Chapter Eight

---------------------------

STANZA STRUCTURES

Technically, stanzaic form ("vertical structure," commonly identified with rhyme-scheme if present) is difficult to distinguish clearly from meter ("horizontal structure," or line-form), and both are ordinarily discussed together. The question of the deployment of significant information within a fixed (or variable) stanza-pattern is an intriguing one, as it has bearings on both the poet's characteristic methods of composition (think of Shelley, placing isolated words several lines in advance) and also the reader's processing of the serially ordered but often synchrally related units of sense. The elementary catalogues of stanzas are legion, and tedious; the comprehensive catalogue for major English poetry does not yet exist, though one has already been prepared for German (see Schlawe, L574), and no really innovative or massive work can proceed until we have such a resource. In the interim Turco (G59) is a useful brief handbook, and there are larger specialized studies of the ode by Shuster (G49) and M addison (L97), of the couplet by Brown (E1369) and Piper (E1404), of the Spenserian by R eschke (G80), of the French forms by Cohen (L786–87), and of the sonnet by Lever (G115) and Lev̈y (G116) among many. But perhaps the most illuminating approach to stanzas is to ask not what the form is but what it can (and cannot) do for the organization of the poem's message. Such a functional approach has recently been sketched out by H āublein (G19) and shows considerable promise as a critical tool.

GENERAL STUDIES

G1 Adams, Stephen J. "T. S. Eliot's So-called Sestina: A Note on The Dry Salvages, II." ELN 15 (1978): 203–8. Therein Eliot is attempting not the sestina but a related Provençal lyric form,
the cóbas estrampas (isolated stanzas) with rimas cars (scarce rhymes), which he apparently learned from Pound. The meter is still stress verse. Cf. G9 and G20.

G2 Allen, James L., Jr. "Stanza Pattern in the Poetry of Poe." Tennessee Studies in Literature 12 (1967): 111–20. Convinced that Poe was a consummate technical craftsman, Allen reacts indignantly to the influential view of W. L. Werner (B228) that Poe's stanzas are mainly loose verse paragraphs. To reject everything but perfect identity of form as formless is to ignore Poe's allegiance to Variety Within Uniformity and to be blind to his expressive variations.

G3 Beum, Robert. "Yeats's Octaves." Texas Studies in Literature and Language 3 (1961): 89–96; rpt as chapter 10 of his The Poetic Art of William Butler Yeats (B12). An admirably elegant defense of Yeats's stature as a poet of the very first order, argued on the basis of his individuality and his mastery of the ottava rima stanza. Coming after his earlier use of the quatrains, the octave was a moderate not a radical change for Yeats; it represented Tradition yet had been seldom employed and--best of all--allowed ampler room for an ampler exposition. Cf. G39.

G4 Binyon, Laurence. "'Terza Rima' in English Poetry." English 3 (1940): 113–17. Curious why Dante's great meter has never taken deep root in English, Binyon concludes that when English poets fail to respect the integrity of each stanza, allowing run-on of sense, they "change the metre into something else. . . . In terza rima, the rhymes being not coupled but interwoven, there is not the danger, always present in the closed couplet, of the verse becoming mechanical and monotonous in its beat: the form is ampler, more flexible, and allows of varied cadences. But with a loose treatment the same thing happens in both cases: the rhyme tends to lose its functional value." Binyon collects as many instances in English as he can find. Cf. G60.


G6 Coffin, Tristram P. "Coleridge's Use of the Ballad Stanza in The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." MLQ 12 (1951): 437–45. Coleridge's variations and expansions of the abbc stanza occur most often in the middle of the poem, where the supernatural forces are most prevalent; the principle of expansion seems to be incremental repetition.


G8 Collins, Ben L. "The Stanzaic Pattern in Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind.'" Keats-Shelley Journal 19 (1970): 7–8. Tenders the opinion that each section of the poem is a sonnet based on terza rima. Cf. Haworth (G103) and Wilcox (G64).

G10 Damico, Helen. "Sources of Stanza Forms Used by Burns." Studies in Scottish Literature 12 (1975): 207–19. Traces the long genealogy of the six-line stanza, the form of which is \( \text{aaa}_4 \text{b}_2 \text{a}_4 \text{b}_2 \), from its first appearance in the Middle Ages through fairly common usage by such poets as Allan Ramsay and Robert Sempill down to Burns, who turned its light tone into "a markedly lyric character with a dying fall" suitable for serious subjects. Also traced: rime couée, the septenary, the cauda, the bob-and-wheel, and other related and compound forms.


G12 Dechert, Peter. "He Shouts to See Them Scamper So: E. A. Robinson and the French Forms." Colby Library Quarterly 8 (1969): 386–98. Robinson's interest in strict metrical forms borrowed from the French (rondeau, rondel, ballade, triolet, villanelle) was limited to his early period, under the influence of his mentor A. T. Schumann; he wrote no more of them after 1895. The villanelle "The House on the Hill" is the best of the lot.

G13 Dickson, Margarette Ball. Patterns and Poems. Minneapolis: Argus, 1938. 103 pp. A pocket primer of stanza forms with the author's original poems as examples.

G14 Fisher, J. "James Hammond and the Quatrain of Gray's Elegy." MP 32 (1935): 301–10. Hammond was the first, though not the most important, influence in fixing the quatrain as the staple--indeed, obligatory--stanza for the elegy in the eighteenth century.

G15 Fletcher, Robert H. "The Metrical Forms Used by Certain Victorian Poets." JEGP 7 (1907–8): 87–91. A very brief statement of the sum totals of metrical (i.e. stanzaic) forms used by Browning (200), Tennyson (240), and Swinburne (420), with discussion of problems of categorization and usefulness of results. Given the present exposition, I cannot see but that the former is exceedingly large and the latter very small, though the question is an interesting one.


G18 Häublein, Ernst. Strophe und Struktur in der Lyrik Sir Philip Sidneys. Bern: Herbert Lang, 1971. A current, critically informed, and "fully systematic" analysis of the structure and internal dynamics of the stanza, taking Sidney's poems and those of the major Renaissance miscellanies as texts. The author anatomizes (1) structural (or logical) relations between stanzas in a poem, grading the connectedness as "unfixed," "light-stimulus," or "strong-stimulus," with a notation for marking these; (2) reiteration of key words or phrases in and across stanzas; and (3) the
structure within a stanza, especially vis à vis the problem of rhyme.

A companion-work to Turco (G59), yet of considerably greater range and penetration. Häublein reviews the major critical opinions on stanza-form from Puttenham (E614) to the present and surveys the characteristics of the major forms, but his principal interest throughout is the functions and effects—the dynamics—of stanzas, a province virtually unexplored to date. He examines modes of unification, varieties of openings and endings, structural repetition, and the "framing" effect within the stanza, and forms of linkage and development between stanzas in a poem. Well informed; extensive examples.

A splendidly succinct, informative, synoptic history of sestinas written from the twelfth century (Arnaut Daniel) to the twentieth, along with notes on twenty-one sestinas written by poets in our time and a Bibliography. Cf. G1 and G9.

The stanza form of the ode is that of Milton's translation of the fifth ode of the first book of Horace, but it was suggested to Collins by Joseph Warton, who also has a poem in the same form.

Herbert devised a strategy of counterpointing his stanzas (abstract patterns of line-lengths, e.g. abab) to his rhymes (also abstract patterns, e.g. abba). As a result, "this clash of patterns, this contrapuntal music" seems designed to promote the sense before the pleasing sounds of the poem, thereby insuring the alertness of the reader. The sources: Puttenham's theory and Donne's practice. Hayes identifies twenty-seven varieties of stanza in The Temple, concluding, from an examination of twelve other major poets, that Herbert's contrapuntal stanza-structure is nearly nonexistent in the rest of English poetry. Compare this study with that by Kiparsky on abstract patterns (B117).

Promotes two explanations for the unrhymed lines and intricate stanza-arrangements in the poem, basing both on extensive English literary tradition: (1) they denote the "formless agitation" of grief; (2) they are appropriate to the rustic diction and manners of an "uncouth swain."

Finds an instance of a poem having six syllables to the line (four lines per stanza and twenty-six stanzas, in this case) in 1561, fourteen years before the first use of the term "sixain" recorded in the OED (by Gascoigne) and differing in sense. Gascoigne used the term to mean stanzas of six lines, which seems to have been the generally accepted definition. The 1561 usage—six syllables to the line—is an anomaly.

The six-line form (metrically 4-3-4-3-4-3; rhyme-scheme xaxaxa) Rossetti thought of as a ballad stanza and seems to have found in Coleridge, but by the time of "The Blessed Damozel" it had lost the ballad meter entirely and taken
on a "shifting, hesitant rhythm" created by back-to-back stresses. Longfellow and Holmes also employed the form.

A very salient point: apparent units should be real units. Stanzaic divisions on the page ought to correspond to divisions in thought or organization in the structure of the poem. Plath's "Ariel" is taken to task.

Drawing some suggestions from Hopkins' undergraduate essay "On the Origin of Beauty" (on symmetry and variation), Keating notices that the first four lines of Hopkins' stanza are separated (and unified) metrically and thematically from the last four. This diabolical creates effects of (1) balanced antithesis, (2) particularization, (3) incremental addition, or (4) reflectiveness, and altogether the stanzaic pattern of The Wreck is "basically antiphonal."

A visual approach to stanzaic design, emphasizing the "geography" or contour of the poem on the page, whether it be in monomorphic, polymorphic, paratactic, or radial-design (pivoting on a central line or word--the fulcrum in "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird" is the word "see") construction. Rhyme, too, can serve visual as well as aural effects.

Stanza-breaks at lines 6 and 14 are both indispensable, even though the rhyme scheme does not seem to concur: two stanzas must seem to be three, since thematically love has not inherently changed, it has simply become more manifest.

The ab cad cquatrain seems to be distinctly associated, in Eliot's mind, with the theme of love-degraded-into-lust, i.e. sex.

The changes in the poem's stanza-pattern "reflect the ironic paradox of discovering aesthetic form while trying to escape from it."


Addendum to Morton (G40). The example is a poem of Mrs. Katherine Phillips called "A Translation of Thomas à Kempis into verse," first published in 1667.

Additions to the genealogy of this six-line stanza-form (aaabab): Robert Sempill used it in 1640, taking the form from a collection of lyrics, The Gude and Godlie Ballatis. Some earlier instances are here identified as ca. 1500; the form has
been traced back to thirteenth-century France by T. F. Henderson.

Patrick Cary seems to have transported the form, ca. 1651, though his work remained unknown until Scott reprinted it in 1819; Bridges revived it in 1873.

Namely Lang, Gosse, Henley, Hardy, and Symons.

Patrick Cary seems to have transported the form, ca. 1651, though his work remained unknown until Scott reprinted it in 1819; Bridges revived it in 1873.

Namely Lang, Gosse, Henley, Hardy, and Symons.

Bridges, Dobson, and Hopkins.

Five chapters on forms, including one on the Spenserian and one on the Sonnet (Italian origins through the nineteenth century).

Robinson wrote forty Octaves, twenty-eight of which are extant. Has anyone else written in this stanza as an isolate? Cf. G3.

Though Tennyson was unaware of any predecessors in the use of the abba tetrameter stanza, Morton locates twenty-five examples by seventeen poets in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries, most notably by Jonson, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, and Clough, but only Lord Herbert used it at all frequently. See McKeehan (G33) and the next entry.

The rarity of the form is perhaps due to its metrical compactness and envelope-rhymes; the former reduces variety and encourages prolixity, while the latter weaken the ends of the contiguous stanzas. Stanzaic comparison with the other well-known elegies in English is revealing.

A history of the revival begun in 1871 with Swinburne's translations of Villon and fortified by the discovery of de Banville's work in France after 1874, so that the English poets too--Swinburne, Lang, Gosse, Payne, Henley, and Dobson--began to call themselves "Parnassians."

Finds the origin and power of the refrain in the wider rhythmical patterns of repetition and variation, as also seen in meter and rhyme.

Very useful information (and notes) on Victorian poems in foreign forms.

Very useful information (and notes) on Victorian poems in foreign forms.

R. uhmann, Friedrich G. Studien zur Gesichte und Charakteristik des Refrains in der

-- 450 --
Organized historically, from early folk ballads to the Edwardians; nearly half the book is devoted to the Victorians--Tennyson, Poe, Browning, Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne.


The scope is actually Early Renaissance to just after Keats, and the method includes a very close attention to the prosodic aspects of the ode (as essential criteria for definition of that form) throughout. A much more satisfactory treatment than in Maddison (L97).

Demonstrates the metrical regularization suffered by the three rondeaux chosen for inclusion in Tottel's Miscellany.


A very detailed examination of the Italian metrical forms--terza rima, ottava rima, sesta rima, sestina, madrigal, strambotto, anezone, and sonnet--and then the forms of the lyrics in the Arcadia's of Sannazaro (Italian, 1504), Montemayor (Portuguese, 1558), and Sidney.

Follows Garrod in explicating the stanzaic form of the six Odes of 1819, beginning with the "Ode to Psyche"; their form seems to be a fusion of the Petrarchan sonnet and the Pindaric ode. R ejects N. S. Bushnell's conclusions in MLN 44 (1929): 287–96. See also G70.

They are: the degeneration of blank verse written by minor poets imitating Tennyson and Browning, didacticism in poetry, a revived interest in medievalism, and most importantly, the l'art pour l'art movement begun in France in the Thirties headed by Gautier. See Gosse (G17).

They are: the degeneration of blank verse written by minor poets imitating Tennyson and Browning, didacticism in poetry, a revived interest in medievalism, and most importantly, the l'art pour l'art movement begun in France in the Thirties headed by Gautier. See Gosse (G17).

G57 -----. "The Development of the Rondeau in England from its Origin in the Middle Century."
Discusses the form as used by Chaucer, Hoccleve, Lydgate, W yatt, Charles Cotton, and the authors of The Rolliad (1874).


A little handbook of metrical/ stanzai forms in English poetry, including many forms or analogues from French, Irish, Welsh, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Greek, and Japanese, organized alphabetically, with abstract symbolizations of the form. Three introductory chapters on metrics, sound, and figures; bibliographies of sources and examples; glossary. Many of the forms are however extremely rare in English or else only assayed in the author's own work. Not scholarly. Cf. Häublein (G19).


Instances of the ababb stanza before Housman.

G64 Wilcox, Stewart C. "The Prosodic Structure of 'O de to the West W ind.'" Notes & Queries 195 (1950): 77–78.
Elaborates on the synthesis of sonnet form and terza rima in the West-W ind stanza, and the parallel of the triple metrical form with the tripartite thematic divisions. Cf. Collins (G8) and Haworth (G103).

A fully rounded study of the prosodic structures which jointly give a stanza its shape, along with the effects Hardy could achieve in each of his several stanzaic modes, couplets to octains and irregular forms.

SPENSERIAN

Chapter 2 is very good on Spenser's handling of his stanza-form; chapter 3 treats his "poetic language."

Spenser employed in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* a rhyme-scheme intended to be continuous—one wherein the fourth rhyme in every group of four lines is reiterated as the second in the following four, i. e. ababxdebegfgh, etc.—rather than divided into discrete elegiac quatrains.

On the three crucial characteristics of the form: the nine-line stanza Spenser might have noticed in two poems in Tottel, and the medial bb couplet he must have learned from Chaucerian rhyme royal (it appears in the June and November eclogues); the sixth-line c-rhyme, however, which links the final couplet to the body of the stanza, he must have found in the Italian madrigal.

Spenser used four devices to effect some continuity across stanza-breaks: repetition of a rhyme, a key word, or a whole line, or beginning a stanza with a relative pronoun. See Stein (G84), Owen (G76), and Schoeck (G81).


Spenser devised an aural structure equally as distinctive and important as, yet in counterpoint and tension to, the visual structure of his stanza: against the solidity and uniformity of the structure of line-lengths, he set in opposition irregularities of stressing, caesura placement, and enjambment to create variety. Another device: the repetition of short metrical "motifs" to link stanzas; this device Spenser learned from music, since the strophic poem set to music requires metrical repetition to correspond to the repeated phrasings in the melody. Seems to be a study of metrical variation.


G73 Mahony, Patrick J. "An Analysis of Shelley's Craftsmanship in *Adonais.*" *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 4 (1964): 555-68. 
Detailed technical analysis of Shelley's handling of the Spenserian stanza in matters of tempo and pacing, rhyme, feminine endings, caesura, trisyllabic feet with elision, spondees, pyrrhics, alliteration, and assonance. Stanzas 1, 4, and 21 are anatomized.

A valuable examination of the predecessors and successors of Spenser's metrical hallmark. Of the former the most important and least understood is the Mirror for Magistrates. Of the latter, only eighteen examples by five authors may be found in the seventeenth century. But aside from the full form of the stanza, its principal characteristics are the linking of quatrains and a final Alexandrine: the linking has not been much followed, but the final long-line "is the most certain mark of Spenserian influence, even where that influence is at second or even third hand."

G75 ------. "The Spenserian Stanza in the Eighteenth Century." M P 10 (1913): 365–91. Continuing his historical researches, Morton finds fifty-six instances by thirty-eight known and eight anonymous authors in the eighteenth century, including a few early attempts by Pope. But the immediate public response to Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" shows that Spenser's influence was unexpectedly strong in the Age of Reason.

G76 Owen, W. J. B. "Oriando Furioso and Stanza-Connection in The Faerie Queene." M L N 67 (1952): 5–8. Tucker Brooke (G69) was wrong to think Virgil the source for Spenser's device of linking stanzas by verbal repetition; Ariosto is the more obvious source. See also Schoeck (G81) and Stein (G84).

G77 Pope, Emma F. "The Critical Background of the Spenserian Stanza." M P 24 (1926): 31–53. Drawing on a very extensive knowledge of early Italian poetics, Pope argues that Spenser derived his stanza form from the terza rima in Dante, a stately epic meter, regularizing syllable-count and line-length, and adapting the final Alexandrine from the sdrucciolo; "for stanzaic form his direct model was the nine-line madrigal recognized by all critics as a stanzaic form of terza rima." Additionally, Section 1 of the essay surveys the course of quantitative measures in Italy, France, and England up to 1600. Repetitive but very highly informed.


G79 Reeve, Frederic E. "The Stanza of The Faerie Queene." D A 12 (1952): 307A (Princeton). Applies Elder Olson's theory of prosody (B158) to the analysis of the Spenserian stanza, isolating rhythmic, metric, and harmonic. Matter and diction also examined. In terms of metrical structure the stanza generally sets four lines against five or vice versa.


G81 Schoeck, R. J. "Alliteration as a Means of Stanza Connection in The Faerie Queene." M L N 64 (1949): 90–93. Addenda to Stein (G84) and Brooke (G69). Schoeck distinguishes regular or primary alliteration from subordinate or secondary (more subtly and closely em-
bedded). See also Owen (G76).

Spenser formed his stanza from the ottava rima stanza he found in Chaucer and the Alexandrines he saw in Tottel's Miscellany.

Some odd seven-line stanzas (six pentameters plus a hexameter) in this early (1594) version of Faust seem to be a conflation of the Spenserian stanza and rhyme royal, the final Alexandrine of the former being appended to the latter, the older form.

Addenda to Brooke (G69). Continuity is preserved also by repetition of key sounds or sound-patterns, by rhyme-sounds repeated outside of the rhyme position, and by preservation of rhythmic flow. See Schoeck (G81) and Owen (G76).

The source of the form is not the Chaucerian ottava rima but the stanza of The Monk's Tale and the A.B.C. Surveys rhyme, (syntactic) pause, (metrical) caesura, enjambment, metrical variety, metrical and sonal mimesis ("word-painting"), melody (assonance, consonance, alliteration), and the use of the Alexandrine. Concluding list of poets who have used the form.

See also: B40, C264, C296, C299, K250.

**SONNET**

The fourteen lines of the sonnet constitute that narrow cell where English poets have fretted most, and most accurately gauged their skill and invention in comparison with their predecessors, the great poets of the past--in the tightest forms, the set pieces, the obligatory routines.

Based on his dissertation at North Carolina in 1966. After Spenser and Sidney, Barnes was the most prolific and versatile innovator of stanzaic forms in the Renaissance.

In support of his argument that the sequence not the individual sonnet was the aesthetic whole for the Elizabethans, Sir Denys demonstrates varieties of linkage between sonnets, i.e. the whole line, the half line, rhyme words, rhyme sounds, composite rhyming (both whole words and sounds), and more complex patterns of rhymes and other key words elsewhere in the lines, both in consecutive and separated sonnets. Detailed analysis of rhyme-linkages in Shakespeare's sonnets allows reconstruction of their chronology. Bray's results are disputed by Bullitt (G91).

-- 455 --


G91 Bullitt, John M. "The Use of Rhyme Link in the Sonnets of Sidney, Drayton, and Spenser." JEGP 49 (1950): 14–32. Sir Denys Bray's (G88) somewhat excessive claim for rhyme-linking as an important and common device in Renaissance sonnets is repudiated in this analysis: Sidney and Drayton show no particular enthusiasm for the device, though Spenser employs it at times. Without a doubt some of the sonnets of these poets were intended to be linked, but on the other hand the paucity of rhymes in English entails the unfortunate fact that many seeming links will appear which may or may not have been intended, even beyond those that appear in sonnets that are unquestionably not meant to be linked.

G92 Bullock, Walter L. "The Genesis of the English Sonnet Form." PMLA 38 (1923): 729–44. Rebuts the argument of Lathrop (G113) and insists on the simpler, traditional, consensus view that W. yatt learned the forms of both octave and sestet from an anthology he read while on a trip to Italy in 1527. Surrey, then, "relaxed and simplified" the forms he learned from W. yatt.

G93 Cermak, Mary M. "Terminal Structures in the Sonnets of W. yatt and Surrey." DAI 30 (1969): 2522A (Catholic University of America). A study in Poetic Closure; also a study in The Sense of an Ending. Most of W. yatt's and Surrey's sonnets end with a couplet, but (surprisingly) this terminal structure does not correlate with 12–2 division of the sonnet as a whole, quatrains, serial progression, and syntactic isolability of the couplet. The concluding couplet is usually attached syntactically only to the closest preceding lines, and the rhyme form is clearly 8–6, so that in both poets the sonnets show both Italian and English characteristics. Their sonnets have, on the most general level, beginnings, middles, and ends, though the form is not indelibly Shakespearean.


G96 Cook, Wister J. "The Sonnets of Christina Rossetti: A Comparative Prosodic Analysis." DAI 32 (1972): 6419A (Auburn). Examines metrical variation and pause-placement in her sonnets as compared with those of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, and Meredith. Rossetti was not especially adroit at meter: her lines tend to oscillate between the extremes of regularity and irregularity, and she rarely uses enjambment.


-- 456 --
A pedestrian literary history of the "external form" of the sonnet in England from its twelfth-century Provençal origins to the present, but particularly in the Renaissance.


The rhyme-scheme of the "Ode" shows discernible lineaments of the Italian sonnet, the close proximity of which in ancestry is not immediately evident because of line-lengths in typography. But in the aural mode the kinship is more evident.


Astrophel's unease with the Petrarchan conventions is reflected in the Sidneyan prosodic strategy of using a two-tercet sestet against the quatrained octave.


A double Shakespearean sonnet is embedded in ll. 236–62 of "The Fire Sermon."


Detailed comparison and contrast of meters and rhymes. The single most significant difference between the Petrarchan sonnet and its English imitations is the adoption in the latter of a couplet to close the sestet.


More successful than any of Shelley's seventeen experiments in the sonnet form is the fusion of terza rima and the sonnet in each of this poem's sections: "the sonnet restrains the speed of the terza rima, terza rima, in turn, loosens the sometimes ponderous sonnet, giving it flexibility and speed." Cf. Collins (G8) and Wilcox (G64).


A seemingly exhaustive structural analysis of the linguistic features of the sonnet, apparently intended as a model of the method. See also:


And:


Johnson suggests the existence of sonnet-like units in Milton's three epics, distinguished not by rhyme but by approximate syntax and by the fact that these "sonnets" regularly appear "at points of resolution in the destinies of the characters who speak them." He identifies about two dozen in PL, nearly a dozen in PR, and a half-dozen in SA, but nowhere are these catalogued in this essay, so the reader will have to pick his way through for examples, which is irritating. Cf. Arnold Stein (G134).

G110 Kalsen, T. J. "W. H. Auden's Supersonnet." Genre 4 (1971): 329-34. Surveys the various alterations of sonnet form which English poets have experimented with, then focuses on one such by Auden: a 21-line expanded sonnet, in three stanzas of 6, 6, and 9 lines, rhyming aabbc, ddef, and ghijghjhi. Example: "The Crossroads."

G111 Kelley, Tracy R. "Studies in the Development of the Prosody of the Elizabethan Sonnet." Diss., University of California, 1937. Basing his discussion on six very large statistical tables, Kelley draws conclusions on the evolution of technique in the sonnet from W yatt to Donne, but with chief interest in the sonneteers of the 1580s and '90s. He examines (1) non-metrical pause placement, both intralinear and end-of-line; (2) stress variations on the iamb; and (3) consonant alliteration and vowel harmony (see also Appendix A). The author uses Mayor's (E592) 0-1-2 scansion system, yet Saintsbury is the authority most cited and approved. Conclusion: the sonneteers purposefully aimed for variation both in meter and internal caesura placement, while line-end pauses decreased in number yet were more effectively employed. The data here is reliable and worth consultation, though it is not conveniently accessible.


G113 Lathrop, H. B. "The Sonnet Forms of W yatt and Surrey." MP 2 (1904–5): 463–70. A modification of the traditional view. W yatt's sestets divide evenly into tercets as often as not; his sources were the French poet Saint Gelais and the Italian sonneteers. Surrey's sonnet, however, is a new fourteen-line form derived from the stambotto not an imitation of W yatt. See G92.

G114 Lentzner, Karl. Über das Sonett und seine Gestaltung in der englischen Dichtung bis Milton. Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1886. 81 pp. Mainly literary history, though of course on this subject nothing much can be said without frequent reference to form. Indexes of sonneteers, first lines, Milton's sonnets in chronological order, and Milton's rhyme-schemes.

G115 Lever, J. W. The Elizabethan Love Sonnet. London: Methuen, 1956; 2nd ed. 1965; rpt 1978. Thompson (E91) gives a more direct and successful account of the metrical development of the early sonneteers, but it is hard--very hard--to draw away from Lever's refulgent book. The first chapter, on W yatt, is devoted largely to versification; thereafter, mainly pp. 86–87, 134–35, and 145.

within the frames of rhyme and stanza. Levý examines the "internal morphology" of the sonnets of the eleven major Renaissance sonneteers, then compares their practices with those of three later English poets and six Continental ones. No radically new conclusions emerge, but a number of significant ones do, and in general the article synthesizes, concisely and accessibly, a wealth of information—far more than most English critics put into whole books.

A fine technical analysis of this case-in-point of "the transformation of a [poetic] form when taken over by a foreign nation."

Argues the "original, varied technical inventiveness" of Herbert's seventeen sonnets.

A very close examination of Surrey at the hands of his successive editors discloses some modifications of traditional views on the respective importance of his blank verse and his sonnets: Surrey shows "rather less direct acquaintance with Italy than might have been expected" when his sonnets are set against Wyatt's and Petrarch's. Against about 600 lines of sonnets Surrey wrote over 2000 lines of heroic verse, and though his Aeneid was not reprinted, the introduction of blank verse is his most notable achievement.


Metrical virtuosity is discussed on pp. 82–88, 92–93, and 98–100.

Subsumed in and therefore superseded by the following study.

Guaranteed to boggle the minds of all readers except statisticians. Working his way through a considerable number of the literally thousands of possible permutations of sonnet form, Oliphant stipulates ten minimal-compliance rules for a poem to be deemed a sonnet, and fifteen rules for it to achieve "perfection" in that form. The permutation-analysis produces "21 forms in 46 varieties of unlinked and 170 varieties of linked" structure which meet the stipulations, as opposed to the mere eight forms now commonly in use.

Mathematically, 51,300 "without destroying the sonnet as a recognizable form." With up to 7 rhymes in alphabetical order, the English form will yield 55 types, the Italian 32. If the alphabetical order is discarded, the Italian sestet alone may yield 25 two-rhyme types and 90 three-rhyme types. How could anyone think this a "scanty plot of ground"?
In Tottel 54 of the 310 poems are sonnets, and these show 14 different rhyme-schemes, an index of the milieu of experimentation in the early development of the form. Parker argues that sonnets 218, 219, and 241 in the Rollins edition are by Wyatt.

Hopkins' three "bob-tailed" sonnets ("Pied Beauty," "Peace," and "Ash Boughs") have a structure derived from a careful and calculated reduction of the standard sonnet form by 1/4, the 14 lines thus cut to 10.5, on the basis of the poet's belief that the English form had too expansive a structure for the compression of its thought.

G127 Potter, James L. "The Development of Sonnet-Patterns in the Sixteenth Century." Diss., Harvard University, 1954.

Very close explication of sound-patterning (the vowels of the octave and sestet rhymes seem particularly important in controlling the total sonal texture) and meter (variations and inversions, syllabic length) reveals the internal dynamics of the quickening emotional crescendo in lines 1-13 of Milton's sonnet.

Devises "an objective means of locating, describing, and finding" the volta of a sonnet by comparing performances of the sonnet with syntactic and suprasegmental analysis.

Explores "the shifting equilibrium between the freedom of spoken language and the restrictions of poetic form," particularly in rhyme-scheme, where Frost used more than the conventional number of rhymes for thematic effect.


General discussion of the form, W yatt through the Rossettis. Useful notes.

The longevity of the sonnet's form is explained by the fact that it (1) controls and (2) enriches the experience being presented. The control resides in order; the form evokes a unified response, based on numerous sub-levels of organization. Each level groups fewer than six of its units, which is in fact the maximum number of units perceptible in the human attention span. The Gestalt criteria of nearness, likeness, sequence, and closure are also met in the rhyme scheme. The enrichment resides in the pleasure of perceiving "equipollence," the series of "internal balances" the sonnet maintains both within and among its levels of organization.

-- 460 --

G135 Stoehr, Taylor. "Syntax and Poetic Form in Milton's Sonnets." English Studies 45 (1964): 298–301. Very close analysis of the "tension between energy and control" in five sonnets, demonstrating how Milton hammered out a unity of syntactic form, meter, and stanza form (by yoking the quatrain and sestet through enjambment) within which his powerfully emotional subjects could be brought under order.

G136 Stout, Janis P. "Convention and Variation in Frost's Sonnets." Concerning Poetry 11 (1978): 27–36. Frost wrote twenty-eight sonnets, of which it can be said that "the sonnets in which Frost least varies the conventions tend to be his weakest."

G137 Strzetelski, Jerzy. The English Sonnet: Syntax and Style. Cracow: Jagiell University, 1970. 146 pp. Analysis of 278 sonnets by 55 authors over 400 years using the method mapped out by R. ezskiewicz for T he B ook of M argery K empe (a graphic notation of the dimensions of momentum and modification in the sentence, analogous to Jakobson's axes of selection and combination). The resultant summary graphs and tables provide an enormous amount of compressed information still to be mined. Tentative conclusion: the centripetal force of tradition on authors construing the syntax of sonnets has held much greater sway than the centrifugal force of the individual talent.


G139 Sweeney, Kevin M. "The Structural Importance of the First Quatrain in the Sequence of Sonnets of Michael Drayton: A Study of the 4–10 Sonnet." D AI 38 (1977): 2147A (Catholic University of America). The study of sonnet structure is one study of the ways in which meaning can be structured. The 4–10 pattern is very unusual—though about a third of Drayton's 106 sonnets are either clearly or ambiguously of this pattern—and it appears in two types: either the dizaine will develop the meaning embryonic in the quatrain, or it will provide contrast, taking the quatrain material simply as "a point of departure."


G143 Vanderbok, Judith A. "Growth Patterns in E. E. Cummings's Sonnets: A

Statistical changes in seventy-six variables are tabulated for four phases of Cummings' career; 99% of these elements were present in his work from the very beginning. If indeed Cummings did "grow" artistically it was only very modestly.

Weeks, L. T. "The Order of Rhymes of the English Sonnet." MLN 25 (1910): 176-80. Addendum by H. M. Belden on p. 231. On p. 179 the author presents a large table showing quatrain rhyme-schemes listed down one axis and sestet rhymes along the other, with frequency of occurrence tabulated for each variety in the sonnets of "the entire body of English sonnet writers." If this last claim be true, the table should be of considerable utility.

Wendel, Karl-Heinz. Sonettstrukturen in Shakespeares Dramen. Bad Hamburg: H. Gehlen, 1968. 192 pp. An extensive exercise in triviality: "sonnet" is differentiated from "sonnet-structure" only on the basis of manifestation: sonnets appear separately, while sonnet-structures are embedded in longer runs of verse, as in the drama. Their purpose is dramatically, or contextually, motivated.


Within, Philip M. "A Prosodic Analysis of Milton's Seventh Sonnet." Bucknell Review 6, no. 4 (1957): 29-34. A justification of the metrical irregularities as semantically expressive, and an interesting observation on the grouping of sounds in the octave versus the sestet.

Zillman, Lawrence J. John Keats and the Sonnet Tradition: A Critical and Comparative Study. Los Angeles: Lymanhouse, 1939. Based on his dissertation work at the University of Washington in 1936, "The Sonnets of John Keats: A Critical and Comparative Study in Versecraft." A tripartite work: the first section discusses the sonnet tradition in general, while the second (about 75 pages) focuses on a close analysis of Keats's handling of the sonnet, and the third (Appendix) prints the texts of the 67 sonnets Keats wrote. There are also incidental observations on the sonnet techniques of Hunt, Bowles, Wordsworth, Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser in Appendix II. Keats at sonnets was relatively conservative, following the views of the age—and especially Hunt--pretty closely. It is not generally known that he only turned to the Shakespearean form after writing nearly 40 of his 67 or so sonnets in the Italian form. Zillman's study of Keats's prosody is narrower in focus and less stylish but more detailed than Bate's (B7), often providing tables of information on sound patterning, alliteration and assonance, rhyming, metrical variation, end-stopping, pauses, and phrasing.


-- 462 --