

William Shakespeare's sonnet "30" deals with the lyrical I who takes stock of his past losses and troubles (e.g. sorrow of death or the loss of important things), rendered in legal and financial metaphors, until he thinks consolingly of his friend, who is also the addressee of this sonnet. My first impression is that sonnet "30" is a very sad sonnet, dealing with death and loss, resulting in a melancholic atmosphere which is created by the sonnet's content but also through the artful use of stylistic devices.

The stanzas' structure of the sonnet is made up by three quatrains followed by a couplet. The quatrains and the couplet can be distinguished by the rhyme scheme which is a-b a-b, c-d c-d, e-f e-f,gg. The sonnet's form allocates with the form of the traditional English sonnet. In this context it is interesting to see the rhyme the words the relationship between the rhyme words "past" (l.2) and "waste"(l.4). If you look at them you would not think they rhyme but they probably did during Shakespeare's time, as the two words could have been pronounced differently in the 16th century. The question is now whether that stanzas' structure meets the structure of the content. My first assumption had been yes, as all the quatrains start similarly with "When" (l.1), "Then" (l.5) and "Then" (l.9). But if you consider the content of the sonnet, which I will do now, you may come to a different conclusion.

In the first quatrain (l. 1-4) the lyrical I sets the scene by stating that he feels sorry for himself and for what he lost and didn't achieve in the past. Within the first line the reader gets directly introduced to the author's legal and partly financial terminology, which he uses throughout the whole poem. Words like "sessions", "summon up", "cancelled", "expense", "grievance", "account", "pay" and "losses restored" are all from this word-field. These images help the lyrical I to be more abstract, what makes the whole sonnet a little bit more neutral. This legal terminology also reminds me of sonnet "27", in which Shakespeare used this terminology, too, to support his message through abstract metaphors.

The first two lines are connected by their content and stylistic devices. In those two lines we get to know that the lyrical I must have experienced something ("things past") which always comes back to his mind. That is of great importance for the rest of the sonnet. These two lines are also connected by a run-on-line and by the remarkable alliteration "sessions [...] sweet silent / summon" (l. 1-2), which also stresses the importance of the point I made before. The fact, that he describes the silent thoughts as "sweet", can be understood in two ways: Firstly, that the lyrical I wants to find peace instead of being caught in the past, or secondly, that he is in favor of thinking of the past. At this point we cannot definitely say it, but considering the whole sonnet, it must be the first conclusion. But let us go on with line 3. The lyrical I tells us that he tried to achieve something ("sought") but failed in doing so ("lack"). He grieves his failures and shortcomings of the past. The fatalness of these failures gets stressed by the parallelism in this line: "I sigh [...] I sought". In line 4 the lyrical I says that his time disappeared because of crying about the past shortcomings. Here he says, that crying is a waste of time for him, what meets the muscularly image of the 16th century. Remarkable is also the contrast between old and new in this line. You can say that the actuality of his grief is contrasted with the age of his sorrows, what gets stressed by the alliteration "woes [...] wail [...] waste". It is also interesting to see that the author tends to use vague expressions in this quatrain like "things past" or "many a thing", what stresses that this grief is very old and lies back a long time. The fact that he still cries about it (l.4) tells us that something very bad