

Sonnet 73 , william shakespeare – analysis essay sample

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This is a traditional sonnet comprised of fourteen rhymed lines of ten syllables. Each line has five feet consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, indicating the poem was written in iambic pentameter. The seven rhyming pairs are set out in the scheme introduced by Surrey; ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

The opening line is an example of enjambement. It is only by continuing to the second line that the reader will find out which time of year the poet refers to. The first quatrain introduces a metaphor of the year to stand for his life. The images presented are those of winter. The trees have lost their leaves, the church is abandoned. The 'sweet birds' may refer both to the congregation, and to the birds that have migrated for the winter.

The second quatrain compresses the time metaphor further from a year to a day. The end seems nearer than in the first as it is after 'sunset fadeth'. As the night takes away the day, death will end his life. This is further emphasised by the use of the phrase 'seals up' with its connotations of the coffin.

The metaphor changes to fire in the third quatrain. Another example of enjambement is found in line nine, where it is necessary to read on in order to find out what type of fire is here, although the word 'glowing' hints at embers rather than flames. The burning of the fire creates the ashes which extinguish the flames thus forming the 'death-bed'.

The intention of the sonnet is revealed in the closing couplet. The word 'mayst' in the opening line of the poem is an invitation for his companion to

look at him. The repetition of ' In me thou see'st' focuses that observation as the images show death becoming more imminent. In the final couplet tribute is paid to the person who sees all this yet loves him still. The caesura which follows, ' This thou perceiv'st' gives more impact to what follows. The love is stronger for its awareness of the short time remaining, and the repetition of that word ' love' emphasises its importance to the sonnet.

It is generally believed that the first 126 sonnets of Shakespeare were addressed to a man. The voice of this 73rd is that of an older man addressing a younger male. The language is informal and intimate in tone, but also appreciative and trusting of his companion's affection