

Shakespeare's Sonnets

William Shakespeare

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About

February 6th, 2011

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Chapter 1. Sonnet I thru V

Sonnet I

February 6th, 2011

FROM fairest creatures we desire increase, That thereby beauty's rose might never die, But as the riper should by time decease, His tender heir might bear his memory: But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes, Feed'st thy light'st 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, makest waste in niggarding. Pity the world, or else this glutton be, To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.



This was long thought to be the only portrait of William Shakespeare that had any claim to have been painted from life, until another possible life portrait, the Cobbe portrait, was revealed in 2009

Sonnet II

February 6th, 2011

When forty winters shall beseege thy brow, And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field, Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now, Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held: Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies, Where all the treasure of thy lusty days, To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes, Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise. How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use, If thou couldst answer 'This fair child of mine Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,' Proving his beauty by succession thine! This were to be new made when thou art old, And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

Sonnet III

February 6th, 2011

Look in thy glass, and tell the face thou viewest Now is the time that face should form another; Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest, Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother. For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry? Or who is he so fond will be the tomb Of his self-love, to stop posterity? Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee Calls back the lovely April of her prime: So thou through windows of thine age shall see Despite of wrinkles this thy golden time. But if thou live, remember'd not to be, Die single, and thine image dies with thee.

Sonnet IV

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Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy? Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend, And being frank she lends to those are free. Then, beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse The bounteous largess given thee to give? Profitless usurer, why dost thou use So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live? For having traffic with thyself alone, Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive. Then how, when nature calls thee to be gone, What acceptable audit canst thou leave? Thy unused beauty must be tomb'd with thee, Which, used, lives th' executor to be.

Sonnet V

February 6th, 2011

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell, Will play the tyrants to the very same And that unfair which

fairly doth excel: For never-resting time leads summer on To hideous winter
and confounds him there; Sap cheque'd with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'ersnow'd and bareness every where: Then, were not summer's
distillation left, A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass, Beauty's effect with
beauty were bereft, Nor it nor no remembrance what it was: But flowers
distill'd though they with winter meet, Leese but their show; their substance
still lives sweet.

Chapter 2. Sonnet VI - X

Sonnet VI

February 6th, 2011

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
In thee thy summer, ere thou be
distill'd: Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-kill'd.
That use is not forbidden usury,
Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
That's for thyself to breed another thee,
Or ten times happier, be it ten for one;
Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
If ten of thine ten times refigured thee:
Then what could death do, if thou shouldst depart,
Leaving thee living in posterity?
Be not self-will'd, for thou art
much too fair To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

Sonnet VII

February 6th, 2011

Lo! in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under
eye Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
And having climb'd the steep-up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage;
But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted
are From his low tract and look another way:
So thou, thyself out-going in
thy noon, Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.

Sonnet VIII

February 6th, 2011

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
Why lovest thou that which thou receivest not gladly,
Or else receivest with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,
Resembling sire and child and happy mother
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee: 'thou single wilt prove none.'

Sonnet IX

February 6th, 2011

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye That thou consumest thyself in single life?
Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die. The world will wail thee, like a makeless
wife; The world will be thy widow and still weep That thou no form of thee
hast left behind, When every private widow well may keep By children's eyes
her husband's shape in mind. Look, what an unthrift in the world doth spend
Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it; But beauty's waste hath in
the world an end, And kept unused, the user so destroys it. No love toward
others in that bosom sits That on himself such murderous shame commits.

Sonnet X

February 6th, 2011

For shame! deny that thou bear'st love to any, Who for thyself art so
unprovident. Grant, if thou wilt, thou art beloved of many, But that thou none
lovest is most evident; For thou art so possess'd with murderous hate That
'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire. Seeking that beauteous roof to
ruinate Which to repair should be thy chief desire. O, change thy thought,
that I may change my mind! Shall hate be fairer lodged than gentle love?
Be, as thy presence is, gracious and kind, Or to thyself at least kind-hearted
prove: Make thee another self, for love of me, That beauty still may live in
thine or thee.