

7: LOVE SONNETS IN THE EARLY 16TH CENTURY:

SIR THOMAS WYATT AND MICHELANGELO'S POETRY

REGARDE! MFL ACTIVITY: ITALIAN

Sir Thomas Wyatt – Sonnet 7, c.1525-1538

Farewell Love and all thy laws for ever,
thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
to perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour.

In blind error when I did persevere,
thy sharp repulse, that pricketh ay so sore,
hath taught me to set in trifles no store,
and scape forth, since liberty is liefer.

Therefore farewell, go trouble younger
hearts, and in me claim no more authority,
with idle youth go use thy property,

And thereon spend thy many brittle darts.
for hitherto though I have lost all my time,
me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to
climb

Sir Francis Wyatt – Sonnet 22, c. 1525-1538

I abide and abide and better abide,
and, after the old proverb, the happy day,
and ever my lady to me doth say,
"let me alone and I will provide".

I abide and abide and tarry the tide
and with abiding speed well ye may.
thus do I abide I wot alway,
n' other obtaining nor yet denied.

Aye me! this long abiding
seemeth to me, as who sayeth,
a prolonging of a dying death,
or a refusing of a desired thing.

Much were it better for to be plain,
than to say abide and yet shall not obtain.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, 'Non so se s'è la desiata luce', c. 1534-46

Non so se s'è la desiata luce
del suo primo fattor, che l'alma sente,
o se dalla memoria della gente
alcun' altra beltà nel cor traluce;

O se fama o se sogno alcun produce
algi occhi manifesto, al cor presente,
di sé lasciando un non se che cocente,
ch'è forse or quel c'a pianger mi conduce.

Quel ch'ì sento e ch'ì cerco e chi mi guidi
meco non è; né so ben veder dove
trovar mel possa, e par c'altri mel mostri.

Questo, signor, m'avvien, po' ch'ì vi vidi,
c'un dolce amaro, un sì e no mi muove:
certo saranno stati gli occhi vostri.

I do not know if it is the very longed-for
light of the one who first made it that my
soul feels: or if some other beauty lodged
in my memory of people shines in my heart.

Or if fame or dreaming brings someone
before my eyes, or makes him present in
my heart, leaving behind a burning trace I

cannot describe – perhaps it is this which
draws my heart to tears.

What I feel and what I seek, and who may
guide me to it, lie beyond my power; and
I cannot clearly see where I may find it,
though it seems that someone may show
me.

This, lord, is what has happened to me
from the time I saw you: something bitter
and sweet, a yes and no move me: it is
certainly your eyes that have brought this
about.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, 'Se l'immortal desio, c'alza e corregge', c. 1532-33

Se l'immortal desio, c'alza e corregge
gli altrui pensier, traessi e' mie di fore,
forse c'ancor nella casa d'Amore
farie pietoso chi spietato regge.

Ma perché l'alma per divina legge
ha lunga vita, e 'l corpo in breve muore,
non può 'l senso suo lode o suo valore
appien descriver quel c'appien non legge.

Dunche, oilmé! Come sarà udita
la casta voglia che 'l chor dentro incende
da chi sempre se stesso in altrui vede?

La mie cara giornata m'è impedita
col mie signor c'alle menzogne attende,
c'a dire il ver, bugiardo è chi nol crede.

If desire of the immortal, which raises and
directs men's thoughts aright, were to make
mine show clearly, that would perhaps
make merciful him who rules without mercy
still in the realm of Love.

But since by divine law the soul has a
long life, while the body after a short time
dies, the senses cannot fully tell the soul's
praise of worth, since this they cannot fully
perceive.

Alas, then, how shall the caste desire
which sets aflame my heart within be heard
by those who always see themselves in
others?

I am shut off from the dear company of my
lord who pays heed to falsehoods, while,
if truth be told, he is a liar who does not
believe it.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Thomas Wyatt: Sonnet 7

endeavour = strive for
that pricketh ay so sore = that is always so
painful.

to set in trifles no store = to attach no
importance to trivialities.

liefer = more desirable.

property = power, capabilities

me lusteth no longer = I no longer wish.

Thomas Wyatt: Sonnet 22

abide = wait (patiently)

after the old proverb, the happy day = I
await, as the proverb says, for a happier
(more fortunate) day

I will provide = I will provide satisfaction
tarry the tide = wait for the tide to turn

And with abiding speed well ye may = it is
possible that, by waiting, you (one) may be
successful

I wot alway = I reckon, forever

N'other = no other, nothing

as who sayeth = as one might describe it

and yet shall not obtain = even though (she
knows) that he (I or anyone) will not obtain
his desire

The sonnet is a form of poetry that can be
found in lyrical poetry from Europe. The
term "sonnet" derives from the Italian word
sonetto, meaning "little song" or "little
sound". By the thirteenth century, it had
come to signify a poem of fourteen lines
that follows a strict rhyme scheme and
specific structure.



AYE ME! THIS LONG ABIDING SEEMETH TO ME, AS WHO SAYETH, A PROLONGING OF A DYING DEATH



Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) fu un famoso poeta rinascimentale inglese e ambasciatore alla corte di Enrico VIII; si dice fosse anche l'amante di Anna Bolena. Le sue poesie sono permeate da sentimenti di amor cortese ma allo stesso tempo passionale. Scrisse oltre 200 canzoni e compose epigrammi e satire, sperimentando con nuove forme poetiche quali il rondeau. È noto maggiormente per aver introdotto il sonetto in versi in lingua inglese, componendo lui stesso 31 sonetti, di cui 10 sono traduzioni di versi petrarcheschi. La sua importanza nella storia della letteratura inglese è fondamentale. La forma del sonetto e l'impiego della lingua inglese anziché del latino influenzarono poeti successivi, come Shakespeare.

A prima vista, l'amore passionale di Wyatt sembra essere molto distante dalla concezione più sobria e contenuta dell'amore descritta da Michelangelo. Tuttavia, entrambi gli autori descrivono la sofferenza che l'amore provoca nell'innamorato rifiutato, e la quasi dipendenza esistenziale da esso. I versi 9-11 nel sonetto 22 di Wyatt:

*Aye! This long abiding,
seemeth to me, as who sayeth,
a prolonging of a dying death'*

rispecchiano il dolore di Michelangelo nei versi 4-8:

Non so se s'è la desiata luce
[...] o se fama o se sogno alcun produce
agli occhi manifesto, al cor presente,
di sé lasciando un non so che cocente
ch'è forse or quel c'a pianger mi conduce.

La passione e il desiderio dell'amata, descritti chiaramente in termini fisici nell'immaginario poetico di Wyatt, o suggeriti con più timidezza nella prosa di Michelangelo, sono una forma ricorrente in entrambi i sonetti dei poeti.

Riferimenti stilistici e tematici a poeti come Dante (1265-1321), Petrarca (1304-1374) o al filosofo greco Platone, sono un altro elemento che accomuna i due poeti. Il verso 3 nel sonetto 7, Wyatt rimanda direttamente a Petrarca e a Seneca, mentre nella poesia di Michelangelo, Se l'immortal desio, c'alza e corregge, riferimenti alle idee filosofiche di Platone si riscontrano

nei versi 7 (non può 'l senso suo lode o suo valore) e 10 (la casta voglia che 'l cor dentro incende). Un'attenta analisi del loro linguaggio poetico, del ritmo e della musicalità dei versi, ci permettono di capire come mai furono così apprezzati dai loro contemporanei. Ci aiutano inoltre a capire la concezione dell'amore e della poesia in Italia e in Inghilterra ai primi del Cinquecento.

SONETTI:

- L'amore ai primi del Cinquecento:
- Come viene descritto l'amore nei 4 sonetti? La visione di Sir Wyatt è differente da quella di Michelangelo?
- Descrizione dell'amata: come viene rappresentata fisicamente l'amata? Potresti dipingere un ritratto o descrivere chiaramente l'amata di entrambi i poeti, basandoti sulle informazioni rilevate nei sonetti?
- Puoi trovare delle corrispondenze tra la rappresentazione dell'amata di Michelangelo nei suoi disegni e nei suoi dipinti?
- Puoi trovare delle particolari sfumature o idee che esprimano che tipo di amore è rivelato nelle poesie di Michelangelo e Wyatt?
- Avendo letto questi sonetti, come definiresti che cos'è un sonetto? Conosci qualche altro esempio di un sonetto? Se sì, di chi?

ATTIVITA':

Riscrivi in inglese o in italiano corrente i sonetti sopra citati: devi utilizzare la forma del sonetto ma puoi impiegare una vasta gamma di termini. Come si paragona il tuo sonetto con quelli dei tuoi compagni? Leggete i vostri sonetti ad alta voce. Il loro ritmo e la loro musicalità vi ricordano di qualche tipo di musica contemporanea? Puoi convertire il tuo sonetto in un più vivace e moderno linguaggio musicale?



Far left:
Michelangelo Buonarroti
The Dream (Il Sogno)
c.1533 (detail showing the vice of lust)

Left:
Michelangelo Buonarroti
Lazarus
c.1516
Red and black chalk on laid paper
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LOVE SONNETS IN THE EARLY 16TH CENTURY

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(for a full English translation see overleaf)

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS4+
MFL Italian.

REGARDE! LANGUAGE AND ART

CURRICULUM LINKS: KS4+ MFL ITALIAN.

English Literature, Art and Design, Art History and History

Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542) was a prominent 16th century English poet and an Ambassador at the court of Henry VIII; he was also rumoured to have been one of Anne Boleyn's lovers. His poetry is suffused with sentiments of passionate yet courtly love. While having written over 200 songs, Wyatt also experimented with new poetic forms such as the rondeau, epigrams and satires. He is probably best known for having 'pioneered' the sonnet in English verse, himself writing 31 sonnets, of which 10 were translations of Petrarch.

Wyatt's poetry plays a key role in the history of English literature. His codification of sonnets and his use of the English language (as opposed to Latin) were to influence later poets, such as William Shakespeare, one of the best-known sonnet writers.

At a quick glance, Wyatt's fervent expression of love seems to be at odds with Michelangelo's more restrained depiction of the amorous sentiment. However, both poets compete in depicting the painful emotional and almost existential dependence love can hold on a rejected lover.

Sir Thomas Wyatt's verses 9-11 in sonnet 22:

*Aye me! this long abiding
seemeth to me, as who sayeth,
a prolonging of a dying death
mirrors Michelangelo's pain in verses 4-8,
Non so se s'è la desiata luce:
[...] fame or dreaming brings someone
before my eyes,
[...], leaving behind a burning trace I
cannot describe – perhaps it is this which
draws my heart to tears.*

Desire and longing for the loved one, either depicted in clear physical terms in Wyatt's overall poetic imagery, or suggested more tentatively in Michelangelo's prose, is a constant recurrence in both poets' sonnets. Stylistic and conceptual references to earlier Italian poets such as Dante (1265 – 1321), Petrarch (1304 – 1374) or thinkers of the Antiquity such as Plato, is also a similarity both artists share. Wyatt makes clear references to Petrarch and Senec in verse 3 of sonnet 7, while in Michelangelo's poem, *Se l'immortal desio, c'alza e corregge*, clear

references to Plato's philosophical views are made in verse 6 ('the senses cannot fully tell the soul's praise') and verse 9 ('the chaste desire which sets aflame by heart'). A close examination of the poetic language, and of rhythms and musicality at play in these sonnets, help us understand why both poets were very successful in their own times. They also help us understand the poetic and love conventions of early 16th century Italy and England.

LOVE IN THE EARLY 16TH CENTURY:

- How is love depicted in all four sonnets? Is Sir Wyatt's view of love different from Michelangelo's?
- Depiction of the loved one: how are the physical attributes of the beloved described? Could you paint a portrait or clearly describe both poets' lovers from the information related in the sonnets?
- How can you relate Michelangelo's depiction of his beloved to his drawing and painting work?
- Can you pick up on any specific nuance, or idea underlying the type of love expressed in both Michelangelo's and Wyatt's poetry?

SONNETS IN LITERATURE:

After having read these sonnets, can you define what a sonnet is just by reading the examples? Do you know any other poems that are like these examples of sonnets? If so, who by?

ACTIVITY:

With the help of the glossary, rewrite in contemporary English the Thomas Wyatt sonnets. Then try re-writing the Michelangelo sonnets in contemporary English or Italian: you will have to stick to the form of the sonnet, but are allowed to play with a wide range of vocabulary. What do your final sonnets look like? How do they compare with some of your classmates? Read your sonnets out loud. Do their rhythm, musicality, speak to you, do they remind you of a contemporary form of music? Can you transpose your sonnet into a more lively or modern form of music?

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Glossary and sonnets by Sir Thomas Wyatt courtesy of Oxquarry Books Ltd, on www.shakespeare-sonnets.com