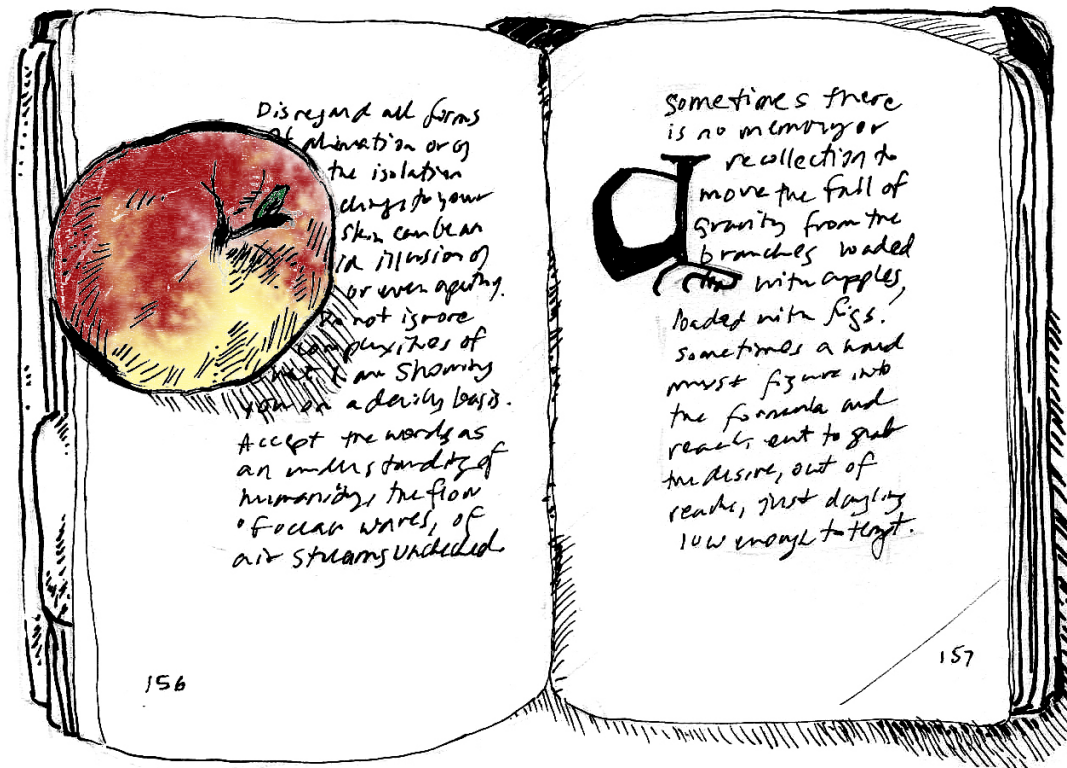


Sonnets



Sonnets

Edmund Spenser (1552 – 1599) || *Amoretti*

Edmund Spenser crafted the **Spenserian Sonnet** combining the Italian sonnet with the English sonnet, following the three quatrains and couplet concept from the English traditional form.

- His rhyme scheme follows a hybrid of Italian and English:

Italian : ABAB / ABAB / CDC / CDC

English: ABAB / CDCD / EFEF / GG

Spencerian : ABAB / BCBC / CDCD / EE

- Likewise he divides the theme into three sections:
 - > **statement of the problem**, as a thesis; the opening quatrain is usually one sentence
 - > **exploration of the problem** in the resulting octave
 - > a **resolution** appears in the ending couplet

Sonnets

Emund Spenser (1552 – 1599)

from *Amoretti* || I

(see page 676 in *Longman* for comparison)

*thesis:
problem
established
in opening
quatrain*

Happy ye leaves! when as those lilly hands,
Which hold my life in their dead doing might,
Shall handle you and hold in love's soft bands,
Lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.
And happy lines, on which, with starry light,
Those laming eyes will deigne sometimes to look,
And reade the sorrowes of my dying spright,
Written with teares in harts close bleeding book.

*problem
discussed
in following
octave.*

(octave ends/sestet begins; Spenser blurs the two together)

And happy rymes bathed in the sacred brooke,
Of Helicon, whence she derivéd is,
When ye behold that Angels blessed looke,
My soules long lackéd foode, my heavens blis.
Leaves, lines, and rymes seeke her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.

*problem
resolved
in final
couplet*

Rhyme scheme || Meter

A	5
B	5
A	5
B	5
B	5
C	5
B	5
C	5
C	5
D	5
C	5
D	5
E	5
E	5

Edmund Spenser's Poetry. Second edition. Hugh MacLean, ed. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, © 1982. Print.

Sonnets

This poem introduces the full sequence of 89 sonnets, titled *Amoretti*.

The title translates to “little love” in Italian.

- The main image the poem shows is the woman Spenser courts, Elizabeth, holding the collection of works in her hands, reading.
- The over-all themes expressed in the book lean towards a more optimistic approach, resulting in anti-Petrarchan concepts. At the same time, Spenser will maintain some Petrarchan conceits so as to not totally move away from the traditional form. Notice Elizabeth has life and death power over the poet-persona, as shown in line 2-4.
- A stress is placed on Elizabeth’s eyes, developing a common metaphor of the Beloved’s power of love.
- Spenser also utilizes an image from Greek myth: Helicon, the mountain from where the Nine Muses live — then returns to Christian symbols, by expressing how his soul longs for nourishment from her “Angels blessed looke” (l. 11)— combining her as both Greek goddess and divine angel.

Sonnets

Emund Spenser

from *Amoretti* || IX

*thesis:
problem
established
in opening
quatrain*

Long while I sought to what I might compare
Those powerful eyes, which lighten my dark sight,
Yet find I nought on earth to which I dare
Resemble th' image of their goodly light.

*problem
discussed
in following
octave.*

Not to the sun, for they do shine by night;
Nor to the moon, for they are changed never;
Nor to the stars, for they have purer sight;
Nor to the fire, for they consume not ever;
Nor to the lightning, for they still persevere;
Nor to the diamond, for they are more tender;
Nor unto crystal, far nought may them sever;
Nor unto glass, such baseness might offend her;

*problem
resolved
in final
couplet*

Then to the Maker self they likest be,
Whose light doth lighten all that here we see.

Rhyme scheme || Meter

A	5
B	5•5
A	5
B	5
B	5
C	5
B	5
C	5•5 / (6?)
C	5•5
D	5•5
C	5•5
D	5•5
E	5
E	5

English Sixteenth-Century Verse: An Anthology. Richard S. Sylvester, ed. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, © 1974. Print.

Sonnets

Notice the emphasis in line 4 on the word “sight.” With it falling as the extra half foot, it is subconsciously stressed in the reader’s mind. This correlates with the theme of wanting to describe his Beloved’s eyes, which blind him with love.

With his new formula, in this particular case the octave establishes a hierarchy of icons, beginning with major elements first, the celestial objects, then works its way down to earthly elements, in descending order:

sun

moon

stars

fire

lightning

diamond

crystal

glass

Sonnets

- He likewise twists all the negatives into positives, all the while complimenting his Beloved's eyes.
- To force this idea, he utilizes a technique called **caesura**, which is a pause in natural speaking — which does not interfere with meter. Here, the caesura's represent an intake of breath.
- In Spenser's case, he employed this trick in the structure of the list itself, breaking between the inferior model and the perfection of the eyes.
- The resolution couplet transforms what appears to be obvious failure to assertion of positive: only God could be equal to her eyes. The Poet reaches salvation through his Beloved.
- Likewise, notice in this case an emphasis is placed on the poet's relationship with his poetry *and* with his Beloved, Elizabeth. She is a source of art for him so it is vital he makes a strong, creative connection to both writing and herself.

Sonnets

Emund Spenser

from *Amoretti* || LXXV

(see page 679 in *Longman* for comparison)

thesis:
problem
established
in opening
quatrain

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washéd it away:
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.
“Vayne man,” sayd she, “that doest in vaine assay,
A mortall thing so to immortalize,
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name bee wypéd out lykewize.”
“Not so,” quod I, “let baser things devize
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
My verse, your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.
Where when as death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew.”

problem
discussed
in following
octave.

problem
resolved
in final
couplet

Rhyme scheme || Meter

A	5
B	5
A	5
B	5
B	5
C	5
B	5
C	5
C	5
D	5
C	5
D	5·5
E	5
E	5

Edmund Spenser's Poetry. Second edition. Hugh MacLean, ed. W.W. Norton & Co., New York, © 1982. Print.