

Principles of Literary Study  
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Office hours: Mondays 2:00–3:00 or by appointment

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## syllable structure

onset	nucleus	coda
0+ cons.	vowel	0+ cons.
l	e	t
	ea	t
d	ie	
	eye	
str	e	ngths

- ▶ many syllables lack coda (*die*), onset (*eat*) or both (*a*, *eye*)

rime everything after the onset

## rhyme review: look for variation

- ▶ usual rhyme: rime of stressed final syllable
  - ▶ *doubt/about* (Wyatt, “Whoso list”)
- ▶ disyllabic rhyme: rhyming stressed syllables followed by matching unstressed syllables
  - ▶ *painted/acquainted* (Shakespeare, Sonnet 20)
  - ▶ a.k.a. “feminine rhyme” but *come on*
- ▶ “slant” rhyme: coda matches; sometimes onset too
  - ▶ *grown/moon* (Yeats, “Adam’s Curse”)
  - ▶ *groined//groaned* (Owen, “Strange Meeting”)
  - ▶ *bedsidel/head* (Heaney, “Clearances” 3)
- ▶ full rhyme: syllable identity
  - ▶ *Whig/wig* (Swift, “City Shower”)
  - ▶ generally reads as repetition (or a joke) rather than rhyme

## further review

- ▶ “To His Coy Mistress” is creepy
- ▶ Its argument structure is troubled by the violent metaphors
- ▶ If its dream of withdrawal from the world depends on its libertine assumptions...
- ▶ maybe those assumptions are the problem

## Owen: reasons not to rhyme

'Strange friend,' I said, 'here is no cause to mourn.'  
'None,' said that other, 'save the undone years,  
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,  
Was my life also; I went hunting wild  
After the wildest beauty in the world,  
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,  
But mocks the steady running of the hour,  
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.  
For by my glee might many men have laughed,  
And of my weeping something had been left,  
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,  
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.  
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,  
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.' (14-27)

## rhyme as strong constraint: Shahid's ghazal

Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight  
before you agonize him in farewell tonight?

Pale hands that once loved me beside the Shalimar:  
Whom else from rapture's road will you expel tonight?

...

And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—  
God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.

- ▶ ghazal originated as Arabic love-poem genre
- ▶ important in Persian, Turkish, Urdu...
- ▶ *aa ba ca...* rhyme
- ▶ every couplet has repeated final word (Farsi *radīf*) after rhyme
- ▶ includes pen-name or *takhalluṣ* in last couplet

## sonnets: you tell me

- ▶ Judging from the readings, what features are *typical* of the sonnet?
  - ▶ In addition to today's readings, remember: other Shakespeare sonnets, Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* 1, 55, Herbert's "Prayer," Milton's Sonnet 19, Shelley's "England in 1819."
- ▶ Think about:
  - ▶ thematic features (what it's about)
  - ▶ formal features (lines, meter, rhyme)
  - ▶ rhetorical features (what kind of audience or reading situation does it presuppose?)
- ▶ *typical* does not mean *universal*

short break

## example sonnet

- ▶ class choice: Shakespeare, Sonnet 138
  - ▶ “And wherefore say not I that I am old?”

## the typical sonnet

- ▶ 14 lines of rhymed iambic pentameter
- ▶ most common rhyme schemes:
  - ▶ Petrarchan *abbaabbacdecde* or variants, 8 + 6 split by *volta*
  - ▶ Shakespearean *ababcdcdefefgg*, 4 + 4 + 4 + 2
- ▶ concerns Platonic or frustrated love
- ▶ aimed at private forms of reading
- ▶ Early Modern period establishes the genre as a central category of European vernacular lyric (Italian 14th c., French and English e16th c.)
  - ▶ anything established can be riffed off of (already in Shakespeare's time)

## Vendler on Sonnet 116

- ▶ What is Vendler's main claim about Sonnet 116?
- ▶ What kind of evidence does she use to support it?

thesis I read this poem as an example not of definition but of dramatic refutation or rebuttal. (488)

motive This represents...a paradigmatic case of how reading a poem as though it were an essay, governed by an initial topic sentence, can miss its entire aesthetic dynamic. (491-92)

## genre generalities

Lyric, though it may *refer* to the social, remains the genre that directs its *mimesis* toward the performance of the mind in *solitary* speech. (1–2)

The true “actors” in lyrics are words, not “dramatic persons”; and the drama of any lyric is constituted by the successive entrances of new sets of words, or new stylistic arrangements (grammatical, syntactical, phonetic) that are visibly in conflict with previous arrangements used with reference to the “same” situation. (3)

It is in the hope of showing that Shakespeare’s sonnets contain more than is to be found in their translations or reductions or paraphrases that I have compiled this Commentary. (10)

# Yeats: it's not a love poem

- ▶ ruthlessly conjoins erotic and violent language
  - ▶ *caressed, nape, breast, thighs, body, heart*
  - ▶ *blow, beating, staggering, caught, helpless, terrified*
  - ▶ which is *body*?
- ▶ *volta* links the traumatic moment to historical catastrophe
  - ▶ (and lyric to epic: cf. Kavanagh)
  - ▶ the turn to history makes the last rhyme deteriorate (*up/drop*)
- ▶ the questions: are they rhetorical?
  - ▶ ll. 5–8 situates speaker with Leda
  - ▶ ll. 11–14 registers his difference from her

next

- ▶ bring back sonnets so we can discuss Heaney
- ▶ think about stanzas (Italian *stanza*: “room”)
- ▶ focus on:
  - ▶ Keats, “Ode on a Grecian Urn”
  - ▶ Moore, “The Fish”
  - ▶ Auden, “In Memory of W.B. Yeats”