

The Structure of Image Patterns of Shakespeare's Sonnets

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<Abstract>

The sonnets of Donne and Milton consist of the logical context of the sonnet, while Shakespeare's sonnets are constructed by the development of the images. According to the pattern of images, we have the juxtaposition of images, the litany of images, and the recurrent images. The juxtaposition of the images has the pattern of images which come side by side in the same line or in an other line of the sonnet, while the litany of images has the repeated image pattern in the sonnet. The former, like a chorus, cooperates to reveal the theme with harmonizing power, while the latter has the interaction of echo and response, like the counterpoint of music. Finally the recurrent images change the range of their activity into the other sonnets. The image used in one sonnet is repeated by the other one with a new light of suggestion, and develops from the mere metaphor to the symbol which has the larger meaning of the sonnet which cannot be given by the only metaphor in a sonnet.

Shakespeare의 Sonnet에 나타난 이미지패턴의 構造

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<요 약>

Donne이나 Milton의 Sonnet의 構造는 주로 그 文脈에 따라서 이루어지지만, Shakespeare의 Sonnet는 이미지의 發展에 따라서 Sonnet가 진행된다. 그 이미지패턴에 따라서 이미지의 並列, 이미지의 連續, 그리고 反復이미지로 區分한다. 이미지의 並列은 그 이미지가 같은 行 또는 다른 行에 나란히 오는 경우이고, 이미지의 連續은 같은 Sonnet에서 되풀이하여 나오는 경우이다. 前者는 마치 음악의 合唱에서 처럼, 나란히 오는 이미지가 和合되어 조화를 이루면서 그 Sonnet의 테마를 나타내어 주고 있으며, 후자는 이미지간에 相互作用, 즉 각 이미지間에 反響과 應答으로서 그 Sonnet의 中心되는 테마를 나타내어 보여주고 있다. 끝으로 되풀이되어 나오는 反復이미지는 여러 Sonnet에서 되풀이되어 나오는 이미지로서 각각 Sonnet에서 그 이미지의 뜻이 변해가면서, 단독의 은유(metaphor)로서 나타내는 의미보다 더욱커져 나중에는 象徵적으로 된다.

I. Introduction

The structure of the Italian sonnets is so much based on the logical basis of the form, that the

first quatrain states a proposition and the second proves it, and that the first tercet confirms it and the second draws the conclusion. ⁽¹⁾ Milton is the English sonneteer to recognize and cultivate this Italian form. The structure of Donnes'

(1) John Fuller, *The Sonnet* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd., 1979), p.2.

sonnets tends to follow a dialectic of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.⁽²⁾ We can here understand that the sonnets of Milton and Donne are all together developed, based on the logical contexts of the sonnets. But the structure of Shakespeare's sonnets is developed by means of the pattern of images, closely connected with the themes in the sonnets.

The development of images consists of the structure of the sonnet, and the close relation between images cooperates to make a rich carpet of the suggestions of the theme in the sonnet. The aim of every image is to light the way for the theme and help to reveal it, step by step. Sonnet 146, for example, illustrates a highly developed metaphor thoroughly integrated into the total texture of the poem. Intensity is achieved not only in the separate image, but through the closeness of the pattern within which a poem's images are related.⁽³⁾ According to the pattern of images, we have the juxtaposition of images, the litany of images, and the recurrent symbols.

II. The Juxtaposition of Images

We can see the placement of images side by side in Sonnet 64.

When I have seen by Time's fell hand
defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age,
When sometime lofty towers I see down
rased,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,
Increasing store with loss and loss with
store;
When I have seen such interchange of
state,
Or state itself confounded to decay,

Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare
That Time will come and take my love
away.

In the above sonnet, every image suggests the vicissitudes of everything by the destructiveness of time, although all the images come side by side; the proud monument of the gorgeous past defaced by time, lofty towers thrown down, and brasses laid for eternity ripped up by mortal fury in the first quatrain—the ruins of human works; the shore eaten up by the sea and the land gained upon the sea, alternating loss with gain in the second quatrain—the vicissitudinous nature. Thus the dominion of "state", with its ubiquitous "ruin" is total not only in its inclusion of man and nature but also in its embracing of the present and future as well as the past. The poet juxtaposes man with nature, and does the past with the present and future as in the third quatrain. The echo of "ruin" in "ruminare" serves the poet's purpose admirably. For the ruin is in the rumination, is its cause and its subject, even as it forms it and forces its conclusion from it.⁽⁴⁾ And yet there is something continuous, repetitious, even inconclusive in "ruminare" that is also the result of ruin.

Here the effect of the juxtaposition of the images is like the chorus in the music, for the images cooperate to convey the idea of the theme of the sonnet, harmonizing each other. Harmony may be described as the clothing of melody, and there is a richness of effect and emotional feeling.⁽⁵⁾ It is a critical commonplace that many of the sonnets fall into groups which can be compared to the musical form of theme and variations.⁽⁶⁾ In the above sonnet, many images that come side by side reveal the theme of the vicissitude of everything in the world, with the richness of effect and emotion, like the symphony

(2) Judah Stampfer, *John Donne and the Metaphysical Gesture* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), p. 245.

(3) C. Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1958), p. 40.

(4) Murray Krieger, *A Window to Criticism: Shakespeare's Sonnets and Modern Poetics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 169.

(5) Percy A. Scholes, *The Oxford Companion To Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 447.

(6) Philip Martin, *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Self, Love and Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 22.

which sound together. Clearly this multiplying power of the images comes much more from the combination of images by means of the juxtaposition than from a single or a few images, for the juxtaposition of images forms a richer carpet of suggestion and emotion, a texture of varied persuasion.

The technique employed by the poet in Sonnet 94 is the juxtaposition, and the sestet is a metaphor for the octave.

They that have pow'r to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold and to temptation slow;
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flow'r is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die,
But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:

In the octave the subjects are persons, men—the lords and stewards (They, others), in the sestet the subjects are flowers, weeds: animate versus inanimate, or the world of man versus the world of nature. And there is a relationship between two parts, but it is the relationship of the combination by harmony. The world of nature reproduces exactly the microcosm of man, and vice versa. The world of nature is the metaphor for the world of man. Here what is true of the metaphor is true of its referent therefore.⁽⁷⁾

The poet juxtaposes the images; "lords and

summer's flow'r" and "stewards and basest weed". The combination of the images, for example, "lords and summer's flow'r" reveals the theme as with the effect of the duet which is the piece of music for two voices, based on the principle of cooperation and harmony. The theme in this sonnet is clearly represented in the last couplet.

For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Here again the combination of the images is made by the juxtaposition—"Lilies and weeds". The theme in the sonnet is that the person whose whole appearance is a lifeless sham, who makes no emotional communication with others, is identified by the self-love which makes him mistake his natural gifts for attributes of his own, and waste them in self-admiration. That kind of self-love smells worse than weeds.⁽⁸⁾ That kind of self-love is compared to rotten lilies that smell far worse than weeds.

Therefore from the above theme, the man who makes the emotional communication with others is the lord who preserves nature's riches from waste, and is like the flower which makes the summer so beautiful. On the other hand, the man who makes no emotional communication with other is the steward who is the caretaker of his lord's beauty, and is like the coarsest weed around beautiful flowers.

The images in a poem are like a series of mirrors set at different angles so that, as the theme moves on, it is reflected in a number of different aspects.⁽⁹⁾ Thus the images that come side by side aim at harmonizing each other for revealing the theme of the sonnet, and the harmony brings to the theme the richness of effect and emotion.

(7) Giorgio Melchiori, *Shakespeare's Dramatic Meditations: An Experiment in Criticism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 38.

(8) James Winny, *The Master-Mistress: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1968), pp. 167-168.

(9) Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

III. The Litany of Images

Litany is an appointed form of public prayer, usually of a penitential character, consisting of a series of supplication, deprecations, or intercessions in which the clergy leads and the people respond.⁽¹⁰⁾ The litany is the same form of response being repeated for several successive clauses. In the sonnet, the litany of images consists of one image for each line, which will then be taken up again in the others.⁽¹¹⁾ Therefore the presiding theme of the sonnet in the central image is enforced by the response of the minor images in the sonnet.

We can see this kind of image pattern in Sonnet 1.

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripener should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory;
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel:
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

In the first quatrain, "beauty's rose" in line 2 becomes the functional image which points to a theme already defined, for the rose is a conventional image of beauty. "That thereby beauty's rose might never die" in line 2, stands for the

eternity of beauty, and becomes the central theme of this sonnet, while "beauty's rose" becomes the central image of the sonnet. Other images in the sonnet begin to associate themselves with the central image "beauty's rose". Like the litany, the sonnet is developed by the central image with responses from the other images. Shakespeare is often praised for his power of using imagery as an integrating element.⁽¹²⁾

The image, "His tender heir" in line 4, interlocks the central image. "beauty's rose", responding with the sense of propagation. Thus the heir of beauty leads to the eternity of beauty, for he can always remain the monument of beauty. Here is the interaction between the central image and the minor images. In the second quatrain, we have the concrete images of self-love; "thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes", "thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel", "a famine where abundance lies", and "Thyself thy foe". These images seem heterogeneous to the central image, but they are not so. Their response to it is performed by the inversion in which the poet uses the opposed concepts for the purpose of gaining the effect of contrast. Through the images, the eternity of beauty is contrasted with self-love. The first quatrain creates a sense of natural and inevitable order, a necessary enchainment of one generation with the next and the next: father, child, and the unconceived who must be brought to birth. Through the image, "beauty's rose", the poet suggests that nature has the infinite capability to eternize beauty in the light of a rose which is withered but reborn. Thus beauty keeps perpetually flourishing.⁽¹³⁾ According to the cosmic order and infinity, nature and man retain and enjoy the perpetual beauty.

But in contrast, the fair youth in the second

(10) *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), Vol. V, p.339.

(11) Melchiori, *op. cit.*, p.22.

(12) Winifred M. T. Nowotny, "Formal Elements in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Barbara Herrnstein (Boston: D. C. Heath and Co., 1964), p.152.

(13) Martin, *op. cit.*, p.17.

quatrain has a retrograde attitude towards the eternity of beauty. He is endowed by nature with great beauty, but he is concerned only with his own beauty. The images, "contraction to his bright eyes" and "his burning flame by self-substantial fuel" suggest self-satisfaction or self-love. The self-love of this kind, however, leads to narcissism, for it makes him discontinue his beauty after his death. Unlike "beauty's rose" and "tender heir", his beauty is limited within himself, and has short life within his life. This, therefore, is self-destruction, like in the images, "a famine where abundance lies" and "Thyself thy foe". Here the central image, "beauty's rose", also has been echoed by the images in the second quatrain; "contraction to his own bright eyes", "his burning flame by self-substantial fuel", "a famine where abundance lies", and "Thyself thy foe". In turn, they respond to the central image, as in the litany. The repetitiveness of images gives this sonnet the character of a litany. ⁽¹⁴⁾

The third quatrain reinforces the second quatrain and responds to the central image, through the following images; "the world's fresh ornament", "herald to the gaudy spring", and "tender churl". The images, "the world's fresh ornament" and "herald to the gaudy spring", respond to the central image, "beauty's rose", for his beauty of youth is bright and fresh enough to become the treasure which beautifies the world, and his youth is festive and powerful enough to become the spring of our life, as in lines 9--10. Generally speaking, the youth also stands for the spring of our life. Therefore "beauty's rose" suggests beauty in the first quatrain, while its suggestion widens into beauty and youth in the third quatrain. The whole and total meaning of "beauty and youth" is merely a fair youth who emblems "beauty". Here the litany of images also has the effect of harmony in which all parts conduce to

the result of uniform coherent texture.

In lines 11--12, we are offered a paradox; to concentrate on his self is to lose it. And this paradox is the pattern to reinforce the images in lines 7--8. "Within thine own bud buriest thy content" means burying his talents, and a more direct suggestion is that the youth is making an end—"grave" in line 14 which is echoed from the image of line 11. And "Within his own bud" suggests the beginning of new life. The young friend may be a bud, but he can flower only in another. To swerve from this is to make waste in niggarding. ⁽¹⁵⁾ And "tender churl" in line 12 is contrasted with "tender heir" in line 4. The interaction of the images is again performed by the litany of images through the echo and response. The contrast between "heir" and "churl" gives us the striking sense of beauty, for the poet suggests that the former is the guard or maker of the eternity of beauty while the latter the destroyer or killer of beauty. Out of this contrast grows a poetic image which resembles the living beauty. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Clearly this contrast of the images becomes the convincing power in the sonnet. Therefore the litany of images has the advantage of the contrast between two images and the effect of the contrast is so much helpful to reveal the central theme of the sonnet, besides echo and response.

IV. Recurrent Images

It is common to find images used in one sonnet repeated by a later one in a new context and so extended in Shakespeare's sonnets. Sometimes the earlier use is the establishing one and the meaning in the second case is largely borrowed from that. Sometimes the new context throws a new light on the earlier image. ⁽¹⁶⁾ Thus the recurrent images have the correlation between the earlier images and the new ones.

(14) Nowotny, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

(15) Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

(16) *Ibid.*, p. 24.

The "worm", for example, becomes one of the recurrent images. In Sonnet 1, the passage, "To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee", suggests that the youth is not only a collaborator of death but also one who anticipates death by doing the worm's destructive work on the side of the tomb. This claim is justified in retrospect, from the view of later sonnets (Sonnet 6, 71, 74, and 146) in which worms explicitly enter as agents of obliteration. But the word "eat" has anticipated them in making the friend one of them. Denying the world an heir, he has reduced his reality to the dimensions of the physical self which he uses up.⁽¹⁷⁾ There is nothing left for any heir but the worms; having rejected his incarnation in his child, he can live on only in the worms.

In Sonnet 6, the worms can not become his heirs, for they represent only the agents of the obliteration of his beauty.

Be not self-will'd, for thou art much too fair
To be death's conquest and make worms
thine heir.

Here the poet keeps as close as he can to nature, and to common-sense, though he does not stop there. The speaker in the sonnet persuades the youth not to be self-willed, for he is too fair to be extinguished utterly by death, with only worms for heirs. This persuasion is based on the good sense, it is, however, more than that, for "worms" here represents the obliteration of all his beauty. The character of the imagery is symbolic.⁽¹⁸⁾ In Sonnet 71 this character is more outstanding than here.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms
to dwell:

(17) Krieger, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

(18) *Ibid.*, p. 120.

(19) *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.

(20) Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 44.

The vile world is a lesser worm, for it in effect does the worm's work—the obliteration of beauty by self-love on the side of the tomb. There is nothing left in self-love except the worms, and he can live on only among the worms after death. Thus the world of self-love—the world of Narcissus—becomes the world of worms, and the world reduced to its dead physical level, life in its unelevated material dimension. And the shift from the "vile world" to the "wise world" in line 13 is the poet's irony; "Lest the wise world should look into your moan,". For this world is wise—that is, shrewd, self-interest—only as it is vile, only as it exercises those actions which ape the destructive perfection, the absolute cooperation with time, of the "vilest worms."⁽¹⁹⁾

Thus clearly the poet here uses the symbol for the self-love of the youth. "The prey of worms, my body being dead," of Sonnet 74 and "Shall worms, inheritors of this excess, / Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?" of Sonnet 146 represent all together the obliteration of beauty by the self-love of narcissism. This is a truth unrelated to, and more exalted than that of positivist science, or any observation depending upon the discursive reason.⁽²⁰⁾ The "worms" emblematised in certain recurring images, and yet it is uniquely alive because of its participation in a higher order of the symbolic truth. Therefore, in the second quatrain of Sonnet 146, the rivalry between ways of life, or rather between the way of eternity and the way of obliteration.

Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?

It is the rivalry between the miraculous and finally victorious way and the vile, wise, mate-

realistic and finally destructive way.⁽²¹⁾ Thus the transition of the imagery from the metaphor to the symbol stands for some larger meaning which cannot be given, or not fully given in perceptual experience itself.

V. Conclusion

In the structure of sonnets, the sonnets of Donne and Milton consist of the logical context or meaning of the sonnet, whereas Shakespeare's sonnets are constructed by the images or the development of the images. Each of images has the correlation between them for the presiding theme of the sonnet, and is unified for the higher order of conveying the meaning of it.

There are the juxtaposition of images, the litany of images, and recurrent symbols in these image patterns. The juxtaposition of the images has the pattern of images which come side by side in the same line or in an other line of the sonnet, while the litany of images has the repeated image pattern in the sonnet. Both of the two types have musical effect. The former, like a chorus, cooperates to reveal the theme with harmonizing power, while the latter has the interaction of echo and response, like the counterpoint of music. Thus these kinds of image patterns realize the richer suggestion and emotion of the presiding theme than the single image. Surely the musical effect of the image patterns is the surprising force in the function of the image revealing the theme. Finally the recurrent images change the range of their activity into the other sonnets. The image used in one sonnet is repeated by the other one with a new light of suggestion and deeper emotion. Furthermore, the recurrent image develops from the mere metaphor to the symbol, and has the larger meaning of the poet which cannot be given by the only metaphor in a sonnet.

(21) Krieger, *op. cit.*, p.127.

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