

Sonnet evolution assignment

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When readers hear the word sonnet, they usually think of Shakespeare; however, he is not the first sonneteer, nor the last, of course. The sonnet got its beginnings centuries ago and has endured. One might ask why it has endured over such a lengthy period of time, and the answer is a simple one: EVOLUTION. Just as humans have had to evolve over time, the sonnet has had to do so as well.

The two main forms of the sonnet are the Italian sonnet (also referred to as the Petrarchan sonnet) and the English sonnet (also referred to as the Shakespearean sonnet). In an attempt to show the evolutionary road the sonnet has traveled, these two sonnet forms will be thoroughly examined. Credited for the creation of the sonnet is Giacomo da Lentini. Also known as Jacopo, Lentini created the sonnet sometime in the thirteenth century and are the earliest known. "He adapted the themes, style, and language of Provençal poetry to Italian, infusing it with his own aristocratic and exclusive tastes (Giacomo). All known poetry credited to Giacomo concerns various ideals of love, not necessarily in the same sense that love is seen today, rather, it is seen in terms such as "the service of the lover to his lady (Giacomo)." Although Giacomo is the inventor, Petrarch is the sonneteer that is remembered and talked about concerning the art. Petrarch came along some years later to popularize the sonnet with his love sonnets about Laura and his unrequited love for her. He is thought to have met her in church, although "met" might be a little presumptuous.

Petrarch was fixated on her, and created some of the most beautiful poetry, that we, otherwise, would never have seen. For a woman he would never

know, for a woman he could never have, he should change the world forever; for that's precisely what Petrarch did when he gave us the perfected sonnet. He provided the start to what would become generations of love poetry. As well as a love of literature, Petrarch also had during his early youth a deep religious faith, a love of virtue, and an unusually deep perception of the transitory nature of human affairs.

There now followed the reaction which also coincided with the beginning of his famous chaste love for a woman known now only as Laura. Vain attempts have been made to identify her, but Petrarch himself kept silent about everything that had to do with her personal life, or her social standing in the community. He was probably trying to protect her from criticism or just didn't consider it important to mention while he was writing about his love for her. He first saw her in the Church of St. Clare at Avignon on April 6, 1327, and loved her, although she was outside his reach.

From this love there springs the work for which he is most celebrated, the Italian poems (Rime), which he thought of as mere trifles but which he collected and revised throughout his life (Petrarch). The sonnet, despite its rigor, is no exception to evolution, and over the years it has adopted a number of different rhyming patterns. The Petrarchan sonnet generally follows a set rhyme scheme, which runs as follows: abba abba cdc dcd. The first eight lines, or octave, do not often deviate from the abba abba pattern, but the last six lines, or sestet, frequently follow a different pattern, such as cde cde, cde ced, or cdc dee.

Each line also has the same number of syllables, usually eleven or seven by Petrarch. In time, other variants on this rhyming scheme were introduced. The octave and sestet have special functions in a Petrarchan sonnet. The octave's purpose is to introduce a problem, express a desire, reflect on reality, or otherwise present a situation that causes doubt or conflict within the speaker. It usually does this by introducing the problem within its first quatrain (unified four-line section) and developing it in the second.

Typically, the ninth line (between the octave and the sestet) created a shift, which signaled the change in the topic or tone of the sonnet. This is also called a Volta and is usually indicated by words such as: but, yet, and, or and yet (Volta). The sestet's purpose as a whole is to make a comment on the problem or to apply a solution to it. The rhyme scheme in the following poem, by Petrarch, follows the rhyme scheme of abba abba cdcddc. The Volta (shift) occurs in the ninth line. " And yet I live! Myself I grieve and scorn. " It is an exclamation of exasperation.

He is expressing his love throughout the first part of the sonnet, but then it's almost as if he gives up. He is still alive although he says he's in so much pain without her love in return. Gli Occhi Di Ch' lo Parlai Those eyes, 'neath which my passionate rapture rose, The arms, hands, feet, the beauty that erewhile Could my own soul from its own self beguile, And in a separate world of dreams enclose, The hair's bright tresses, full of golden glows, And the soft lightning of the angelic smile That changed this earth to some celestial isle, Are now but dust, poor dust, that nothing knows.

And yet I live! Myself I grieve and scorn, Left dark without the light I loved in vain, Adrift in tempest on a bark forlorn; Dead is the source of all my amorous strain, Dry is the channel of my thoughts outworn, And my sad harp can sound but notes of pain. -Petrarch Although most sonneteers use the basic structure of the Petrarchan sonnet, they usually do not restrict themselves to his exact rhyme scheme; instead, some use iambic hexameter, while others do not use the octave-sestet division created by the traditional rhyme scheme (English Sonnet).

Whatever the changes made by poets, “ no proper Italian sonnet will contain more than five different rhymes (Petrarch). ” In contrast, the English, or Shakespearean sonnet (named after Shakespeare, not because he was the first to write in this form, but because he was the most famous poet to use this sequence) consists of three quatrains of four lines and a couplet of two lines. The couplet generally introduced an unexpected sharp thematic shift. Shakespeare modified the sonnet form to require fewer words with the same rhyme, but in doing so, he also modified the kind of meaning or argument that the poem would convey (Booth 123).

The concluding couplet brought about a tendency towards an epigrammatic ending, “ often the ‘ twist in the tail’ variety, contradicting what the rest of the sonnet had affirmed (Cruttwell 5-6). Also, in contrast with Petrarch, the English sonnet generally has ten syllables per line instead of seven or eleven. Shakespeare, in a sense, created a new kind of sonnet. It is not completely separated from the Italian sonnet; however, it did lose a very important part of the Italian form. It meant that the clear octave-sestet division disappeared, and with that the tendency to write the poem in two

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sentence units. In its place, you get a short lyric poem with three stanzas and a concluding couplet. It's like having four units to a poem instead of two. The sonnet was introduced to England, along with other Italian verse forms, by Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, earl of Surrey, in the 16th century. The new forms precipitated the great Elizabethan flowering of lyric poetry, and the period marks the peak of the sonnet's English popularity.

In the course of adapting the Italian form to a language less rich in rhymes, the Elizabethans gradually arrived at the distinctive English sonnet, which is composed of three quatrains, each having an independent rhyme scheme, and is ended with a rhymed couplet (Sonnet). The rhyme scheme of the English sonnet is abab cdcd efef gg. Its greater number of rhymes makes it a less demanding form than the Petrarchan sonnet, but this is offset by the difficulty presented by the couplet, which must summarize the impact of the preceding quatrains with the compressed force of a Greek epigram (Frye 14).

The following sonnet, by Shakespeare, shows the traditional English sonnet rhyme scheme of abab cdcd efef gg. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimm'd; And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd; But thy eternal summer shall not fade

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st; Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade, When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st: So long as

men can breathe or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. -Shakespeare In this poem, Shakespeare sets up the main tone of the sonnet in the first twelve lines. It is an emotional poem that shows how much he loves this woman. He wants to immortalize her through his poetry. The last two lines (couplet) prove this, " So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. He is saying that as long as this sonnet is saved, she will live on as well. Both the Petrarchan and English sonnet forms have continued to remain in use. Generally speaking, they are used for specific reasons. The Petrarchan is usually used for those sonnets that stand alone, individual poems. The English is usually used when the poems are a sequence. Milton, Wordsworth, and Hopkins all prefer the Petrarchan form, while poets like Drayton or Shakespeare write their sonnets using the English form (Cruttwell 9).

Some poets tend to take from both forms to create their own, such as Sidney and Donne, who tend to use a mixture of the two: abba abba cdcd ee. " More through usage than through anything inherent in the forms themselves, the Italian form has developed associations of dignity and solemnity; the English, of comparative lightness and gracefulness (Booth 6). " The Italian form has also been favored for themes such as religion (often used by Donne). Donne uses the abbaba cdcd eee. It is a little more unusual; however it is in keeping with the five rhymes or less.

AIR AND ANGELS TWICE or thrice had I loved thee, Before I knew thy face or name; So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame Angels affect us oft, and worshipp'd be. Still when, to where thou wert, I came, Some lovely glorious nothing did I see. But since my soul, whose child love is, Takes limbs of flesh,
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and else could nothing do, More subtle than the parent is Love must not be,
but take a body too; And therefore what thou wert, and who, I bid Love ask,
and now That it assume thy body, I allow, And fix itself in thy lip, eye, and
brow. -Donne(Donne)

And also for celebratory occasions for epiphanies (often used by Milton or Wordsworth). In Wordsworth's poem, he uses abba abba cdcdcd rhyme scheme. His poem leans more towards an epiphany of nature and how humans affect it. It's not necessarily celebratory. The World Is Too Much With Us
The world is too much with us; late and soon, Getting and spending, we
lay waste our powers; Little we see in Nature that is ours; We have given our
hearts away, a sordid boon! This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon, The
winds that will be howling at all hours, And are up-gathered now like sleeping
flowers,

For this, for everything, we are out of tune; It moves us not. -Great God! I'd
rather be A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn; So might I, standing on this
pleasant lea, Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn; Have sight of
Proteus rising from the sea; Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. -

Wordsworth(Brians) The English form has been and still is, above all other
forms, the sonnet form utilized for love poetry. Even after the death of
Petrarch in 1374, the sonnet still remained popular, even five hundred years
after it came into the English language.

This alone helps prove the durability of the sonnet. It needs only to adapt a
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