate when your depths
resound. Yet everything that touches us, me and you, takes us
together like a violin’s bow, which draws one voice out of two
separate strings. Upon what instrument are we two spanned?
And what musician holds us in his hand? Oh sweetest song.

2. BIOGRAPHICAL REINFORCEMENT

Rilke was never able to have a strong committed romantic relationship. He married Clara Westhoff but eventually just abandoned her with a daughter to pursue his dreams in Paris. And yet, he was able to decipher something highly nontrivial about successful romantic relationships, the need for autonomy within. The entire human race will improve dramatically if this is adopted clearly by all people, that autonomy within romantic relationships is necessary for satisfaction. This lack of understanding is quite likely a major portion of dysfunction in human lives across the globe.

REFERENCES

- [1] Noémie Carbonneau, Tamas Martos, Viola Sallay, Samuel Rochette, Richard Koestner, Examining the associations of autonomy and directive support given and received with relationship satisfaction in the context of goals that romantic partners have for one another, *Motivation and Emotion*, 13, 2019