

Romeo and Juliet

Outside time: the sacred kiss of the pilgrim sonnet

Sacred stillness of orchard prefigured by the pilgrim sonnet in 1.4.206-219.

Dante defines, in *Vita Nuova*, Commentary Ch. XL, *peregrini* (pilgrims) as ('in a broad sense') wanderers in a foreign land; in a 'strict sense' he defines three different types of pilgrim: *peregrini* (to Saint Jaques, in Galicia), *palmieri* (palmers to Palestine); *romei*, pilgrims to Rome.

ROMEO If I profane with my unwortheiest hand
This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,

My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
Which mannerly devotion shows in this,

For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO Have not saints lips, and holy palmers too?

JULIET Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do;
They pray, grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET Saints do not move, though grant for prayer's sake.

ROMEO Then move not while my prayer's effect I take.

1) 1.4.206–219: The pilgrim sonnet: a *diptych* and a *trptych* in fourteen lines (seven pairs), antiphonal in form and content, with reflecting words: 'this/kiss' (2,4, 6,8), 'pilgrims' (3,7, 5,10) where both uses of singular and plural 'pilgrim/pilgrims' occupy identical positions in line.

octave: a *diptych*

4

4

sestet: a *trptych*

1+1,

2,

1+1

2) Seven key words, all concerned with pilgrimage, are each repeated four times.

pilgrim/pilgrims (1+3),

palm/palmers (1+3),

hand/hands (1+3),

this/kiss (2+2)

lips (3+1),

saint/saints (2+2),

pray/prayer (2+2).

[numbers in parenthesis indicate distribution between Romeo and Juliet]

3) 'Four, she's not fourteen', 'a fortnight and odd days' [to Lammas-tide?] (1.3.14-16). Time: 17 July. Conception Hallowe'en (31 October/1 November), birth 31 July/1 August.

4) July girl: 'By th'rood [cross of Christ] . . . Jule . . . Ay, Jule . . . Ay, Jule . . . Ay'.

Othello: symmetrical patterns

“Rude am I in my speech”

Although the symmetry between Act I.iii and V.ii is more obvious, that between the two V.ii speeches is all the more striking because they both indicate ending half-way through l. 19, and are then followed by a coda of three lines.

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approved good masters:
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter
It is most true; true, I have married her.
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech
And little blest with the soft phrase of peace,
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field,
And little of this great world can I speak
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. yet by your gracious patience
I will a round unvarnished tale deliver
Of my whole course of love, what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration and what mighty magic –
For such proceedings I am charged withal –
I won his daughter.

(I.iii. 77-94)

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!
Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars,
It is the cause. Yet I'll not shed her blood
Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow
And smooth as monumental alabaster.
Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men.
Put out the light, and then put out the light:
If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
I can again thy former light restore
Should I repent me; but once put out thy light,
Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
I know not where is that Promethean heat
That can thy light relume. When I have plucked the rose
I cannot give it vital growth again,
It needs must wither: I'll smell thee on the tree.
O balmy breath, that dost almost persuade
Justice to break her sword! **Once** more, **once** more:
Be thus when thou art dead and I will kill thee
And love thee after.

Once more and that's the last.

So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
But they are cruel tears. This sorrow's heavenly,
It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

(V.ii. 1-22)

Soft you, a *word* or two before you go.
I have done the state some service, and they know't:
No more of that. I pray you in your *letters*,
When you shall these unlucky deeds *relate*,
Speak of me as I am: nothing extenuate,
Nor *set down* aught in malice: then must you *speak*
Of one that loved not wisely, but too well;
Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
Perplexed in the extreme, *of one* whose hand
Like the base Judean, threw a pearl away
Richer than all his tribe; *of one* whose subdued eyes,
Albeit unused to the melting mood,
Drops tears as fast as the Arabian trees
Their medicinable gum. *Set you down* this
And *say* beside that in Aleppo once,
Where a malignant and turbanned Turk
Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
I took by th' throat the circumcised dog
And smote him – thus!

LOD.: O bloody period.

GRAT.: All that's spoke is marred.

OTH.: I **kissed** thee ere I killed thee: no way but **this**,
Killing myself to die upon a **kiss**.

(V.ii. 336-357)