

The Renaissance

The Italian Influence

PRONUNCIATION

- Please check the pronunciation of words in dictionaries online:
- <https://www.dictionary.com/>
- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese/>
- <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/it/>
- <https://howjsay.com/>

The sonnet

- The Italian sonnet (a **fourteen**-line poem) was divided into 2 four-line stanzas (two **quatrains**) and 2 three-line stanzas (two **tercets**). The division can also be defined as an **octave** and a **sestet**
- It was introduced in England by **Thomas Wyatt** and **Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey**.
- They translated many Italian sonnets or imitated them. The original is sometimes just a point of departure, suggesting an idea or theme. But the sonnet reflects the experience of the poet.

Difference between Italian and English sonnets

- Petrarch's rhyme scheme:

(read vertically, each column is a sonnet)

abba	abba	abba
abba	abba	abba
cde	cdc	cde
cde	cdc	dce

- The first two stanzas (octave) present a theme and the sestet develops it or answers a question presented by the octave.
- 'Una candida cerva' from // *Canzoniere* or *Rime Sparse*:

- Wyatt Surrey / Shakespeare

abba	abab
abba	cdcd
cddc	efef
ee	gg

- Wyatt and Surrey replaced Petrarch's scheme with three four-line stanzas (3 quatrains) and a two-line conclusion (a couplet). Wyatt used this structural scheme in 'Whoso List to Hunt'.

Petrarch: Una candida cerva

- Una candida cerva sopra l'erba
verde m'appare, con duo corna d'oro,
fra due riviere, all'ombra d'un alloro,
levando 'l sol, a la stagione acerba. a
b
b
a
- Era sua vista sì dolce superba,
ch'i' lasciai per seguirla ogni lavoro;
come l'avarò che 'n cercar tesoro,
con diletto l'affanno disacerba. a
b
b
a
- “Nessun mi tocchi – al bel collo d'intorno
scritto avea di diamanti e di topazi -
libera farmi al mio Cesare parve”. c
d
e
- Et era 'l sol già volto al mezzogiorno;
gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar non sazi,
quand'io caddi ne l'acqua, et ella sparve. c
d
e

Comment on: 'Una candida cerva'

- Petrarch's white hind /hΛɪnd/ is pure (candida, white) and inaccessible. It symbolizes Laura. The chain of diamonds represents chastity, Cesare is God to whom she will be united. Courtly love: the woman is an angel, cold and detached, unreal. Her aim is to elevate the poet, to teach him virtue.
- In Petrarch: the poet's love is unheard and unrequited. /rɪ'kwΛɪt/.
- Rhyme scheme: abba abba cde cde

Other Themes

- Desire of love and glory (alloro)
- Theme of hunting has sexual undertones
- Reference to the moment he met Laura (stagione acerba = early morning in spring but also recalls his youth)
- Due riviere = two rivers → Avignon (where he met Laura)
- Dolce e superba = oxymoron (lofty, with dignity)
- Corna d'oro: reference to her blonde hair
- Mezzogiorno: middle of the day but also man's middle age
- He "cleans" his desire falling into a stream

Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)

- A courtier, a poet and a diplomat serving Henry VIII in several missions to France and Italy.
- Many of his poems are translations of Petrarch's *Rime sparse*. Petrarch's work constitutes a point of reference. He took the discipline of the Italian verse but modified the scheme of the sonnet. Instead of an octave and a sestet, **he divided the sonnet into 3 quatrains and a final couplet.**
- He also **altered it thematically**: his **woman** is a **real** one. She is present physically, courted and invited to declare herself, so that the poet knows if she reciprocates him or not.

Thomas Wyatt

- While serving the king in the 1520s, Wyatt became interested in an attractive and witty young lady who frequented the court, **Ann Boleyn**. But a few years later, the king himself began courting Boleyn while seeking the annulment from his marriage to Catherine of Aragon. Henry later married Boleyn after declaring his union with Catherine invalid. Consequently, Wyatt, who was in an unhappy marriage, had to give up any thoughts of winning Boleyn for himself. His sonnet is believed to be an expression of his frustration at this turn of events.
- The poem tells of **a deer hunt** in which several riders are chasing a **hind** (female deer). The deer hunt and the hind are both metaphors, the hunt representing young men pursuing an alluring woman at the king's court and the hind representing the woman herself, presumably Boleyn.

Thomas Wyatt (see also the booklet)

- Whosolist to hunt, I know where is an hind, a
But as for me, alas, I may no more. b
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore, b
I am of them that farthest cometh behind. a
- Yet may I by no means my wearied mind a
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore b
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore, b
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind. a
- Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt, c
As well as I may spend his time in vain. d
And graven with diamonds in letters plain d
There is written, her fair neck round about: c
- Noli me tangere, for Caesar's I am, e
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame. e

'Whoso list to hunt' (Whoever wishes to hunt)

- **Scheme: abba abba cddc ee**
- Whoever wishes to hunt, I know where there is a deer. But don't count on me to ride it down with you. I no longer have the desire. The work it takes has made me very tired, and I am now farther behind in the chase than anyone else. Yet I find it difficult to take my mind off the deer, and as she continues to run I follow. But I weaken; my enthusiasm is gone. Consequently, I am quitting the chase since trying to catch the deer is as futile /'fju:tʌɪl/ as trying to catch the wind in a net. I advise others to quit the chase too, lest (to avoid that) their time is wasted. Be aware that the hind wears a necklace encrusted with diamonds that spell out a warning that no hunter dares to touch her, for she belongs to the ruler of the land and she is wild even though she seems tame.

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (1516/17-1547)

- He perfected the English form of the sonnet creating the **rhyme scheme** that will be **used by Shakespeare** (abab/cdcd/efef/gg).
- He also translated Virgil's Aeneid (Books II and IV) in a verse form of his own invention: the **blank verse** (lines of ten syllables = unrhymed iambic pentameter).
- The blank verse will be the most used verse in English literature (Shakespeare, Milton up to Wordsworth and Tennyson). It is not far from the natural rhythm of English speech.

Shakespeare's *Sonnets*

- Published for the first time in 1609, not authorized, in an in-quarto volume.
- From n. 1 to 126 they are concerned with a “fair youth”, (**a young man**) from 127 to 154 with a “Dark Lady”.
- Who are they? The book is dedicated to a Mr W. H. = Henry Wriothesley Count of Southampton (probably the “Fair youth” too) or William Herbert Count of Pembroke.
- Dark Lady (dark in complexion and hair)

Shakespeare's *Sonnets*: Themes (1)

- Immortality of poetry and immortality that poetry confers
- Sonnets 1-7 urge the youth to marry and procreate so his beauty will continue in his offspring. The fair youth is extraordinarily handsome but is also entranced /ɛn'traɪns/ (hypnotized) by himself, like Narcissus.
- Relationship between the poet and the Dark Lady, the suffering of his love for her.
- Description of her as a real woman

Shakespeare's Sonnets: Themes (2)

- General topics:
- Time the destroyer
- Injustice that seems to triumph over the world
- Specific facts: discrepancy between the poet's age and his friend's youth, the estrangement and reconciliation between the poet and the youth, the absence of his friend.

Rhythm and Meter in English Poetry

Meters with two-syllable feet are:

IAMBIC (x /) : That **time** of **year** thou **mayst** in **me** behold

- (iambic pentameter: 5 iambs, 10 syllables)

TROCHAIC (/ x): **Tell** me **not** in **mournful numbers**

- (trochaic tetrameter: 4 trochees, 8 syllables)

Meters with three-syllable feet are:

ANAPESTIC (x x /): And the **sound** of a **voice** that is **still**

- (anapestic trimeter : 3 anapests, 9 syllables)

DACTYLIC (/ x x): **This** is the **forest** **primeval**, the **murmuring**
pines and the **hem**lock

(dactylic hexameter: 6 dactyls, 17 syllables; a trochee replaces the final dactyl)