

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

ABRIDGED

Beyond the Point

-of-

Usefulness

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Shakespeare's Sonnets:
Abridged Beyond the Point of Usefulness

*To the Woman whom History shall
remember only as The Dork Lady.*

Preface

A Brief History of the Sonnets

In 1609, Thomas Thorpe published the first full edition of “SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS.” This is the only copy that Shakespeare himself would have had the opportunity to edit, but given the quantity of typos in the book and how weird the poems are, it is thought by some that he didn’t really care too much.

As with all works pertaining to the man rever-

entially called The Bard, authorship disputes have swirled for centuries. Today most scholars believe Shakespeare wrote all 154, including the crappy ones.

In the many editions since Thorpe's, editors have struggled with the sonnets, largely for two reasons: they're not all that great, and also they're pretty gay.

Early editors solved the second problem by changing a "he" to a "she" where needed. One editor, named Malone, asserted that the poems were all written to a woman. This works well enough in some cases, but in others it becomes hard to suspend one's disbelief. Consider this quatrain from Sonnet 20:

And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

Sure, you could tell yourself the “one thing” that defeats Shakespeare’s purpose isn’t a wiener. You could do that for a line or two. But, then you arrive at the final couplet:

But since she *pricked thee out* for women’s pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love’s use their treasure.
[emphasis added]

Editors and readers from the last two centuries have handled this pickle in various ways. Although ignoring them was the most popular

technique, there were exceptions. Notably, Oscar Wilde felt there was nothing odd about an older man writing erotic poetry to a teenage boy.

Modern scholars are fine with the gay part, which means we're down to just debating whether these are any good. Opinions are mixed. Indeed, despite a few noted admirers, Shakespeare's sonnets have enjoyed far less popularity than that play about the guy whose ghost-dad tells him to murder people, or the one with the teenagers who die of impatience.

The Structure of the Sonnets

The 154 canonical sonnets are usually divided into two sections.

The first 126 are the “Fair Youth¹” sequence, written to an attractive young man. The average reader, who was once forced to enjoy “Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day,” may be surprised to discover that these sonnets are less than 100% romantic. In fact, that particular sonnet is somewhat anomalous in that it lacks any references to Shakespeare’s penis or the fact that he is really good at writing sonnets.

After the initial 126 poems, we encounter the 28 “Dark Lady” sonnets. These contend with an unattractive, bad-smelling, yet surprisingly popular married woman whom Shakespeare negs until she sleeps with him. Most of the poems that

1 *The term “Fair Youth” is not present in the sonnets, but is something of a euphemism designed to, as poet Don Paterson writes in Reading Shakespeare’s Sonnets, “[keep] everything just on the right side of sodomy.”*

follow this consummation concern how Shakespeare hates himself for having sex with her. Remember this next time you receive these as a Valentine's gift.

The Story Within the Poems

One major controversy concerns whether the sonnets are meant to be taken as a simple collection of poems, epistolary fiction, or as actual love sonnets sent to actual people. We have assumed the latter, because many of the poems are so pathetic that it's hard to imagine them as anything other than a faithful description of an actual person's dating life.

A rough summary of events would go as follows:

Shakespeare meets a hot young guy and sends him seventeen sonnets encouraging him to reproduce. As one does. This evolves into something of a relationship, which lasts until the hot guy cheats.

They go on-again-off-again for a while, at which point the hot guy decides he likes a rival poet better because Shakespeare's always using fancy words and elaborate metaphors instead of comparing the hot guy's eyes to the sun or his nose to diamonds or whatever. They part ways.

A few years pass. The hot guy — suddenly realizing that Shakespeare is missing — writes to complain that he hasn't gotten a sonnet for a while. Shakespeare, with the typical self-regard of a writer, apologizes and sends a raft of new poems, including one where the hot guy is compared

favorably with God.

They get back together, whereupon Shakespeare cheats. Shakespeare says he really sympathizes with how the Fair Youth feels, because (*ahem*) he too has been cheated on. The romance fares predictably thereafter, but they decide to remain friends.

Shakespeare then becomes infatuated with a woman who, by the tofu-ish standards of Northern Europe, is dark in complexion. He writes this “Dark Lady” a few poems praising her beauty. When she doesn’t respond with love, he switches to poems about how she’s ugly, including the perplexingly famous Sonnet 130 wherein he says her eyes, lips, breasts, hair, cheeks, breath, voice, and *manner of walking* are decidedly average.

This romantic strategy fails, at which point Shakespeare asks the Fair Youth to put in a good word for him. To nobody's surprise, the Fair Youth and the Dark Lady sleep together.

Shakespeare then tries a new tactic in the perplexingly *unfamous* sonnets 135 and 136, which are best understood by knowing that the word “will” was once slang for genitalia, and then reading this quatrain:

Will, will fulfill the treasure of thy love,
Ay, fill it full with wills, and my will one.
In things of great receipt with ease we prove
Among a number one is reckoned none.

That is, “Baby, you’ll sleep with anyone with a willy, and I too am anyone.” Oddly enough, this_{ix}

seems to work, which results in new depths of self-hatred for History's Greatest Playwright. Shakespeare then cheats on the Dark Lady while she cheats on Shakespeare and on her husband and the Fair Youth and who knows who or what else.

The Sonnets conclude with a mythic love story that may be an allegory for how everybody in this group got syphilis. The End.

In short, what we have here is either bad poetry or outstanding gossip.

In the ensuing pages, we offer you each and every sonnet abridged into a convenient couplet of iambic tetrameter. We urge you to read the entire book in a single sitting in order to achieve a newfound understanding of the sonnets, which

will allow you to stop sending these as a love offering and start sending them as a subtle insult.

Zach Weinersmith
Weinersmith Manor
September 2018

Probably, more nonsense has been talked and written, more intellectual and emotional energy expended in vain, on the sonnets of Shakespeare than on any literary work in the world.

- W.H. Auden

I am a worthless boat.

- William Shakespeare



An Introductory Poem

There's much herein that much admires
"Sweet silent thought," and "bare ruin'd choirs."
But much to make the novice gloat
"Will will fulfill" and "worthless boat."
But happy these one-fifty-four:
No verse was ever granted more.
The good are said to crown good taste.
The bad are said to've been misplaced.
And when no kindness could describe 'em,
The scholars kindly reascribe 'em.
When William's rhyming standards are low

The fault's with Thorpe or maybe Marlowe.
And where deserve our couplets shame
We trust that you will do the same.
If not, who cares? You've paid. Now, find
Some parts (though close) aren't even rhymed.

A Poem About the Format of This Book

When these truncations to compose,
We sat in pensive deep repose.
And said while sipping deep on lambic
“The lines run long in verse iambic.
The buyer pays a quarter more
Unless we cut the feet to four.”
We called the printer. With a cough,
Demanded discounts: $1/5$ th off.
When their response did not inspire,
We passed the cost onto the buyer.

The Sonnets

THE FAIR YOUTH SONNETS

MARRIAGE SEQUENCE

1

Hey Hot Guy, have a kid or two,
So hotness doesn't die with you.

2

Eyes get sunken, skin gets loose.
Before you're old, man, reproduce.

3

Your conduct's got your mom dismayed.
Be a good boy — plow some maid.

4

If looks are cash, you're over-pledged.
So breed, to get your hotness hedged.

Note: Sonnets 5 and 6 form a "diptych," which is Greek for "two ptychs." Hereafter, diptychs will be denoted by combining both sonnets into a single quatrain.

5 & 6

You're like a flower: crap, come Winter.
So, while it's summer, have a litter.

If you have ten, and they have ten,
We'll have a hundred sexy men.

7

The sun grows dull as days wear on.
Just like your face. So, have a son.

8

Wife and child and you: that's tone.
Don't just pluck your string alone.

9

If you should die, we're beauty's widows.
You heartless bastard, have some kiddos.

10

You hate us all, or so I gather.
You beauty-wasting baby-not-haver.

11

While we're waning, kids are ramping.
You're Nature's stamp, so get to stamping!

12

Plants get dead like you'll get dead.
Preserve your beauty — get it bred.

13

You're leasing hotness, you don't own it.
Make a son. And hotness? Loan it.

14

I see your future, through your eyes:
"One day, this kidless hot guy dies."

15 & 16

Time will sully then degrade you.
Unlike this sonnet, which I made you.

But poems cannot sate my need
To see you give some maid your seed.

17

Have kids, so that I shan't be slandered:
"Promoted Unreal Beauty Standard."

THE FAIR YOUTH SONNETS

MAIN SEQUENCE

18

Summer's bad, then dies. You won't.
(Okay, you will, but poems don't.)

19

Time! Do your worst to my love's face!
I care not. This sonnet's ace.

20

You're like a sexy woman, guy.
Too bad I'm not (the least bit!) bi.

21

Another poet's too artistic.
He calls you "gem!" I'm realistic.

22

You have my heart and I've got yours.
Let's tend our cardiovascularures.

23

No words have I, when you I gawk.
Consider silence pretty-talk.

24

My body stores my tablet heart.
My eyes are painters, bad at art.

Note: The general view among scholars is that Sonnet 24 is either intended to be farce or just kind of sucks.

25

So long as our loves overlap,
No one can make me feel like crap.

26

A better rhyme I'll one day knit
For you my love (but this ain't it.)

27 & 28

Can't sleep by day, 'cause work's my duty.
Can't sleep by night, 'cause you're a cutie.

How can I keep a mind that's seemly,
When Night and Day thus double-team me?

29

When in disgrace and feeling crappy,
I think "you love me." Then I'm happy.

30

Unless upon you I'm reflecting,
I weep whenever introspecting.

31

They're dead to me, who wouldn't have me.
You're like those loves, but not cadavery.

32

If you should read these when I'm buried,
Say "Sentiment: lovely. Quality: varied."

Note: Sonnets 33-36 form a “Shakespeare is mad at what you did” cycle.

33

My Sun, the clouds corrupt your shine.
You hurt me, ‘kay? Whatever. Fine.

34

Your “sorry” shan’t my shame allay.
It’s fine. I’m fine. Just fine, okay?

35

Oh, don’t be sad, love, be guilt-free.
Sorry I let you be awful to me.

36

So... turns out I'm the guilty party.
We aren't on speaking terms now (are we?).

37

I am garbage, you are great,
And that's what keeps me going, mate.

38

It takes no skill to write of thee.
A harder subject: horrid me.

39

We're one, so praising you's immodest.
Let's split, so I can call you hottest.

Note: Sonnets 40-42 focus on how the Hot Guy from previous sonnets keeps sleeping with Shakespeare's girlfriend.

40

You stole my girl! Was that a way
To flirt with me? If so, okay.

41

When next my girl desires your bed.
How 'bout someone else instead?

42

We're one. By transitivity:
When she does you, she's doing me.

Note: Sonnet 43 inaugurates a recurring theme in which Shakespeare misses the Hot Guy, and the Hot Guy doesn't care.

43

No need to see you, man. It's fine.
I'll watch you nightly, in my mind.

Note: Sonnets 44 and 45 depend on the Four Element theory of matter, which was disproved by Robert Boyle in 1661, rendering these poems invalid.

44 & 45

If airy thought, I'd fly to thee.
Instead, I just cry quietly.

My fire, my air — 'til they revert
From you, I'm just some soggy dirt.

46

My eyes and heart claimed rights to thee,
Then settled for split custody.

47

When eye or heart must get their fix,
My heart shares thoughts, my eyes send pics.

48

Each favorite thing of mine I fetter.
If you were thus, I'd feel much better.

49

You'll leave because I'm awful, love.
I write to tell you: "fair enough."

50 & 51

I leave you, weighed with such remorse,
It really sucks to be my horse.

I come back, spurring, wanting speed.
It really sucks to be my steed.

52

Scarceness gives things greater piquancy.
So THANKS for coming so infrequently

53

All sexy art is you in part,
You've many forms, but constant heart.

Note: Sonnet 53's claim that the Hot Guy is of constant heart has led to speculation among scholars that Shakespeare either wrote it before the "Hot Guy did my girlfriend" sequence (Sonnets 40-42) or that Shakespeare intended this poem as a suggestion for future behavior.

54

Though roses die, their smells ne'er do.
My rose, this poem smells like you.

55

War and death and slutty time
Will waste all things except this rhyme.

56

This time apart shall help renewing
Your grasp that love is more than screwing.

Note: Sonnets 57 and 58 form the most passive-aggressive diptych in the English language.

57 & 58

I LOVE to slave and serve for you.
It's not like I had things to do.

I needn't hear where you embark.
It's GREAT here, crying in the dark.

59

Is Shakespeare's rhyming hist'ry's best?
Or's his muse just good-lookiest?

60

Time will kill you, lacking pity.
Unlike this verse that says you're pretty.

61

D'you send your ghost to haunt my rest?
No? Perhaps I'm just obsessed.

62

I love myself, till mirr'r reflects me.
But we are one, so still, I'm sexy.

63

My love, your face gets worse and worse.
At least it's young within this verse.

64

Decay and change and death do happen.
One day too, our love shall crappen.

65

Against cruel time, frail beauty's savior
Is me. The poet, William Shakespeare.

Note: Sonnets 66-69 are a brief sequence about how the Hot Guy has fallen in with the wrong crowd.

66

Beauty's junked and virtue's boned.
I'd die, but then you'd be aloned.

67

Why'd Nature place you 'midst the skanky?
So She could say, " 'Twas once less stanky."

68

The skanky need to ornament
Themselves, but you were born with it.

69

If people say “he’s scum, though hot.”
Just thank the scumbag friends you’ve got.

70

By wicked tongues, you’ve been profaned,
But pure and perfect, you’ve remained.

Note: Sonnet 70 appears to overlook the actions described in Sonnets 33, 34, 35, 40, 41, 42, 56, 57, and 58, and fail to anticipate the actions to come in Sonnets 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 133, 134, and possibly 144.

71 & 72

Think not of me once I'm worm-foody.
I'd hate my corpse to make you moody.

If asked about that Shakespeare chap,
Speak not, for I was total crap.

73 & 74

I'm dying soon, I'm pretty sure.
Which fact should strengthen our amour.

But, when I'm dead, do not regret.
My rhymes were good. My body? Ech.

Note: Shakespeare lived for approximately 25 years after composing this poem.

75

Like glutton's food, like miser's money
I get you lots, but want more, honey.

76

You say my verse repeats a ton.
You know what else repeats? *The sun.*

77

Write your mem'ries here, to peek
Your sexy past, once you're antique.

Note: Some scholars believe Sonnet 77 came with the gift of a blank book, as a way to say "If you think I'm too repetitive, write your own f---ing poems."

Note: Sonnet 78 begins what scholars refer to as the “rival poet” sequence, which runs until Sonnet 86. Given all the indications that the Hot Guy doesn’t really care about any of these sonnets, the word “rival” seems a bit generous to Shakespeare.

78

Now other poets are obsessed
With you. It sucks. Please like me best.

79

He “finds” your hotness. That’s his claim.
I **see** your hotness. Not the same!

80

If you’re the sea, my ship is callow.
He sails your deep, I bark your shallow.

81

When I am dirt, I'll be forgotten.
You'll live within my verse once rotten.

Note: Sonnet 81 appears to be a temporary departure from whining about the other poet. Alternatively, Shakespeare may be attempting to woo back the Fair Youth by reminding him that he'll be a corpse soon and Shakespeare's written, like, 80 of these.

82

That poet gilds when gold's undue.
That's fine for uggos, not for you!

83

No verse could e'er encapsulate thee.
And thus, I've not been writing lately.

Note: There are 43 more sonnets about the Hot Guy after this one.

84

You're hot. No poet ought embellish it.
But poets do because you relish it.

85

Your poet friends are great. I'm not.
But, I like you a lot. A LOT.

86

His rhymes ne'er caused my pen to fail!
I'm silent due to your betrayal!

87

My worth is naught. Your worth immense.
This breakup thus makes total sense.

Note: Sonnets 88-90 form a triptych on the topic of “go ahead and dump me, that’s just great with me, fine.”

88 & 89 & 90

When scornful lies on me you state,
I’m on your side, man. HA! CHECKMATE.

Insult me, love. I’ll not debate thee.
I hate your hates, so let’s both hate me!

Oh, dump me now, so now’s unhappiness
Shall dwarf all later living’s crappiness.

Note: Sonnets 91-93 are a triptych about how the Hot Guy is definitely absolutely cheating again.

91 & 92 & 93

I'm ugly, poor, my writing's trite.
But I've your love. I do. Right?

Without your love, my heart stops beating.
I live. You love me. Wait... you cheating?

I tell myself you're ne'er untrue,
For cheating's something uggoes do.

94

Noble hotties are flow'rs among us.
But better weed than flower with fungus.

95

When housed in you, jerkassery
Takes on the form of classery.

96

Your sexy looks lead men to shame,
And since you're mine, I get the blame!

Note: Sonnets 97-99 are a short set about Shakespeare missing the Hot Guy during a separation that was presumably precipitated by the Hot Guy cheating all the time.

97

Summer's flowers, Autumn's fruitage:
It's all just Winter sans your cute-age.

98 & 99

Your absence did my springtime screw
Each flower was a lesser you.

I screamed "HEY FLOW'RS! I SEE YOUR PLAN!"
YOU STOLE YOUR BEAUTIES FROM MY MAN!"

100 & 101

Muse! Gimme verse that aggrandizes
My lover ere he ugly-tizes.

Oh muse, I know he needs no frill.
But, once a corpse, he prob'ly will.

102

Restrictions on my verse supply
Were made to keep their value high.

103

Than verse, your looks are always dearer.
If I've not written, check your mirror.

104

To me you're young as when we met!
(Though possibly I'm incorrect.)

105

My love is not idolatry!
It's just... you're rather God-ish, see?

106

The ancients lacked you, but wrote your beauty.
Today we have you, but write not-goodly.

107

You got jailed. The world's chaotic.
We'll live on here once we're necrotic!

Note: This is the first sonnet in which Shakespeare expects both he AND the Fair Youth to be immortalized in verse. It is likely that the latter found this clingy.

108

I'm out of ways to call you fabulous.
Our love's grown old, yet not cadaverous!

109

I've been away, but ne'er in heart!
I'm junk. You're great. So why depart?

110

I've cheated. Dallied. Lived in sin.
I miss you, can we date again?

Note: Sonnets 111 and 112 are a diptych in which Shakespeare admits to the shame of being a theatre person.

111 & 112

I'm acting now. And publicly.
No cure is known, but pity me.

Though I'm debauched by vulgar tongue,
Your love is all my Right or Wrong.

113 & 114

All's your face since our adieu.
Uggos, hotties, birds — all you!

Am I nuts, or's your face ubiquitous?
(The first idea seems less ridiculous.)

115

I thought our love had peaked, but facts
Have proved that peak a local max.

116

Time can't wither love. If't can
Then screw my love and poems, man.

117

Ignoring, slighting, bein' untrue
Was just my way of testing you.

118 & 119

Just as poison fights disease
I cheated to our love increase.

You look so fine since my bad-doin's
Let's build new love on old love's ruins.

Note: Poison doesn't fight disease.

120

You know how I know you hate my deceivin’?
You cheated too. And now we’re even.

*Note: This is the one time Shakespeare and the Hot Guy find
they have something in common.*

121

Than bad-reputed, being bad’s more fun.
They call me bad? *Takes one to know one.*

122

A notebook. Thanks. This poem's to say
My memory's fine, so I gave it away.

Note: Sonnet 122 is generally thought to refer to a blank notebook given by the Hot Guy to Shakespeare. Compare to Sonnet 72 to understand how catty this all is.

123

Ignore the old, despise the new!
Time can't change me! I'll stay true.

Note: Compare with Sonnets 117-121 in which Shakespeare does not stay true.

124

My love's not thrall'd to its conditions.
It's not like flowers or politicians.

125

Fine stuff's not what love's about.
Let's keep love simple. OUT, SPY! OUT!

Note: This sonnet uses the novel technique of suddenly yelling at a spy for no known reason scholars have been able to discern.

126

Only you, love, make time tarry.
That's temporary. ()

Note: Sonnet 126 concludes with parentheticals. Scholars believe they are meant to represent silence, perhaps to indicate the end of the tryst between the Hot Guy and Shakespeare. Or, maybe Shakespeare left a blank he was planning to fill with an explanation of why everything he previously said about the fleetingness of time was bogus. I have more thoughts on this, but ().

THE DARK LADY SEQUENCE

127

Since makeup means no beauty's honest,
I like your darkness and your blah-ness.

128

The keyboard gets your fingertips.
I'm jealous. Can I have the lips?

129

I'm savage, murd'rous, very odd.
Outside my refract'ry period.

130

My girl has little sex appeal.
But has this virtue: she is real.

131

They call you ugly. I've disagreed.
It's not so much your looks as deeds.

132

Your lovely eyes are black to mourn me
And how remain I super-horny.

133 & 134

Your heart imprisons me and he.
Jail me darling, set him free!

I asked him you my worth to tell.
And now you're dating? What the hell?!

Note: Scholars have suggested that the Dark Lady is getting with both Shakespeare and the Hot Guy. This may not be the first time. Compare to sonnets 40-42.

135 & 136

I'm Will, my Willy Willys swell.
Will you my Willy Will as well?

My Willy words weren't Willy nilly.
You're Willy wild! Will Willy's Willy!

137

My eyes saw fair where foul is found.
My heart said "pure!" though you sleep 'round.

138

I call her hot, she calls me young.
We each believe the other's tongue.

139

Your glances kill. 'Sthat why your eyes
More often look at other guys?

140

Lie and say that we're an us
Or be badmouthed to the credulous!

141

You're ugly. Shrill. You're coarse. You smell.
And yet, I love and serve you. Hell.

142

Reproach me not for loving thee.
You've cheated lots, please cheat with me!

143

A baby, mom, and fleeing chicken.
She'll chase the bird, while babe lies stricken.

Note: This is the worst metaphor in all of poetry. For clarity, the mom is the Dark Lady, the chicken is the guy she actually likes, and the baby is William Shakespeare, who really wants to have sex with her.

144

My girl, my guy. I think she humps 'im.
But shan't find out until she dumps 'im.

145

She said "I hate," but she
Thank God did not mean me!

Note: Sonnet 145 is unique in that it is written in tetrameter instead of pentameter. We have duly reduced it to trimeter. 145 is thought by some scholars to be misplaced. They consider that it may have been written much earlier, in that it kinda sucks and tetrameter is for morons and children.

146

Poor soul of mine, to have to toil
Inside my crappy mortal coil.

147

Reason's my doctor, love's my ague
The doc has left, so... can I bang you?

148

I see not ugly, seeing you.
I guess my tears obscure my view?

149

I love you not? Then tell me why
I hate your hates, including I?

Note: Compare to Sonnet 89 for another poem where Shakespeare tries to make himself attractive via self-hatred.

150

I love you though you're mean and gross!
How come you don't love me the most?

151

Your slave, I rise and fall for thee.
(I mean those words suggestively).

152

I cheated once. You cheated twice.
But I'm more false: I've called you nice.

Note: 153 and 154 tell the same short story in slightly different ways. They are here combined.

153 & 154

As Cupid slept, nymphs quenched his torch
In water, which began to scorch.
A bath to cure lust and VD!
I tried. It didn't work for me.

Note: These final poems are epigrammatic, meant to hearken back to the themes contained throughout the collection. Also they may be a drawn-out metaphor for how Shakespeare, and presumably everyone else here, got syphilis one time.

A Poem Summarizing the Above, as Narrative

Are these the Muse's property
Or mere autobiography?
Herein we shall assume the latter,
For Beauty's sad, but Truth is sadder:
Only Life Itself could furnish
Verse so valiant, yet so wormish:

Shakespeare spies a Youth who's hot,
Thinks "is he bi? Hm. Prob'ly not."
But Cupid's blow is fell and fatal.
The poet makes a case that's natal:

“I cannot have your body flawless.
So make some sons and spread the hotness.”

His sorry failure at seduction
Via words on reproduction,
Convinces Will he must assert
His love in poems more overt.
A romance grows in perfect meter,
Then Hot Guy proves to be a cheater.

The Bard, in sad self-mastery
Excuses all this bastardry
The poems grow e'er more boot-lickish
The youth acts super super prickish.
The Bard's excuses grow more clever.
The Hot Guy takes his girl and beds her.

Undaunted in his innuendo
Shakespeare acts se offendendo.

They reconcile and Shakespeare's verse
Becomes more thoughtful, less perverse.
The poet frets and pulls his hair.
The Hot Guy doesn't realllllly care.

The poet grows in wit, resilience,
Wisdom verging fast on brilliance.
The Hot Guy feels, though Willy's witty,
A rival's sonnets sound more pretty.
Shakespeare bears his broken heart
Away to spend some years apart.

The Youth, no hint of irony,
Asks "why'd you stop a-writing me?"
The Bard, no hint of self-esteem,
Replies with poems by the ream.
Love's renewed, and love matures,
And then a funny thing occurs.

Shakespeare, pretty words belied,
Is getting action on the side.
And when the Hot Guy grows aghast,
Will recalls his cheating past.
More equal now, they fill with hope.
Will love prevail at last? Nope.

When dating seems improbable,
The Bard grows philosophical.
Says Truth and Love are everlasting
(Except in times when time is passing).
And Beauty isn't Time-commanding
(Prior poems notwithstanding),

So Will reorients affection
To a girl of dark complexion.
And, finding sonnet norms despotic,
He calls her dull and halitotic.
On seeing her reaction's chilly,

Shakespeare notes he has a willy.

Successful Will still wants to schtup,
And asks the Youth to talk him up.
The Youth complies, but then is struck
By her (and has a bit more luck).
A love triangle? No, it's not.
It's much more like a line and dot.

Later, all his verse compiling
William, weeping (also smiling),
Capped it with an allegory:
Cupid, nymphs, a little story.
Its point? Not Time nor STD
Could get him to a monkery.

Thus, tragedy of Love's laments
To comedy, in time, ferments.

A Poem About the Sonnets Through Time

Perhaps by Fifteen Ninety-Nine
The Bard had penned each sugared line.
Perhaps he took a decade more
To finish these one-fifty-four.
(When scholars pick the early date
It's 'cause they find 'em not too great.)

In May of Sixteen-Hundred-Nine
Came Mr. Thorpe's edition fine.
A year of plague, the playhouse closed,
In need of funds, the Bard composed.

In haste (or else severity)
Left typos to posterity.

Shakespeare died and, decades later,
Benson's version made him straighter.
He turned each "he" into a "she"
(Thus living Willy's fantasy).
In spite of sev'ral choices sloppy,
The book became the benchmark copy.

A hundred years, and then Malone
Reversed the "shes" but kept the tone
Claiming, though the claim was senseless,
All "...in Praise of his Mistress."
This rendered many verses funny.
(note the prick in sonnet 20)

Later critics, often prudes,
Saw "courtly love," not sex with dudes.

“There’s nothing gay or even churlish
In lusting for a boy who’s girlish!
And even though a few are shady
A full 1/6th were to a lady!”

In modern times misogynists
Are thought much worse than guys who’ve kissed.
Accepting Shakespeare’s self at last,
Perhaps we better know the past.
But still a question rings the air:
The sonnets: be they foul or fair?

Now Twenty-Eighteen’s sullied with
Abridgement, done by Weinersmith.
The scholars cry: “Fleece not the masses!
You’ll nullify our books and classes!”
He cannot hear their sad refrains:
The banks accept ill-gotten gains.

A Poem About Sources

Apologies to scholars. Really.
I hope they aren't too touchy-feely.
I slung my barbs, but felt at ease
While raiding bibliographies.
Like Shakespeare and his lady dun
I took their best and then made fun.
And where I'm lacking, blame 'em not
They know more truth than I've forgot.
(Though what each thinks the other knows
Would take a line or two of prose.)
Their work on me was mostly wasted.

They've drunk deep where I've but tasted.
But where'er I fall, among that staff,
I'd like to think that Will would laugh.

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