Abstract

***You** and **I** in Shakespeare's **Sonnets**: from a statistical analysis to a stylistic analysis*

This paper is a statistical study of the pronouns *You* and *I* in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Reading the sonnets linearly the outstanding presence of the *You-I* dyad is soon noticeable, and we can also infer that the addresser-*I* and the addressee-*You* are respectively the subject/lover and the object/beloved of the *Sonnets*. However, a statistical analysis contributes to a detailed picture of their occurrences and provides for a systematic analysis of their patterns of occurrence in their co-text.

1. Introduction

The language of Shakespeare has long attracted the attention of many scholars who, even before the advent of the computer, compiled concordances of Shakespeare's works (*e.g.* Spevack 1973)[i]. The increasing availability of electronic texts and programs for quantitative analyses (*e.g.* The Oxford Electronic Shakespeare) now represent a reliable source and useful tools to carry out 'empirically grounded description of usage on the basis of a large corpus' of Shakespeare's language (Ulrich Busse 2002: 3).

Quantitative studies of the *Sonnets* (see, for example, Ulrich Busse 2002) have investigated the morpho-syntactic variation of the second person pronouns of address and the socio-historical implications for the shift between, for example *thou* and *you* that took place during the Early Modern English (hereafter EModE) period, 1500-1710 *c.a*, which also includes Shakespeare's literary production. Studies of the address pronouns in Shakespeare's dramatic and non-dramatic works have also been carried out (see, for example, Weiser 1977: 506-524; Gurr 1982: 9-25; Bruti 2000: 25-52; Beatrix Busse 2006). Yet, to my knowledge, there have not been extensive studies on the relationship involving the *I*-addresser and the *You*-addressee/s in the whole of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

Most literary critics have generally accepted the arrangements in which the 154 sonnets were organized in the 1609 Quarto edition published by Thomas Thorpe. In most of the literature we read that sonnets 1 to 126 are addressed to a Fair Youth and sonnets 127 to 154 to a Dark Lady (see, for example, Vendler 1999). However the sequence in which the *Sonnets* are displayed and the identity of their addressees have been objects of dispute (*cf.* Auden 1965: XXI). Edmonson and Stanley (2007: 3) state that

> [u]ndoubtedly the collection as we have it is to some degree consciously ordered. Some of the sonnets form pairs and mini-sequences. […] All those that are addressed to a male occur within the first one hundred and twenty-six. Similarly all those clearly addressed to a female occur within the last twenty-eight sonnets. But within this division of the sexes of the implied addressees, most of the sonnets remain silent about the gender of the beloved.

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to question the validity of such claims. The *You* (hereafter *Y*) and *I* dyad is considered essentially as a linguistic pattern that reveals a dialogic relationship between the lyric-*I* and the *Y*-addressee of the *Sonnets* identifiable respectively with an explicit/implicit lover and with an explicit/implicit beloved. Although the presence of this dyad is evident through a traditional reading, I believe that the computer provides systematic evidence of their patterns of occurrence.

2. The aim

The aim of the present paper is to statistically measure the occurrence of all the personal pronouns in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and then to quantify the occurrence of the *I* pronouns (*e.g.* I, me, my, mine, *etc*.) and the *You* pronouns (*e.g.* you, thou, thee, *etc*.) respectively. After obtaining the quantitative results, a sample of the sonnets is selected in which either the *I*-addresser and the *Y*-addressee are explicitly referred to, or are not implied, or one of the two is explicitly mentioned and the other absent on the lexical level. This is to show how in the *Sonnets* the outstanding presence of the *Y-I* dyad is not only quantitatively relevant, but also that when the two pronouns are absent on the linguistic level, the dyad can still be perceived. The presence and absence of the *Y-I* dyad contribute to highlighting the affectionate relationship between an addresser and addressee who are often visible but sometimes invisible on the lexical level.

3. The method

The statistics of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* is now made available from many sites on the Web such as that provided by the *Open Source Shakespeare*[ii] or by the *Shakespeare Website* (David and Ben Crystal 2008) from which in a few seconds the word count or the concordances of the *Sonnets* can be obtained. The hypertext of this work is also made widely available on a number of sites, such as, for example, that of the *Project Gutenberg* (1997).

In the present study, the statistical analysis of pronominal forms of the *Y-I* spheres[iii] in the *Sonnets* has been carried out using the Wmatrix POS (Part-of-Speech) Tool (Rayson 2003; 2007). Before providing the word count and the statistics of the pronouns in question I need to spell out some issues regarding the program I have used.

The automatic output obtained may vary depending on the program employed and the text under analysis (see Rayson 2003; 2008; Balossi 2014). Wmatrix considers the Genitive (*i.e.* the *- s'* in the possessive singular and the apostrophe in the possessive plural), the suffix for the past form *'d'* (*e.g. ask'd*), the abbreviated form of the third singular pronoun *'t* (*e.g.* 'And what is *'t*'), dashes (*e.g.* '- -', '---'), dots, apostrophes or inverted commas as tokens, or multiword expressions (hereafter MWEs, *e.g.* 'lose_his_edge') as one token and not as two tokens, as it occurs with other programs like for example WordSmith Tools (Scott: 2010). Moreover, software for automatic analyses may not recognize the spelling conventions of EModE, as may be the case with Thomas Thorpe's (1609) first edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. However, it is also true that with an analysis of the pronouns of address this is not a major problem because most programs are able to recognize archaic pronominal forms like 'thou', 'ye', *etc*., and thus to assign them to the right POS category, as is the case with Wmatrix.

The e-text employed in the present analysis is the more recent edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* made available by the *Project Gutenberg* (1997). Before loading the e-text into Wmatrix for automatic processing I inserted angle brackets around dashes, dots and the title of the sonnet (*e.g. (<Sonnet I>)* so they would be ignored. Once these changes had been carried out, the POS output was pasted into Excel where post-editing of the following cases was carried out:
-MWEs were counted not as one token, but as separate tokens (*e.g.* 'lose_his_edge' was counted as three tokens and not as one).
-The genitive singular and plural was not counted as one token.
-The suffix *'d'* for the past tense was not counted as one token (*e.g. d'* in *ask'd*).

After the post-editing was carried out in Excel the total number of tokens in the Shakespeare's corpus of the *Sonnets* amounted to 17,509, a size which is nearly the same as that given by the Open Source Shakespeare (17,515).

4. The results

From a first glance at the POS automated output of the whole language of the *Sonnets* obtained through Wmatrix, it is soon noticeable that amongst the most frequently occurring function words (Burrow 1987) are the pronouns 'my', 'I', 'thy' and 'thou', as illustrated by Table 1 below.

Table 1. Top ten most frequent words

	Words	Frequency	Relative frequency
1	and	489	2.79
2	the	444	2.54
3	to	415	2.37
4	of	371	2.12
5	my	364	2.08
6	I	344	1.96
7	in	323	1.84
8	that	320	1.83
9	thy	266	1.52
10	thou	235	1.34
Total items	17,509		

The high occurrence of these pronouns points to a foregrounded linguistic feature that may be attributed to the typicality of love poetry but also to the two protagonists of this relationship the *I*-addresser and the *Y*-addressee. The high incidence of the *I-Y* pronouns amongst the ten top words is made even more statistically significant if we add all the other pronominal forms referring to the *I*-sphere and to the *Y*-sphere. Table 2 below lists all the pronouns of the *I-Y* dyad, their frequencies and relative frequencies.

Table 2. The *Y-I* spheres

Y	Frequency	Relative freq.	*I*	Frequency	Relative freq.
thy	266	1.52	my	364	2.08
thou	235	1.34	I	344	1.96
thee	162	0.93	me	164	0.94
you	111	0.63	mine	63	0.36
your	89	0.51	myself	29	0.17
thine	44	0.25	**Total**	**964**	**5.51**
thyself	21	0.12			
yourself	12	0.07			
yours	5	0.03			

	Word	Frequency	Relative freq.
	ye	2	0.01
Total		**947**	**5.41**
Total items		**17,509**	

As illustrated in Table 2, the Y^{iv}-*I* spheres hold a similar relative frequency of occurrence in the *Sonnets* taken as a whole: 5.41% and 5.51% respectively. These two spheres occur with a much higher frequency compared to the other pronominal forms. Indeed, as shown in Table 3 below, both the singular and the plural third-person spheres record a much lower frequency.

Table 3 The other pronouns

	Word	Frequency	Relative freq.
He-sphere	his	107	0.61
	he	42	0.24
	him	37	0.21
	himself	2	0.01
	Total	**188**	1.07
She-sphere	her	51	0.29
	she	34	0.19
	hers	1	0.01
	herself	1	0.01
	Total	**87**	0.50
We-sphere	we	15	0.09
	our	18	0,10
	us	2	0.01
	Total	**35**	0.20
They-sphere	their	63	0.36
	they	53	0.30
	them	18	0.10
	themselves	6	0.03
	theirs	2	0.01
	Total	**142**	0.81
Total items		**17,509**	

The lower occurrence of the pronominal forms other than the *Y-I* spheres in Table 3 may be justified by the fact that love poetry presupposes an interaction between a first person (I), *i.e.* the lyric-*I*, the lover, and a second person (*Y*), *i.e.* the addressee and the beloved.

A number of issues may be raised in regard to the pronoun usage at the time of Shakespeare. In Old English, *ye/you*; (Blake 1992; Ulrich Busse 2002) were originally plural forms. By the time Shakespeare was writing *ye* continued to be plural, while *you* could be used as both a singular and plural form as it is today. It follows that, in Table 3 above, the results, for the *you* pronoun may also include the plural form of *ye*, which means there may be instances in which *Y* does not refer to the beloved. However, even though space does not allow the presentation of all the data analyzed, the preliminary qualitative analysis carried out for the concordance of the pronoun *you* in Wmatrix shows that in most of the occurrences *you* occurs as a singular form of address to the beloved.

The pronouns *he* and *she* may also refer to the beloved, which is the case with some of the *Sonnets*, though Shakespeare also employs them to personify inanimate entities (*e.g.* 'Till Nature, as she wrought thee'). The same issue is posed for the *we*-sphere, as this pronoun may refer to both protagonists of the *Sonnet*s (*i.e. Y-I*), which is indeed the case in some of the sonnets.

5. Sample analysis of the Sonnets

The quantitative results obtained for the occurrence of the personal pronouns in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* have shown that the *Y-I* dyad is statistically high compared to the other pronouns. Instead this result provides concrete evidence (Leech and Short 1981) for a stylistic feature characterizing the *Sonnets*, it is also necessary to look at them in their co-text (Stubbs 2002).

Therefore, in the remaining part of this paper, I look at a sample number of sonnets in which the dyad is occurring (S12, S27, S81) or non-occurring (S5, S67, S94) on the linguistic level. Sample sonnets in which the *Y*-sphere is present and the *I*-sphere is absent (S6, S11, S95), or in which the former is absent and the latter is present (S63, S66, S121) are also analyzed.

As will emerge from this preliminary limited analysis, the *Y-I* are the protagonists of an affective relationship, which is overtly present when the addresser and addressee are explicitly present on the linguistic level, but is also implied when they are not explicitly mentioned.

5.1 The presence of *You* and *I*

The sample sonnets chosen for analysis, in which both the *Y*-addressee and the *I*-addresser are explicitly referred to, are S12, S27 and S81.

Amongst the 118 words in S12, the semantic spheres of *Y* and *I* are represented by seven items ('I' (4), 'Thou' (1), 'Thy' (1), 'Thee' (1)). The subject pronoun *I* dominates not only due to its number of occurrences but also to the position of *observer* that the speaking *I* holds throughout the sonnet: in the first eight lines marked by the anaphoric 'When' at the beginning of lines 1, 3, 5, *I* only appears in line 1 and line 3 in anaphoric conjunction with 'When'. At first *I*, the observer, is meditating on the passing of time conveyed through the obsessive and mechanical motion of the clock (l.1 'When I do count the clock that tells the time'). Later, the lyric-*I* moves from time, as measured by the clock, to natural time, *i.e.* the time of the seasons, of nature, and of one's existence (ll.3-4). In lines 5-8, *I* is still the omnipresent observer of the dying process of nature. Time, which is also a central theme in many of the other sonnets (see, for example, Vendler 1999), is not conceived of as the cyclical returning of the seasons, but rather as a human dimension involving a beginning and an end, which unlike the seasons never repeats itself. The lyric-*I* insists on such considerations and becomes gradually sadder with the awareness that time for man flies inexorably. The temporal clauses ('When […]) are rounded off in line 8, and in line 9, the second part of the sonnet is introduced by the adverb of time 'Then'. Here, the semantic sphere of *Y* is explicitly introduced. The reference to 'thy beauty' at the beginning of line 8 juxtaposes *Y* and *I* ('Then of *thy* beauty

do *I* question make') in which it becomes apparent that the passing of time, as emerged in the previous part of the sonnet (ll.1-8), strongly affects the addressee's beauty. It is by means of the pronoun 'thou' and no longer the adjective 'thy' (l.9) that the addressee is called into question (l. 10, 'That thou among the wastes of time must go'). *Y* is bound to die just like the other elements of nature (*e.g.* 'the violet', 'trees', ll.3, 5). Reading on (ll.11-12), the inevitable destiny of *Y* becomes even more obvious: 'Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake/And die as fast as they see others grow'. These lines provide evidence for the omnipresence of *Y* in the preceding lines (ll.1-8, 11-12) even though *Y* was not explicitly addressed.

What the lyric-*I* states about the passing of time for man and the decaying of nature stands out as broad remarks put forward while having clearly in mind 'thy beauty' (l.9), which nonetheless arouses a profound sense of anguish in the speaking voice at the thought that 'thy beauty' (l.9) is destined to decay. Such anguish reaches its climax in line 10 ('gainst Time's scythe') where *Time* governed by the clock becomes a metaphor for Death that does not grant survival. Yet the increasingly funereal tone of the preceding lines is loosened in the last line since against 'Time's scythe' (l.13) the 'breed' of *Y* fights against death. The last reference to *Y* (l.14, 'Save breed, to brave him when he takes *thee* hence') if, on the one hand, it is not a promise of eternal beauty or avoidance of death *tout court*, on the other hand gives the assurance that, similarly to the seasons that always repeat themselves, also the beauty of one's beloved will continue thanks to procreation.

Among the 112 words in S27, the semantic sphere of *Y* ('thee' (2), 'thy' (1)) is lower than the *I*-sphere ('my' (8), 'I' (1), 'me' (1) and 'myself' (1)). The sonnet revolves around the theme of a journey. At the beginning (l.1 'Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed') the journey described is real, concrete and we learn that the traveler (*i.e.* the Lyric-*I*) needs resting to recover from fatigue (l.2 'The dear repose for limbs with travel tired'). However, the longed for rest is soon interrupted in Q1[v] by a mental journey that starts immediately after the physical journey (l.1 'I haste', l.3 'in my head', l.4 'my mind'). The mental journey appears to be even more burdensome because the lyric-*I* is affected by extreme weariness caused by the tiring physical journey. The reason why the mental journey is started is not given till Q2, in which we understand that it is made for 'thee' (l.6), and it is for 'thee' that the journey is transformed into a religious ('zealous') 'pilgrimage' (l.5).

In the next lines, the journey becomes gradually more intense and engaging (ll.7-8 'And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,/Looking on darkness which the blind do see'). By means of the sense of sight ('eye-lids'/'Looking') the lyric-*I* tries to see 'thee', the aim of his pilgrimage, in the 'darkness'. The semantic sphere of *Y*, which is just hinted at in Q2, but which has prompted the lyric-*I* to start his mental journey, becomes more evident in Q3 not because it is highly present (only one occurrence of the *Y* sphere is recorded through the possessive 'thy')[vi], but because the object/'thee' that is looked for in the darkness turns out to be 'thy shadow' (l.12) which seems to transforms reality: 'Makes black night beauteous and her old face new', l.12).

In the final couplet the emphasis is again, as at the beginning of the sonnet, on the semantic sphere of *I* ('[my] limbs', 'my head', 'my mind', 'my thoughts'), but the very addressee/objective of the lyric-*I* is *Y* (ll.14 'thee') that upsets *I* like a torment, but that *I* passionately loves.

In S81, the total number of words is 117. Both spheres of *Y* and *I* are present. The number of occurrences between the two spheres are nearly the same (*Y* (8), with the prevalence of the possessive 'your' (5), and *I* (6).

In line 1, both spheres occur ('*I* shall live *your* epitaph') and are repeated in line 2, but the *I-Y* hold an opposite syntactical position ('Or *you* survive', '*I* in earth am rotten'). In line 3 only *Y* is present with '*your* memory' that will never die ('death cannot take'), which contrasts with line 4 where *I* will plunge into oblivion ('in me each part will be forgotten'). In line 5, *Y* is granted eternal memory through 'your name', the future 'shall' and 'immortal life' ('Your name from hence immortal life shall have'). The next two lines (6-7) reintroduce *I* and set up a contrast with the preceding lines ('though I, once gone'; 'The earth can […] but a common

grave'). This opposition is carried on in line 8, where the *I*'s 'common grave' opposes the *Y*'s 'entombed' and with 'your monument' whose memory will 'lie in men's eyes'. Yet in line 9, the two protagonists are reunited by 'you monument' and 'my gentle verse', which returns anaphorically thanks to the relative pronoun 'Which' in line 10. In line 11, *Y* is referred to ('And tongues to be *your* being shall rehearse'/recite) whereas *I* is absent, but his presence is now felt to be in the background through the relative pronoun 'which' coming in the preceding line (l.10) which takes us back to line 9 ('my gentle verse', *i.e.* my poetry). The memory of *Y* becomes even stronger because it will continue forever even 'When all the breathers of this world are dead' (l.14).

The final couplet summarizes the homage that throughout the sonnet *I* has paid to *Y*. The lyric-*I* states that *Y* will live on thanks to his Poetry. But where will his beloved be made eternal? In the 'breath' of future men that thanks to *me* (the lyric-*I*) they will read about 'You'.

From the semantic associations connected to the *Y-I* dyad it transpires that the former is connoted by the semantic field of DEATH while the latter to that of LIFE. *Y* survives thanks to 'my gentle verse', which is a dedicated, loving homage paid by *I* to the beloved to guarantee his survival. However, something of *I* will survive too: his Poetry. The semantic field of poetry is also outstanding and it represents the means through which immortality and victory can be won against Death.

5.2 The absence of *You* and *I*

In the sample sonnets S5, S67 and S94, the addressee *Y* and the addresser *I* are explicitly absent as none of the pronouns referring to the *Y-I* dyad occur.

In the 109 words in S5, the semantic spheres *Y-I* are not overtly mentioned. The sonnet appears to revolve around the unspecified 'lovely gaze' (l.2) of a person who is presumably endowed with extraordinary beauty (l.4 'And that unfair which fairly doth excel'). Such beauty has been created by Time (l.1 'Those hours, that with gentle work did frame') and it is perceived in the present moment, but it is bound to be destroyed by Time itself, by means of its relentless progression. However the final couplet saves this beauty, whose essence will last like the perfume remaining after the distilled flower has disappeared: its 'substance still lives sweet' (l.14).

Accounting for the fact that the lyric-*I* (the explicit *I* in many of the sonnets) is seeing the 'lovely gaze' (l.2) and is beholding his present beauty menaced by the passing of Time, it is the implicit *I* that is at the center of a general reflection which is indirectly addressed to his 'lovely gaze' (*Y*, l.2). Both *Y* and *I* are hidden, *Y* is metonymically present as the 'lovely gaze' (l.) and *I* is hidden behind the lyric voice.

In the 107 words of S67, the *Y-I* dyad is not explicitly occurring. In place of the direct form of address *Y*, we find the impersonal *He* ('he', 'his' and 'him') which is repeated in nearly all the lines (except l.7, l.10 and l.14). The principal theme of the sonnet is the beauty of *He*, which is strongly emphasized and exalted as is the case with many of the other sonnets. Beauty, which is such a remarkable characteristic of *He*, is put under attack by the physical and moral 'infection' (Line 1) characterizing the world inhabited by *He*. Despite this general corruption, in the final couplet *Nature* (ll.13-14 'O, him she [Nature] stores, to show what wealth she had/ In days long since, before these last so bad') appears to come in rescue and protect *He* from being vulnerable to this universal corruption that may endanger his moral and physical Beauty.

In this sonnet, the lyric-*I* is the external observer that on the one hand praises Beauty and on the other criticizes the corruption of the times and expresses bitterness towards it and those who are corrupted, but is also one who shows profound devotion towards the disguised *Y* (*He*).

In the total number of words in S94, both the *Y* and *I* spheres are absent. The pronouns present in this sonnet relate to the plural sphere of *they* ('they' (4), 'their' (3), 'themselves' (1)). The lyric-*I* is not explicitly referred to, although it is implied by the existence of the poem itself. The sonnet appears to be structured as a series of moral statements that the implicit *I* is

delivering to an implicit addressee, a person of exceptional standing, who may be at risk of moral ruin. In the sonnet the implied lyric-*I* neither mentions *Y* nor addresses *Y* directly, but makes observations rather about an unspecified 'they' (*e.g.* ll.1-2 'They that have power to hurt and will do none,/That do not do the thing they most do show') presented with a didactic lesson that *I* delivers to an implied-*Y*, whose moral beauty or reputation risks being spoiled. The strength of the face threat involved perhaps accounts for the indirect strategy adopted by referring entirely to unspecified other people as 'they'. Overall, what we are presented with is a moral lesson that *I* delivers to someone, an implied 'you', whose beauty may be spoilt. However, even though *Y* is explicitly absent from the scene, reading this sonnet in the whole context of the corpus of the *Sonnets* it clearly emerges that the reference to 'they' includes the 'you' implicitly being addressed.

5.3 The absence of *I* and the presence of *You*

The sample sonnets chosen for analysis, in which the addressee *Y* is present and the addresser *I* is absent, are S6, S11 and S95.

In the 115 words of S6, the semantic sphere of *Y* occurs with a high frequency: *Y* is directly addressed twelve times (*e.g.* l.2 'In *thee thy* summer, ere *thou* be distill'd'), and is indirectly referred to through four imperatives in the second singular form (*e.g.* l.1 'Then let not winter's ragged hand deface'). The outstanding, obsessive insistence on *Y* is further remarked on, on the linguistic level, by the grammatical functions *Y* occupies throughout as subject, object or as indirect complement. The theme of the sonnet is but another variation of the initial sonnets, which have as their central motif procreation, *i.e.* the pressing invitation made to the addressee (*Y*) to procreate so that his Beauty may be made immortal. The splendid Beauty the addressee is endowed with is intertwined with the passing of Time that spoils it. And, as is often the case with the *Sonnets*, Time is metaphorically represented through the passing of the seasons (*e.g.* ll.2 'In thee thy summer, ere thou be distill'd'). If Beauty is bound to natural decay, the remedy to it is to generate another self. The highly occurring *Y*-sphere is accentuated by a hypothetical copy of the self that is represented by procreation which in turns testifies to the high occurrence of the *Y*-sphere. Yet the *Y*-sphere, so highly present together with the imperative forms, reveal an implied lyric-*I* who by insisting on the *Y*-addressee in almost all the lines (10 lines out of 12) conveys an intense passion for the beloved, which turns out to be a passionate desire to have him breed in order to guarantee his own immortality, which will also make the *I*'s- passion towards the beloved immortal.

In the 116 words of S11 there is no explicit reference to the *I*-sphere. The sonnet is instead taken up by the *Y*-sphere, which at linguistic level occurs as subject (7), possessive (2) and object (1). Its presence is especially noticeable in lines 1-4 and 12-14. Lines 5 to 11 are devoid of the *Y*-sphere and are characterized instead by general remarks stated in a sententious-like manner (*e.g.* l.6 'Without this, folly, age and cold decay'), which on the one hand seem to confirm what has already been observed about the addressee in the first four lines (*i.e.* his beauty) and on the other prepare the final praise of the beloved, which have the purpose of communicating the last attempt to persuade the beloved to perpetuate his Beauty in future generations: Time is short and can only be defeated by the continuity of future generations, which can guarantee the Beloved's Beauty because his beauty is worth continuing.

The implicit *I*'s insistence on perpetuation is not just aimed at praising the beloved's Beauty, but it also stands out as a defense against the transience of Time that will cause its end unless preventive action is taken against it. The marked insistence addressed to *Y* testifies to the strong passion that lies underneath a speech that is aimed at convincing someone through rational advice as well as through the reasons of the heart.

In the total 121 words of S95 the *Y* sphere is introduced in the *incipit* (l.1 '*thou* make the shame') and it occurs soon after (ll.3-4 '*thy* budding name, *thou thy* sins', and in l.5 'the story of *thy* days'). What is obsessively presented in S95 are essentially the good qualities of *Y*, *in primis* his beauty. But *I* feels that *Y* has within himself a 'blot' that can risk destroying his

splendor. *Y* is characterized by a duplicity or ambiguity, which is positive for what *Y* is, and negative for what *Y* may do to destroy his beauty. If the semantic sphere of *Y* is marked by ambiguity and duplicity (*Y* possesses a good quality, beauty, but the risk of spoiling it is high and that is what the lyric-*I* is trying to make clear), *I* is implicitly present because the use of the pronoun of address 'you' implies the existence of an *I*-addresser. The way the implicit-*I* presents *Y* reveals a strong interest, preoccupation towards the beloved. The lover (*i.e.* the lyric-*I*) is fascinated by the beauty of his beloved and fears he may ruin it through his actions.

5.4 The absence of *You* and the presence of *I*

The sample sonnets selected for analysis, in which the addressee *Y* is explicitly absent and the addresser *I* is present, are S63, S66, and S121.

In the 110 words of S63 only the semantic sphere of *I* is present with five recorded occurrences which are nevertheless relevant: the possessive adjective my (3) is indeed connected in all the instances to the beloved (l.1) '*my love*', (l.12) '*My* sweet love's beauty […] *my* lover's life'). In line 12 the adjective 'my' is further strengthened by the parallel structure it occupies within the line ('*My* […] *my* […]'). The pronoun *I* appears twice and it is significantly accompanied by two present tenses and the adverb '*now*' (l.1 '*I* am now'; l.9 'do *I* now fortify'). It is worth noticing that in line 1, the lyric-*I* is connoted by his old age being contrasted with the present youthful beauty of the addressee (l.12 '*My* sweet love's beauty', l.13 'His beauty'). Through the comparison between the two opposite conditions, *i.e.* the lover's old age and the beloved's youth, the lyric-*I* puts forward the motif of the transience of time with the deep awareness that its action will also cancel the beloved's beauty. This awareness triggers a plausible passionate reaction of the speaking voice that tries to defend his beloved's beauty by stepping into the scene in l. 9: 'For such a time do I now fortify'. His defence acquires the tone of a canto celebrating Beauty that will make it eternal. Despite the fact that none of the *Y*-pronouns of address occur, as is the case with many of the other sonnets, this sonnet is implicitly addressing the *Y*-addressee from line 1 ('my love'), and the destroying force of time is perceived only against the beloved (ll.2-8). Eventually, the fight against Time, as destroyer of the beloved's Beauty, is in the final couplet accomplished for the beloved to prevent the death of his beauty. The couplet sounds like a hymn of victory over Time that is won by the lover for the beloved. Though the *Y*-addressee is not present at the scene, the final message is as strong as if the beloved had been and as if the *I*-lover had performed such a passionate message to *Y* directly.

Compared to the other sample sonnets, S66 presents a lower number of occurrences (87). The sonnet is marked out by an obsessive anaphoric 'And' at the beginning of almost all the lines (ll. 3-12) and by an incisive prelude in line 1 'Tired with all these, for restful death I cry', to which a gloomy picture of a world out of tune follows. This self-contained structure encapsulates the desperation of the lyric-*I* on seeing (l.2 'to behold desert a beggar born') a world that has destroyed all genuine values. Indeed, the verb of feeling 'cry' in line 1, which appears to be the strongest verb in the sonnet on the semantic level, conveys perfectly the mood of the speaking voice. The picture that follows the initial lines (ll.3-12) shows a dramatic image built on a polarity of positive and negative elements (*e.g.* l.4 'And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted') that seem to prove what is stated in the first two lines: the lyric-*I* cries because the world is inexorably sick. The occurrence of an explicit *I* is limited to line 1 and to the final couplet (ll. 13-14 'Tired with all these, from these would *I* be gone/Save that, to die, *I* leave my love alone'). However, despite not being lexically present in lines 2-13, the lyric-*I* is the one who urges the addressee to 'behold' (l.3) this gloomy world and to oppose the terrible reality with what there isn't and with what the world should be like. The gloomy picture seems to culminate at the beginning of the couplet, which apparently repeats the *incipit* of the sonnet, 'Tired with all these, from these would I be gone' (l.1), and with a tragic conclusion 'to die' (l.14). Yet it is the concluding line 14 that helps exorcise death thanks to the presence of 'my

love' ('Save that, to die, *I* leave *my love* alone'): the absent addressee is the only reason for the lyric-*I* to live on.

Looking at the 114 words of S121 we notice that the semantic sphere of *I* is present through the possessive 'my' and the subject 'I', each occurring four times, while that of *Y* is completely absent. It is the sphere of *They* (4) that is noticeable. The plural pronoun 'our' also occurs though with a low frequency (1).

Within the lines of the sonnet, the *I*-sphere does not appear until line 6 and we can notice that lines 1 to 5 present general statements (*e.g.* l.1 'Tis better to be vile than vile esteem'd'). Reading the whole sonnet the outstanding theme, which is revealed and developed throughout, is about what one is and feels to be and the judgments that others (*i.e.* 'they', who are explicitly referred to from line 8 to 14) make about what they think we are. Here we are shown an *I* that defends himself with enormous force and energy (l.9 'No, I am that I am'), and who wants to justify his faults, as clearly stated in the final couplet 'All men are bad, and in their badness reign' (l.14). By means of these firm statements the lyric-*I* justify his faults, or rather, avoids the possibilities of being criticized by the others ('they'). No-one has the rights to make any sort of criticism because no-one is perfect. The final line (l.14) is reminiscent of the saying of Jesus ('Let he who is without sin, cast the first stone'). The *I*-addresser shows a very strong self-defense and also shows himself to be proud of his faults. Despite the fact *Y* is not explicitly referred to, we can infer his presence in line 6: 'Give salutation to my sportive blood'. *Y* is the reason why *I* is being criticized. *I* is characterized by a strong self-defense that does not deny the evidence of his faults, but he rejects the right of being criticized by 'they', the public opinion, *i.e.* the hypocrites, the Pharisees.

6. Conclusion

The quantitative occurrence of the personal pronouns in Shakespeare *Sonnets* has contributed to providing a detailed picture of their occurrence, and to show that the pronouns regarding the *I-Y* spheres are in the corpus of Shakespeare's Sonnets statistically high compared to the other pronouns. This result has successively been used to carry out a focused-based analysis on such pronouns in their co-text. The sample sonnets chosen for scrutiny have proven evidence for an existing affectionate relationship between *Y* and *I* both when the two participants are linguistically referred to and when they are not referred to. This study is still in its infancy: the quantitative results obtained need to be refined, in particular a qualitative analysis of the concordances of the pronouns that may be used to refer to the addressee of the *Sonnets* should be accounted for. Moreover, the same method of analysis could be extended to all the Sonnets. A statistical comparison between the *I-Y* dyad between Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and other sonneteers such a Spencer's *Amoretti* or Petrarch's *Canzoniere* could provide further evidence on whether the outstanding presence of the lover and the beloved in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* is equally evident.

This paper is dedicated to Geoffrey Leech: a great man and a great scholar.

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ENDNOTES

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[i] Richard Grant White edited the complete works of Shakespeare published in 1883 and 1901. A new version was published in 1974 and a subsequent one in 1997 by Evans as general editor.

[ii] The occurrences for the pronouns accessed on the *Open Source Shakespeare* have been used to check those obtained from Wmatrix because the e-texts used are the same *i.e.* the *Project Gutenberg* edition.

[iii] By *Y* and *I* spheres I refer to all the pronominal forms referring to the grammatical categories of second singular pronoun *you* and *I* (*e.g.* subject, object, possessive pronouns, *etc*.).

[iv] For the development of *you* and *thou* and their use in Drama and Poetry, see Ulrich Busse (2002). In Chapter 5, Busse (2002) also provides the number of occurrences of *you* and *thou* in the Sonnets

[v] 'Q' stands for quatrain. For example, 'Q1' refers to the first quatrain.

[vi] A conjecture made by Malone in the 1609 edition of the *Sonnets*.