

## Englische Literaturwissenschaft

**Dr. Wieland Schwanebeck**

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**The Sonnet**

**Wed (3)**

**W48/001**

Given that literary genres are constantly in flux and tend to change over time, the sonnet has proved to be the exception from the rule, for it is a remarkably steady and inflexible poetic form. By and large, its formal set-up is the same today as it was in the Shakespearean Age: Sonnets still consist of 14 lines and are dedicated to philosophical questions as well as the day-dreaming of amorous lyrical 'I's.

Allegedly invented by 13<sup>th</sup> century Italian poets (and brought to an early peak by Petrarca), the sonnet has enjoyed a particularly fruitful relationship with English literature. This course will introduce students to some of the key developments, including the Shakespearean sonnet, Keats's and Wordsworth's contributions to the genre, but also feminist interventions like the works of contemporary poet Sophie Hannah.

We will examine the sonnet with regard to its technical and rhetorical dimension, applying elementary categories of analyzing poetry, including the levels of prosody, rhyme, and imagery. Moreover, we will discuss the poetic content level, examining what propositions can be found beneath the surface of these classic texts and also what has made poets keep returning to this renowned form for centuries. As a possible side-effect, students may discover that by the end of the term they are able to speak (or, indeed, *dream*) in iambic pentameters.

Please buy:

William Shakespeare: *Shakespeare's Sonnets*. Ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones. London: A&C Black, 2010 (The Arden Shakespeare). ISBN 978-1408017975

More texts will be provided in a reader on OPAL at the beginning of the term.

You can join this class no matter if you have already attended the introductory course or not. You do not have to register beforehand – just be there for the first meeting.