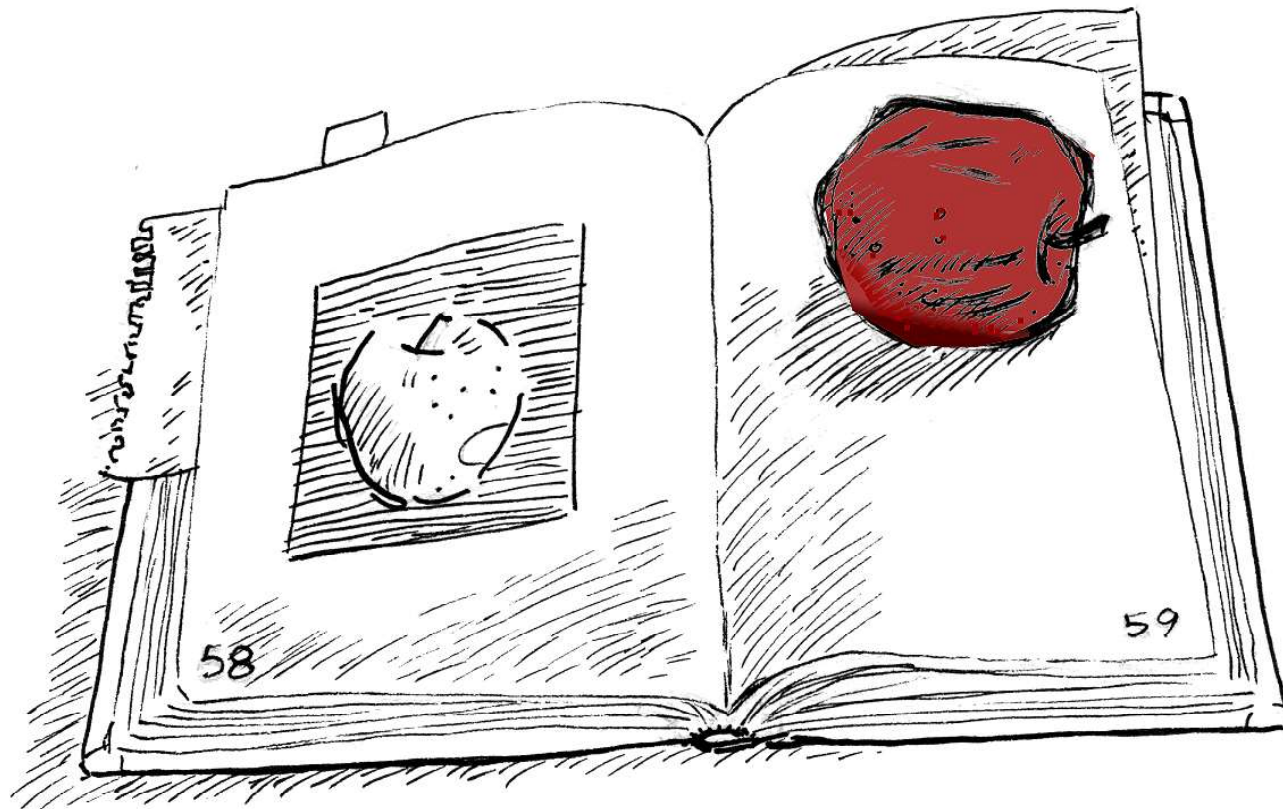


Sonnets



Sonnet Form

Historical Overview

- evolved over centuries; endured for over 700 years
- originally devised as a lyric, developed in southern France, northern Italy
- creation and traditionally attributed to Francesco Petrarch, (July 20, 1304 – July 19, 1374) the Father of Humanism— however it is clear he popularized the form during his lifetime

Defined

- The sonnet is a poem composed with a recognizable formula and is concerned with a single thought or theme, and should have a secondary theme signaled by the existence of a *volta*.
- The term *sonnet* means “little song” in Italian.

Sonnet Form

Types of Sonnets

Because of its popularity, the poem has transformed over time, retaining important categorizing elements, yet metamorphosing some components.

Common forms:

- Italian sonnet > or Petrarchan sonnet
- English sonnet > or Shakesperian sonnet
- Spenserian sonnet
- Blank sonnet

Sonnet Form

Basic Characteristics of Traditional Sonnet (*not* Blank Sonnets)

- fourteen lines
- chosen rhyme scheme and strategic meter
- a turn or shift in theme (referred to as the *volta*)

Important Terms

- octave eight lines || For sonnets the first eight lines carry a theme.
- sestet six lines || The remaining six lines can twist the theme.

- tercet three lines
- quatrain four lines
- couplet two lines

Sonnet Form

Charles Simic || *History*

On a gray evening
Of a gray century,
I ate an apple
While no one was looking.

A small, sour apple
The color of woodfire,
Which I first wiped
On my sleeve.

8



octave:
in this case composed of two quatrains

Then I stretched my legs
As far as they'd go,
Said to myself
Why not close my eyes now

Before the Late
World News and Weather.

14



sestet:
*in this case composed of a quatrain and
a couplet*

Simic, Charles. "History." *The Making of a Sonnet: A Norton Anthology*.
Edward Hirsch and Eavan Boland, eds. New York: W. W. Norton. 2008. Print.

Sonnet Form

Remember:

- Both the octave and the sestet contain parallel themes, or two stories which are related to one another.
- Typically the octave presents a situation, event, image, or generalization and the sestet presents a reflection or meditation on the previous section, a reaction, or a result.
- The *volta* acts as a stress or bridge between the two sections.

Sonnet Form

Applying a Critical Lens to the General Notion of Sonnets

- *Archetypal:*

Poet Speaker assumes archetype of Foolish Lover;

Beloved assumes role of an Immortal Goddess (Aphrodite, Artemis, Athena)

- *Biographical:*

Each poet's recorded details and historical records of his/her career can be linked symbolically to the sequence poems

- *Classicism / Marxism:*

Poet Speaker is usually of a lower class and cannot obtain higher status of Beloved

- *Freudian / Psychoanalytical:*

sexual obsession of the Poet Speaker towards his unobtainable Beloved