*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 unworthiest 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 *triptych* 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 *triptych*

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?] (I.3.14-16). Time: 17 July. Conception Hallowe’en (31 October/I 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 s*peak*

*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)