

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

A line-by-line translation

Sonnet Dedication

Shakespeare

TO. THE. ONLY. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE. ENSUING. SONNETS.
MR. W.H. ALL HAPPINESS.
AND. THAT. ETERNITY.
5 PROMISED.
BY.
OUR. EVER-LASTING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
10 ADVENTURER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T.T.

Shakescleare Translation

To the sole [inspiration](#) ¹ of
These following sonnets:
Mr. W.H., all happiness
And [eternity](#) ² is
Promised
By
Our ever-lasting poet [3](#),
Wished
By the well-wishing
Publisher, in
Printing This.
[T.T.](#) ⁴

¹ To "beget" means, literally, to conceive a child.

² Eternity is mentioned in various sonnets addressed to the young man, such as 18, 19, 60, 63, 101, where it is not religion but sexual reproduction that promises eternity.

³ A number of the sonnets, such as Sonnet 15, identify poetry as a way to achieve immortality.

⁴ Probably Thomas Thorpe, the publisher of this volume.

Sonnet 1

Shakespeare

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decease
His tender heir might bear his memory.
5 But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's 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
10 And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

Shakescleare Translation

We want beautiful people to reproduce [1](#) and grow in number,
So that the examples of beauty might never die.
Even though someone who is ripe [2](#) must eventually die,
His young heir might carry his memory.
But you, bound in a contract to your own beautiful eyes,
Are burning up your own beauty by being single,
Are making a famine where there is abundance,
You are your own enemy, too cruel to your sweet self.
You, who are now the fresh ornament of the world,
And the best herald of the ostentatious spring,
Are burying your beauty within an unused bud,
You are being a girly miser, wasting your beauty by being so stingy.
Show some pity on the world, or else become a glutton,
By letting [what the world deserves](#) ³ be consumed by the grave and you.

¹ The first seventeen sonnets are sometimes called the "procreation sonnets," and they address the necessity of sexual reproduction to continue the existence of beauty in the world.

² A tension between the imagery of agriculture, which represents productive beauty, and the imagery of flowers, which represent ornamental beauty, persists throughout the Sonnets.

³ This seems to refer back to the first line: the young man owes it to the world to pass on his beauty.

Sonnet 2

Shakespeare

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held.
5 Then being asked 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
10 If thou couldst answer, "This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,"
Proving his beauty by succession thine.

Shakescleare Translation

When forty winters will occupy your forehead,
And dig deep trenches the field that beauty now occupies,
The proud clothing [1](#) of your youth, so admired by others now,
Will be ripped rags, considered to be worth little.
Then when someone asks you where all your beauty is,
Where all the treasure of your sexually active days lies,
To say that it lies [2](#) within your own deep-sunken eyes,
Would be an all-consuming shame and wasteful of praise.
The use of your beauty would deserve so much more praise
If you could answer: "This beautiful child of mine
Is the receipt [3](#) of my beauty and the excuse for my oldness."
And his beauty will be proved because he is your son.

¹ "Livery" means the clothing by which someone is identified: i.e. the clothing that a servant wears that identifies him with his master.

² There is a play on words here: the young man, grown old, would have deep-sunken eyes. And he might also answer, wittily, that beauty only remains in his eyes, which are not themselves

This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

This child would be youthful when you are old,
You would see your blood warm when you feel it growing cold.

beautiful, but able to look at what is beautiful.

1 The young man's future offspring will be the proof, like the receipt of a purchase, that he has spent his beauty well.

Sonnet 3

Shakespeare

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, unless some mother.
5 For where is she so fair whose unneared 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
10 Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
But if thou live remembered not to be,
Die single and thine image dies with thee.

Shakescleare Translation

Look in the mirror and tell the face that you see in it,
That now is the time that your face show make another,
If you do not renew your beauty by passing it on,
You cheat the world, and unbless some mother **1**.
There is no woman whose unused womb
Would refuse your husbandry **2** of her?
And who is so foolish that he will make a tomb
Out of his self-love, to stop himself having heirs.
You are the mirror image **3** of your mother, and you
Recall the lovely spring-time of her youth.
Similarly, you will be able to see with your own eyes **4**,
Despite your old age, this golden time of your youth.
But if you live as if you don't want to be remembered,
You die single and your image will die with you.

1 A strange phrase: not having a child at all would "unbless" that woman who would otherwise be the mother of a beautiful child.

2 In addition to its sexual sense, "husbandry" has an agricultural sense, to prepare some land for crops or trees to produce fruit.

3 This not only links with the "glass" in the first line of this sonnet, but the theme of doubling vision that began with the "bright eyes" in the first sonnet.

4 "Windows" sometimes referred to the eyes.

Sonnet 4

Shakespeare

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.
5 Then, beautiful 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,
10 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 us'd lives th' executor to be.

Shakescleare Translation

Wasteful beauty, why do you spend
The inheritance **1** of your beauty upon yourself?
Nature's gift is nothing in itself, it is lent,
And, being generous, she lends to those who are generous **2**.
Then, you beautiful miser, why do you abuse
The bountiful endowment given to you to give to others?
You profitless banker, why do you spend
3 So great a sum, without making more life?
By dealing only with yourself,
You deceive your sweet self about your self.
So when nature calls you to be gone,
What acceptable account of yourself can you leave behind?
Your unused beauty will go to the tomb with you,
Which when used, lives to be your executor **4**.

1 This reference to inheritance compares the young man, keeping his beauty to himself, to a miser. The language of lending, spending, and wasting money continues throughout the sonnet.

2 Beautiful people will give birth to beautiful children.

3 The repetition of "use" is a wordplay that refers to the financial language of spending and investing and also to the use of seed for agriculture and procreation. The young man is "using" his seed unwisely; instead of renewing his beauty by making use of an "unneared" (unused) womb with his seed, he is "spending" it on himself by masturbating.

4 The word "executor" here refers to the person who controls one's will and estate after one dies. Shakespeare is suggesting that by having children, one ensures someone will be there to carry on one's legacy of "beauty" after death.

Sonnet 5

Shakespeare

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.
 5 For never-resting time leads summer on
 To hideous winter and confounds him there,
 Sap checked with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
 Beauty o'er-snowed and bareness everywhere.
 Then were not summer's distillation left,
 10 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 distilled, though they with winter meet,
 Leese but their show; their substance still lives
 15 sweet.

Shakescleare Translation

Time, which with gentle work painted
 The lovely sight that everyone admires,
 Will turn cruel to the very same sight
 And unfairly treat the most beautiful one.
 For never-resting Time drives Summer
 Towards hideous Winter and destroys him there,
 Freezing his sap and removing his lush leaves,
 Covering his beauty in snow and leaving him barren.
 Then if it were not for the distillation of Summer,
 A liquid prisoner trapped in a glass container,
 The effect of beauty would be lost with beauty,
 And neither it nor any memory of what it was.
 But distilled flowers ¹, although they do survive into winter,
 Lose only their appearance; their essence still sweetly lives.

¹ Flowers are distilled and preserved in perfumes.

Sonnet 6

Shakespeare

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
 In thee thy summer, ere thou be distilled.
 Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
 With beauty's treasure, ere it be self-killed.
 5 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,
 10 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-willed, for thou art much too fair
 To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

Shakescleare Translation

Then ¹ do not let Winter's rough hands deface
 The summer in you, before you are distilled.
 Fill glass vials ² with your sweetness ³; treasure some place
 With the treasure ⁴ of your beauty, before it kills itself.
 This use of your beauty is not forbidden like usury ⁵
 Because it makes happy those who willingly pay the loan;
 That would be the case for your breeding another you,
 Or ten times happier ⁶, if lending at ten for one.
 Ten versions of you would be happier than you are now,
 If ten of your children reproduced your beauty.
 Then what could death do if you should die,
 Leaving yourself living after your death?
 Do not be so selfish, you are too beautiful
 To be consumed by death and make worms your only heir.

¹ This remark appears to continue from the previous sonnet.

² A vial can refer to a container used to hold perfume and metaphorically to the womb.

³ Continuing the perfume image of the previous sonnet.

⁴ Again the financial language returns, to join the distillation and procreation narratives.

⁵ "Usury" means lending money at an interest-rate, something that was prohibited to Christians.

⁶ The maximum rate of interest during the early Modern period in England was ten percent. As in previous sonnets, childbirth is here an exercise that creates value.

Sonnet 7

Shakespeare

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;
 5 And having climbed 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,
 10 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,

Shakescleare Translation

Look, in the East when the great light ¹
 Lifts up his burning head, each eye underneath
 Pays homage to this new-appearing sight,
 Serving this sacred majesty with their gazes.
 Having climbed the steep hill in the heavens,
 Resembling a strong youth in his middle age,
 And inferior humans still worship his beauty,
 Watching his golden journey across the sky ².
 But when from its highest point, in a weary chariot,
 Like weak old age, he staggers away from the day,
 The eyes, before so dutiful, are now turned away
 From his downfall and look another way.

¹ This sonnet introduces an extended comparison between the young man and the sun.

² Here, the process of reaching the prime age (and the subsequent aging process) is compared to the sun's travel across the sky (rising and setting), and by extension Helios, the

Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.

So you, reaching your own downfall in your noon,
Will soon be left alone unless you father a son. 

Greek sun god, riding his golden chariot across the sky every day.

 The word "sun" is not used in the poem; and "son" is its final word, emphasizing that the only way to have the metaphorical sun rise again (to reproduce the beauty of the young man) is to beget a son.

Sonnet 8

Shakespeare

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly,
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy?
5 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,
10 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."

Shakescleare Translation

When there is music, why do you listen to it sadly?
Sweetness belongs with sweetness, and joy delights joy.
Why do you love what you are not happy to listen to,
Or do you love things that trouble you?
If the true harmony of well-tuned sounds,
When united in marriage, sounds unpleasant to you,
It is because they sweetly rebuke you, you who spoil
By remaining single the parts  that you should play.
See how one string , like a sweet husband to another,
Resonate with each other so they can sound in pairs,
Resembling father and child and happy mother,
Who all together sing in one pleasing note;
This wordless song, gathering many parts into one whole,
Sings this to you: "Unmarried, you will achieve nothing."

 "Parts" could refer to the musical lines in a song and also sexual organs.

 The stringed instrument referred to here is probably a lute.

Sonnet 9

Shakespeare

Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye
That thou consum'st thyself in single life?
Ah, if thou issueless shalt hap to die,
The world will wail thee like a makeless wife;
5 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 unthrif in the world doth spend
10 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 murd'rous shame commits.

Shakescleare Translation

Is it because you don't want to make your widow cry
That you waste yourself away in your single life?
Ah, if you happen to die childless,
The world will mourn you like a mateless widow.
The world will be your widow and will weep,
That you have left no form of you behind,
Since every particular widow can keep
Her husband's image in her memory, seeing it in their children's eyes.
Whatever a spendthrift spends in the world
Changes only its place , and the world still enjoys it;
However, beauty wasted is lost to the world,
By the beautiful man who keeps his seed unused.
There is no love for others in this man
Who commits such shameful murder on himself.

 Money does not die but continues to circulate.

Sonnet 10

Shakespeare

For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any,
Who for thyself art so unprovident.
Grant if thou wilt, thou art below'd of many,
But that thou none lov'st is most evident;
5 For thou art so possessed with murd'rous hate
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
Which to repair should be thy chief desire.

Shakescleare Translation

In shame you deny that you love anyone else,
Since you are so careless in loving yourself.
Accept, if you can, that you are loved by many,
But the fact that you love no one is obvious;
For you are so possessed by murderous hate
 That you don't hesitate to conspire against yourself,
Looking to ruin that beautiful building
 Which your main wish should be to repair.

 The speaker has accused the young man of being selfish, and now of murdering his own beauty by refusing to have children.

O change thy thought, that I may change my mind.
 10 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.

Oh change your mind, so I can change my opinion of you.
 Why should hate be housed in your beauty ¹, instead of noble love?
 Be like your own presence, which is gracious and kind,
 Or at least be kind ²-hearted to yourself.
 Make yourself another self, out of love for me, ³
 So that beauty can still live in you or your children.

¹ "Roof" is not only the body of the young man, but also his household.

² Or, following the language of the domestic space from line 7, "under that roof"

³ This is a wordplay between "kind" as a warm disposition but also "kind" as in "same kind", which points to family or blood ties that one would create by procreating.

⁴ The sonnet suddenly introduces an "I," suggesting an intimacy between the speaker and the young man.

Sonnet 11

Shakespeare

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
 In one of thine, from that which thou departest;
 And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st
 Thou mayst call thine when thou from youth convertest.
 5 Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase;
 Without this, folly, age, and cold decay.
 If all were minded so, the times should cease,
 And threescore year would make the world away.
 Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
 10 Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish.
 Look whom she best endowed, she gave the more,
 Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish.
 She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
 Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

Shakescleare Translation

As much as you diminish, you will grow
 In a child of yours, from the life you are leaving;
 And that fresh blood which you spend ¹ in your youth
 You can still call yours when you convert it into youth.
 In this, lies wisdom, beauty, and growth;
 Without this ², foolishness, old age, and cold decay.
 If everyone thought like you, time would cease,
 And the world would end in a single lifetime ³.
 Let those who Nature has not made for breeding,
 Rough-looking, featureless, and uncultured, die childless.
 See how Nature gave most to those who she gave the best qualities,
 A gift full of goodness which you should cherish generously.
 Beauty molded you as her stamp, and intended in doing so
 That you should print more, not let the copy of her die.

¹ In Shakespeare's time there were thought to be four different "humors," or liquids that determined the personality and health of a body.

² This course of action.

³ Seventy years was considered to be the standard length of life.

Sonnet 12

Shakespeare

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
 And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
 When I behold the violet past prime,
 And sable curls all silvered o'er with white;
 5 When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
 Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
 And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
 Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
 Then of thy beauty do I question make,
 10 That thou among the wastes of time must go,
 Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
 And die as fast as they see others grow,
 And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense
 Save breed to brave him when he takes thee hence.

Shakescleare Translation

When I count the chimes of the clock that tells the time ¹,
 And see the beautiful day sunk into hideous night;
 When I see the violet wilting after its prime,
 And curly black hair become silvered with white;
 When I see tall trees without any leaves
 Which once did protect the herd from the sun's heat;
 And summer's greenery all tied up in sheaves ²,
 Put with their white bristly beards on the bier ³ to be carried;
 Then I make an objection to your beauty,
 That you must be counted among things ruined by time,
 Since sweet and beautiful things abandon their own qualities
 And die as fast as they see others grow,
 And nothing can defend itself against Time's harvest
 Except by his child, with which he can defy Time.

¹ The number of this sonnet reflects the number of hours on a clock face.

² Bundles of crops, such as wheat or rye.

³ While "bier" can mean a "handbarrow" that haystacks can be carried on (OED 1), and also "a moveable stand on which a corpse, whether in a coffin or not, is placed before burial" (OED 2). The imagery of the harvest turns into a funeral.

Sonnet 13

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

O that you were yourself! But, love, you are
 No longer yours than you yourself here live.
 Against this coming end you should prepare,
 And your sweet semblance to some other give.
 5 So should that beauty which you hold in lease
 Find no determination; then you were
 Yourself again after yourself's decease,
 When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
 Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
 10 Which husbandry in honor might uphold
 Against the stormy gusts of winter's day
 And barren rage of death's eternal cold?
 O, none but unthrifths, dear my love you know,
 You had a father; let your son say so.

Oh, only if you ¹ were your true self! But, love, ² you
 Do not belong to yourself longer than you live in this world.
 You should make preparations against this coming end, ³
 And give your sweet image to another.
 And so should your beauty, which you only have a lease on
 Will not end with you; then, you would
 Be yourself again even after your own death,
 When your sweet children will have your sweet form.
 Who would let so beautiful a house fall into decay,
 Which husbandry ⁴ might continue to support
 Against the stormy gusts of winter's day
 And the unproductive rage of death's eternal cold?
 Oh, only spendthrifts let such decay happen. My dear love,
 You had a father; have a child, so that he can say so too.

¹ "You" is the less intimate version of "thou," which has been used until now.

² The first time in the sequence that the addressee is called "love."

³ Death.

⁴ To maintain or look after, with an obvious pun on "husband."

Sonnet 14

Shakespeare

Not from the stars do I my judgment pluck,
 And yet methinks I have astronomy,
 But not to tell of good or evil luck,
 Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality;
 5 Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell,
 Pointing to each his thunder, rain, and wind,
 Or say with princes if it shall go well,
 By oft predict that I in heaven find;
 But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
 10 And, constant stars, in them I read such art
 As truth and beauty shall together thrive,
 If from thyself to store thou wouldst convert;
 Or else of thee this I prognosticate:
 Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date.

Shakescleare Translation

I don't make my decisions based on the stars,
 But I am influenced by astrology,
 Not to tell me about good or bad luck,
 About plagues, of draughts, or the quality of the harvest;
 Nor can I tell the fortune of each brief minute,
 Indicating whether each minute will be thunder, rain, or wind,
 Or say to princes if things will go well,
 By anything I find in the stars;
 But from your eyes I take my knowledge,
 Your eyes are constant stars where I read such things as this:
 Truth and beauty will thrive together,
 If you turn away from yourself to breeding;
 If not, I prophesy this about you:
 Your death is the doom and death-day of truth and beauty.

Sonnet 15

Shakespeare

When I consider every thing that grows
 Holds in perfection but a little moment;
 That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
 Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
 5 When I perceive that men as plants increase,
 Cheerèd and checked ev'n by the self-same sky,
 Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
 And wear their brave state out of memory;
 Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
 10 Sets you, most rich in youth, before my sight,
 Where wasteful time debateth with decay,
 To change your day of youth to sullied night;
 And all in war with time for love of you,
 As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

Shakescleare Translation

When I consider that everything that grows
 Remains perfect for only a little moment;
 That the huge stage of the world ¹ has on it nothing but shows ²
 On which the stars ³ have their secret influence;
 When I perceive that humans multiply like plants,
 Encouraged and held back by the very same sky,
 Boasting of their youthful sap, until they peak and then decline,
 And wear out their beauty until it is lost from memory;
 Then the idea of this ever-changing state
 Puts me in mind of you, since you are very youthful,
 In you wasteful time debates with decay,
 About how to corrupt your youthful day into sullied night;
 I am fighting against time out of love for you,
 As time takes from you, I engraft ⁴ you again.

¹ The mortal world.

² "Shows" can mean both theatrical performances and appearances (as opposed to real things).

³ See Sonnet 14.

⁴ The poem itself will make the young man grow again. The metaphor is from plant biology, in which one tree may be "engrafted" onto another in order to ensure its survival.

Sonnet 16

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

But wherefore do not you a mightier way
 Make war upon this bloody tyrant, time,
 And fortify yourself in your decay
 With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?
 5 Now stand you on the top of happy hours,
 And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
 With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
 Much liker than your painted counterfeit.
 So should the lines of life that life repair
 10 Which this time's pencil or my pupil pen
 Neither in inward worth nor outward fair
 Can make you live yourself in eyes of men.
 To give away yourself keeps yourself still,
 And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill.

But **1** why don't you, in a stronger way,
 Fight against time, this bloody tyrant,
 And defend yourself against decay
 In a more blessed **2** way than my barren **3** poetry?
 Now you stand on the happy hours of your prime,
 And there are many virgins that are still unseeded,
 Who wish virtuously to bear your children,
 Which would be more like you than any painted portrait.
 So should bloodlines repair life,
 Which neither time's pencils or my inexperienced pen
 Can preserve in its internal essence or external appearance,
 To keep you alive in the eyes of men.
 To give yourself away in marriage would preserve you,
 And you must live, drawn by your own sweet skill **4**.

1 This sonnet is a continuation of Sonnet 15.

2 Linked to childbirth, since it is common to say "blessed with a child".

3 Poetry, unlike a woman's womb, is not fertile.

4 Skill in sexual activity, perhaps.

Sonnet 17

Shakespeare

Who will believe my verse in time to come
 If it were filled with your most high deserts?
 Though yet heav'n knows it is but as a tomb
 Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.
 5 If I could write the beauty of your eyes
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
 The age to come would say, "This poet lies—
 Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces."
 So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
 10 Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue,
 And your true rights be termed a poet's rage
 And stretchèd meter of an antique song;
 But were some child of yours alive that time,
 You should live twice: in it and in my rhyme.

Shakescleare Translation

Who will believe my poetry in the future,
 If it were filled with the highest praise that you deserve?
 Although heaven knows my poetry is no better than a tomb
 Which hides your vitality and shows less than half of your qualities.
 If I could express in writing the beauty of your eyes
 And in fresh verse count up all your virtues,
 People in the future would say, "This poet is lying—
 Such heavenly qualities never existed in a human face."
 And then my poems, when they are yellow with age,
 Would be scorned, like old men who are more talkative than honest,
 And the praise that you deserve would be dismissed as a
 poet's excessive enthusiasm **1**
 And the over-stretched meter of an old **2** song;
 But if a child of yours were alive at that time,
 You would be living twice: in it and in my rhyme.

1 Enthusiasm could mean either divine inspiration or madness.

2 Perhaps also a pun on "antic," meaning mad.

Sonnet 18

Shakespeare

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
 5 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 10 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Shakescleare Translation

Should I compare you to a summer's day?
 You are lovelier and more mild. **1**
 Even in May rough winds shake the delicate flower buds,
 And the duration of summer is always too short.
 Sometimes the Sun, the eye of heaven, is too hot,
 And his golden face is often dimmed;
 And beauty falls away from beautiful people,
 Stripped by Chance or Nature's changing course.
 But your eternal summer will not fade,
 Nor will you lose possession **2** of the beauty you own,
 Nor will death be able to boast that you wander in his shade, **3**
 When you live in eternal lines, **4** set apart from time.
 As long as men breathe or have eyes to see,
 As long as this sonnet lives, it will give life to you.

1 Moderate in temperature and also in temper.

2 In contrast to the temporary "lease" of summer in line 4.

3 Meaning

4 The image is of parallel straight lines, which never meet. "Lines" also refers to the lines of poetry in which the beloved will "grow" and live forever.

Sonnet 19

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
 And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
 Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
 And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood;
 5 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
 And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed time,
 To the wide world and all her fading sweets;
 But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
 O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
 10 Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen.
 Him in thy course untainted do allow
 For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
 Yet do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong,
 My love shall in my verse ever live young.

Devouring time, soften the lion's claws,
 And make the earth eat up her own sweet children;
 Pull out the sharp teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
 And burn the long-living phoenix in her blood.
 Make glad ¹ and sad seasons as you fly by,
 And do whatever you wish, quick-footed time,
 To the wide world and all of her perishing beautiful things;
 But I forbid you one most hateful crime:
 Please don't not carve wrinkles into my love's beautiful forehead,
 Or draw any lines there with your old pen.
 Allow him to remain uncorrupted in your domain ²
 To be a model of beauty to all future men.
 But do your worst, old time; despite your crime,
 My lover will live on in my verse ³ forever young.

¹ Also meaning "colorful."

² That is, in the world, where everything decays and becomes imperfect.

³ In contrast to the antique pen of time that carves old age into the face of the beloved, the poem immortalizes the young man.

Sonnet 20

Shakespeare

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
 Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
 5 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
 A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 10 Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
 But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
 Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

Shakescleare Translation

A woman's face, painted by nature's own hand,
 Is what you have, master-mistress ¹ of my feelings.
 You have a woman's gentle heart, but have not experienced
 Its tricking changes, the typical behavior of false women.
 Your eye is brighter than theirs, but less false in how it moves ²,
Turning into gold ³ whatever it looks at.
 You are a man in physical form, but able to control all appearances, ⁴
 You steal the eyes of men and amaze the souls of women.
 And you were first made for ⁵ a woman,
 Until nature, when she was making you, fell in love with you,
 And by addition defeated my purpose for you
 By adding one thing ⁶ that is useless to me.
 But since nature selected you for women's pleasure,
 I will have your love, but the use of it ⁷ will be their treasure.

¹ There is no simple way to translate this: the young man is the speaker's "mistress," being feminine and his lover, and also the speaker's "master," being a man and also able to dominate him.

² I.e. the way that disloyal women with their eyes give encouragement to many men.

³ While the primary definition of gild is to cover with gold it did not have a particularly positive connotation, especially in Shakespeare's time. Thus this line can also mean, "Whatever you look at turns to superficial glitter."

⁴ This could mean various things, including the ability to adopt every form of appearance, the ability to control other people's appearance through his own appearance (i.e. blushing) or the ability to be in control of every appearance that he assumes.

⁵ This could either mean "made to be a woman" or "made to be with a woman."

⁶ In Shakespeare's time "thing" could refer to the genitals, in this case the lover's penis.

⁷ The use of his love in sex.

Sonnet 21

Shakespeare

So is it not with me as with that muse,
 Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heav'n itself for ornament doth use,
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse—
 5 Making a couplement of proud compare
 With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
 With April's first-born flow'rs, and all things rare

Shakescleare Translation

I am not like that other poet,
 Inspired to write by a woman wearing makeup,
 Who uses heaven itself as an ornament of his praise,
 And every beautiful thing describes his beautiful thing,
 Coupling her through proud comparisons
 With the sun and moon, with the treasures of the earth and sea,
 With the first flowers of the spring, and all the rarest things

That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.
 O let me, true in love but truly write,
 10 And then believe me: my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air.
 Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
 I will not praise that purpose not to sell.

That are contained within the vast circle of the heavens.
 Oh let me, faithful in love, write truthfully,
 And then believe me: my love is as beautiful
 As any mother's child, although it is not as bright
 As the stars fixed like golden candles in the sky.
 Let others say more who like rumor too much.
 I won't praise what I don't intend to sell.

Sonnet 22

Shakespeare

My glass shall not persuade me I am old
 So long as youth and thou are of one date;
 But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
 Then look I death my days should expiate.
 5 For all that beauty that doth cover thee
 Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
 Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me.
 How can I then be elder than thou art?
 O therefore, love, be of thyself so wary
 10 As I, not for myself, but for thee will,
 Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
 As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.
 Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;
 Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again.

Shakescleare Translation

My mirror will not convince me that I am old
 As long as you are youthful;
 But when I see the marks of time ¹ on your body,
 Then I expect that death will end my days.
 Because the beauty that covers you
 Is the clothing that my heart wears,
 And my heart lives in your chest, as yours lives in mine.
 How can I then be older than you are?
 Therefore, my love, take care of yourself
 As I will take care ², not for my sake, but for yours,
 Carrying your heart, which I will be so careful ³ of
 Like a tender nurse keeping her baby from harm.
 Do not presume you can take your heart back when mine has been slain;
 You gave me yours not to give back again.

¹ The metaphor compares wrinkles to the trenches made by a plough in a field.

² Take care either of himself or of the young man, it is unclear. The phrase is unclear, perhaps, because there is no longer any clear distinction between their two bodies.

³ "Chary" means to be sorrowful or wary or to cherish something that is precious.

Sonnet 23

Shakespeare

As an unperfect actor on the stage,
 Who with his fear is put besides his part,
 Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
 Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
 5 So I, for fear of trust, forget to say
 The perfect ceremony of love's rite,
 And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
 O'ercharged with burden of mine own love's might.
 O let my books be then the eloquence
 10 And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
 Who plead for love and look for recompense
 More than that tongue that more hath more expressed.
 O learn to read what silent love hath writ!
 To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.

Shakescleare Translation

As an unprepared actor on stage,
 Who, because of fear, forgets his part,
 Or as some fierce thing filled with too much rage,
 Who has so much strength that it weakens his own heart;
 So I, afraid to trust myself, forget to complete
 The ceremony of love's ritual ¹
 And in the strength of my love I become weak
 Overwhelmed with the burden of my love's greatness.
 Oh, then let my books be the eloquence
 And silent prophets ² of what my heart is saying ³,
 Who make the case for its love and look for something in return
 More than the other tongue ⁴ that says more than I do.
 Oh, learn to read what silent love has written! ⁵
 To hear through the eyes is a skill that belongs to love's intelligence. ⁶

¹ In this metaphor, love is a religious ceremony like the Eucharist, which specific words need to be spoken in order to be complete.

² A "presager" is someone or something that predicts the future.

³ This is a paradox: his heart can speak but it needs books, which are silent, to express what it feels.

⁴ The tongue of a rival suitor or poet.

⁵ The image here is of a face that cannot speak, because it is lovesick.

⁶ The speaker seems to be hoping that his love is reciprocated, so that his beloved will be able to recognize his love.

Sonnet 24

Shakespeare

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeled
 Thy beauty's form in table of my heart.
 My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
 And perspective it is best painter's art.
 5 For through the painter must you see his skill
 To find where your true image pictured lies,
 Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,
 That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes.
 Now see what good turns eyes for eyes have done:
 10 Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
 Are windows to my breast, wherethrough the sun
 Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee.
 Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art;
 They draw but what they see, know not the heart.

Shakescleare Translation

My eyes have acted as a painter, and have fixed
 The form of your beauty in the canvas  of my heart.
 My body is the frame in which it is held,
 And perspective  is the skill of the best painter.
 You have to look from his viewpoint to see his skill,
 To find the picture of your true appearance,
 Which is still hanging in my heart's workshop,
 And your eyes have become its windows.
 Now see what good favors my eyes have done yours:
 My eyes have drawn your shape, and your eyes for me
 Are windows into my heart , and the sun
 Enjoys peeping through, in order to see you.
 But eyes lack this skill to adorn their art;
 They can only draw what they see, they do not see the heart.

 More literally, "table" refers to the board or tablet on which a painting or engraving would have been carried out.

 This seems to refer to the art of "anamorphosis," where painters painted details that looked distorted from one angle but normal from another. The most famous example is a skull "The Ambassadors," a painting by Hans Holbein the Younger.

 Simply put, I see myself loving you in your eyes. The reflections of eyes is a common trope in Shakespeare, especially in the later sonnets, as is the wordplay on "eye" and "I."

Sonnet 25

Shakespeare

Let those who are in favor with their stars
 Of public honor and proud titles boast,
 Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
 Unlooked for joy in that I honor most.
 5 Great princes' favorites their fair leaves spread
 But as the marigold at the sun's eye,
 And in themselves their pride lies buried,
 For at a frown they in their glory die.
 The painful warrior famoused for worth,
 10 After a thousand victories once foiled,
 Is from the book of honor razèd quite,
 And all the rest forgot for which he toiled.
 Then happy I that love and am beloved
 Where I may not remove nor be removed.

Shakescleare Translation

Let those who are favored with good fortune
 And can boast about public status and high titles,
 While I am prevented by fortune from enjoying success
 And also from taking delight in what I value most.
 The favorites of great princes spread out beautiful petals
 Like a marigold when the sun shines,
 And their glory is shut up inside themselves ,
 For when they lose approval they in their splendor die.
 The dutiful warrior, who deserves his fame,
 Is defeated once after a thousand victories,
 And completely erased from the book of honor,
 And everything that he worked for is forgotten.
 I am happy because I love and am loved
 Somewhere  I can't remove myself or be removed.

 Like the marigold again, whose petals close without the sun.

 Unlike the favorites of a king, who can suddenly be removed from their positions.

Sonnet 26

Shakespeare

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
 Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit,
 To thee I send this written embassy,
 To witness duty, not to show my wit.
 5 Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
 May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it,
 But that I hope some good conceit of thine
 In thy soul's thought, all naked, will bestow it.
 Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
 10 Points on me graciously with fair aspect
 And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
 To show me worthy of thy sweet respect.
 Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee;
 Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me.

Shakescleare Translation

You who are lord of my love, and I am your vassal ,
 Your worth has strongly bound my loyalty to you,
 I send this written ambassador to you,
 To demonstrate my obligation, not to show off my intellect.
 This obligation is so great that my poor intellect
 May look poorer, by failing to find the right words,
 But I hope that you have a good idea
 In your soul, that you will be kind to this naked thing.
 Until whatever star that guides my movements
 Puts me on a good course ,
 And covers  my tattered love with good clothes,
 To make me seem worthy of your sweet respect.
 Only then could I boast how much I love you;
 Until then, I will not show my head anywhere that you may test my love.

 In the feudal system a "vassal" borrowed land from a lord, in order to farm it, in exchange for an oath of loyalty.

 Enjoying better fortunes than he does at present.

 Following the feudal relationship between a vassal and a lord, the speaker is described as ragged and poor, and is given new clothes to wear by his star, which is his fortune or inspiration.

Sonnet 27

Shakespeare

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
 The dear repose for limbs with travail tired;
 But then begins a journey in my head
 To work my mind, when body's work's expired.
 5 For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see.
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight
 10 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
 Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
 Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
 Lo thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
 For thee, and for myself, no quiet find.

Shakescleare Translation

Exhausted, I hurry to my bed,
 The precious resting place for my tired limbs;
 But then a journey begins in my head
 Making my mind work when my body's work has finished.
 Then my thoughts, from far away,
 Make a pious pilgrimage to where you are,
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
 Looking at darkness like a blind men.
 Except that the imagination of my soul
 Presents your shadowy image to my sightless sight,
 Which, like a jewel hanging in a horrifying night,
 Makes the black night beautiful and young again.
 So! Every day my limbs and every night my mind,
 Because of you and because of me, can find no rest.

 "Night" is figured as an old witch.

Sonnet 28

Shakespeare

How can I then return in happy plight
 That am debarred the benefit of rest?
 When day's oppression is not eased by night,
 But day by night and night by day oppressed?
 5 And each, though enemies to either's reign,
 Do in consent shake hands to torture me,
 The one by toil, the other to complain
 How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
 I tell the day to please him thou art bright,
 10 And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven.
 So flatter I the swart-complexioned night,
 When sparkling stars twire not, thou gild'st the even.
 But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
 And night doth nightly make grief's length seem
 15 stronger.

Shakescleare Translation

Then how can I return  to a state of happiness
 When I am prevented from resting?
 When the pressure of the day is not relieved at night,
 But day is oppressed by night and night by day?
 And although they are enemies to each other,
 They join forces to torture me,
 The day with labor, and the night with thoughts
 Of how my work takes me even further away from you.
 I tell the day, to please him, about how radiant you are,
 And how your radiance honors him even when the clouds cover the sky.
 I give the same flattery to the dark-faced night,
 Telling him that when stars do not twinkle, you brighten the evening.
 But, every day, the day makes my sorrows longer,
 And, every night, the night makes my grief feel stronger.

 Continuing the theme of sleeplessness from Sonnet 27.

Sonnet 29

Shakespeare

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
 I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
 And trouble deaf heav'n with my bootless cries,
 And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
 5 Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
 Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
 Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
 With what I most enjoy contented least;
 Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
 10 Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
 Like to the lark at break of day arising
 From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Shakescleare Translation

When I have bad luck and people think little of me
 All alone, I cry about being unwanted,
 And disturb heaven with cries that fall on deaf ears,
 And I look at my life and curse my fate,
 Wishing I were someone with better prospects,
 Someone with a beautiful face or many friends,
 Desiring one man's skill or another's range of skills,
 Satisfied least by the things I actually possess;
 But when I most hate myself for these thoughts,
 By good fortune  I think about you, and then I feel
 Like the lark at the break of day rising
 From the gloomy earth to sing in the skies
 The memory of your sweet love brings such richness to me
 That in that moment I would not change place with kings.

 "Haply" means both "happily" and "by chance."

Sonnet 30

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.
5 Then can I drown an eye unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
10 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

When in sessions of sweet silent thinking
I **summon** ¹ up the memory of my past,
I sigh about the lack of many things I wanted,
And I waste precious time by mourning past problems once again.
Then I drown my eyes, which are not used to crying,
For precious friends buried in death's timeless night,
And cry again for the sorrows of past love,
And complain about the loss of many vanished things.
Then I can grieve for griefs from the past,
And sadly tell the stories of each and every loss once again,
The sad account of a complaint I have already complained about,
Which I **express** as if I had not expressed it not before ².
But in the meanwhile if I think of you, dear friend,
All these losses are restored, and sorrows end.

¹ Another legal term.

² The language related to payment in the original text is another example of the many financial and legal metaphors the speaker uses throughout the Sonnets.

Sonnet 31

Shakespeare

Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts
Which I, by lacking, have supposed dead;
And there reigns love, and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buried.
5 How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine eye
As interest of the dead, which now appear
But things removed that hidden in thee lie.
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
10 Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,
Who all their parts of me to thee did give;
That due of many now is thine alone.
Their images I loved I view in thee,
And thou, all they, hast all the all of me.

Shakescleare Translation

Your heart is enriched by ¹ the hearts of everybody,
Which I, by lacking ², assumed were dead;
Love is the king of the heart, and contains all of love's qualities,
And all those friends who I thought were dead,
How many holy and dutiful tears
Have I shed in my mourning duties
For the dead, who now appear to have been
No more than moved away and hidden in your heart.
You are the grave in which buried love **lives** ³,
Hung with the trophies of my past lovers,
Who gave to you everything that they received from me.
Those parts, given to you by many, are now yours alone.
The images of everyone I have loved I see in you,
And you, containing all of them, contain all of me too.

¹ This could mean that the young man's heart contains everyone else's heart in it or that everyone else's heart contains his heart, or both at the same time.

² Either lacking the young man's heart, or everyone else's heart, or both.

³ A surprise at the end of the line, where, after "grave" and "buried," the readers might have expected "lies."

Sonnet 32

Shakespeare

If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl death my bones with dust shall cover,
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,
5 Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,
And though they be outstripped by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.
O then vouchsafe me but this loving thought:
10 "Had my friend's muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought
To march in ranks of better equipage.
But since he died and poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love."

Shakescleare Translation

If you survive the day that I pay my **final debt** ¹,
When death, that villain, covers my bones with dust,
And if, by chance, you look once again
At these unskilled and crude lines written by your dead lover,
Remember that everything improves with time,
And though my poems are surpassed by every other poet,
Keep my poems for their message of love, not for their technical skill,
Which is outranked by the high achievement of more fortunate men.
Oh then grant me just this loving thought:
"If my friend's muse ² had improved with the times,
His love would have been able to purchase a better creation
Worthy of joining the rank of better poets.
But since he died and there are better poets around now,
I will read their poems for their style, and his for his love."

¹ I.e. when I die.

² His poetic inspiration.

Sonnet 33

Shakespeare

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy,
5 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride

Shakescleare Translation

I have seen many glorious mornings
When, like a king ¹, the sun touches the mountain-tops,
Kissing the green meadows with his golden face,
Turning the pale streams into gold with **heavenly alchemy** ²,
Soon allowing the darkest clouds to ride

¹ The image is of a king bestowing favors on his subjects.

With ugly rack on his celestial face,
 And from the fórlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace.
 Ev'n so my sun one early morn did shine
 10 With all triumphant splendor on my brow;
 But out alack, he was but one hour mine;
 The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
 Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth.
 Suns of the world may stain when heav'n's sun staineth.

And damage his heavenly face,
 And hide his face from the abandoned world,
 Sneaking off to the west in disgrace.
 Likewise, one early morning my sun shone
 On my face with triumphant glory;
 But unfortunately, he was only mine for one hour;
 The high clouds have hidden him away from me now.
 But my love is not diminished by this even a bit.
 When even the sun in heaven loses its color, it's natural that suns of the
 earth must lose their color too.

 Alchemy sometimes had evil connotations, so it is necessary to emphasize that this is a good kind!

Sonnet 34

Shakespeare

Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day
 And make me travel forth without my cloak,
 To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
 Hiding thy brav'ry in their rotten smoke?
 5 'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break,
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face.
 For no man well of such a salve can speak
 That heals the wound and cures not the disgrace.
 Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief;
 10 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.
 The offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
 To him that bears the strong offense's cross.
 Ah, but those tears are pearl which thy love sheds,
 And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

Shakescleare Translation

Why did you promise such a beautiful day
 And make me go out without my coat,
 Only to let dark clouds overtake my journey,
 Hiding your fine attributes with their foul mist?
 It is not enough that you break through the clouds,
 To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face.
 For no man can be content with the remedy
 That heals the wound but doesn't cure the insult.
 Your public shame does not cure my pain either;
 Though you ask for forgiveness, I still suffer the hurt.
 The culprit's sorrow gives little relief
 To the victim who still suffers from the crime.
 Ah but the tears that you shed out of love are like pearls,
 They are precious, and compensate for all wrongdoing.

Sonnet 35

Shakespeare

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done.
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud;
 Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
 And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
 5 All men make faults, and even I in this,
 Authórizing thy trespass with compare,
 Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
 Excusing their sins more than their sins are.
 For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense—
 10 Thy adverse party is thy advocate—
 And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence.
 Such civil war is in my love and hate
 That I an accessory needs must be
 To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

Shakescleare Translation

Do not be sad any longer about what you have done.
 Roses have thorns, and silver fountains have mud in them;
 Clouds and eclipses blot out both the moon and the sun,
 And disgusting caterpillar lives in the most beautiful flower.
 All men make mistakes, and even I do, in this sonnet,
 Justifying your crime with my comparisons,
 Corrupting myself by healing your faults,
 Excusing your sins more than they deserve.
 I bring reason to explain your faults
 Your opponent has become your lawyer.
 And in doing so I begin to argue against myself.
 There is a civil war between my love and my hate:
 I must become an accessory
 To that sweet thief who bitterly robs from me.

Sonnet 36

Shakespeare

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
 Although our undivided loves are one.
 So shall those blots that do with me remain
 Without thy help by me be borne alone.
 5 In our two loves there is but one respect,
 Though in our lives a separable spite,
 Which, though it alter not love's sole effect,
 Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.
 I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
 10 Lest my bewailèd guilt should do thee shame;

Shakescleare Translation

I recognize that we two must leave each other,
 Although our love is undivided, united in one.
 And also our disgraces will remain with me
 And I will carry them without your help.
 In our loves there is only one relationship,
 Despite the malicious force which separates us,
 Which, although it doesn't change the union of our love,
 Does take away the sweet time we enjoy together.
 I cannot publicly greet you again,
 So that my guilt does not cause you shame.

Nor thou with public kindness honor me,
Unless thou take that honor from thy name.
But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Nor can you honor me in public acts of kindness,
Unless you wish to remove the honor from your name.
So do not do that; I love you so much that,
You being mine, your good name is also mine.

Sonnet 37

Shakespeare

As a decrepit father takes delight
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made lame by fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth and truth.
5 For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more,
Entitled in thy parts do crownèd sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store.
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,
10 Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give
That I in thy abundance am sufficed,
And by a part of all thy glory live.
Look what is best, that best I wish in thee.
This wish I have; then ten times happy me.

Shakescleare Translation

As a feeble old father is happy
To see his active child do youthful things,
I too, disabled by the most severe spite of fortune,
Take all my comfort from your worth and truth.
Regardless of whether beauty, class, money, or cleverness,
Any one of these, or all of them, or other things,
Are the king of your qualities,
I graft  my love onto your store of virtues.
So then I am not lame, poor, or hated,
While your image enriches me so much
So that I am satisfied by your richness,
And can live off just a part of your glory.
Whatever is best, I wish that you can possess it.
This is my wish. Its fulfillment makes me ten times happier .

 As a gardener grafts the branch of one tree onto another, echoing Sonnet 15.

 The speaker has grafted his love onto the young man's store of many virtues, and he is therefore made happier by the young man's accumulation of more virtues.

Sonnet 38

Shakespeare

How can my muse want subject to invent
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
5 O give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight.
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth muse, ten times more in worth
10 Than those old nine which rhymers invoke;
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date.
If my slight muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

Shakescleare Translation

How can I lack a subject to write about
While you are breathing, you who pour into my poetry
Your own sweet praise, which is too excellent
To be repeated on every common piece of paper.
Oh, give yourself the credit, if anything in me
Worthy of reading survives your looking at it.
For who is so stupid that they can't write to you,
When you yourself give light to all invention ?
You are the tenth muse , ten times worthier
Than the old nine muses that other rhymers  call upon,
And whoever calls on you, let him give birth to
Everlasting verses that will outlive a long life.
If my small muse pleases this demanding age,
The pain of writing will be mine, but the acclaim will be yours.

 Poetic invention, in particular.

 In Greek and Roman mythology, there are nine Muses, the goddesses of creative inspiration. The Poet marks the Beloved as the tenth.

 A derogatory name for poets.

Sonnet 39

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

O how thy worth with manners may I sing,
 When thou art all the better part of me?
 What can mine own praise to mine own self bring,
 And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?
 5 Even for this, let us divided live,
 And our dear love lose name of single one,
 That by this separation I may give
 That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone.
 O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,
 10 Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
 To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
 Which time and thoughts so sweetly dost deceive,
 And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
 By praising him here who doth hence remain.

How can I praise you with appropriate modesty,
 When you are the better part of me?
 What good does praising myself bring to me,
 And what is praising you, but praising myself?
 For this reason, let us live apart,
 And our precious love lose the reputation of being a union,
 So that through this separation I can give
 You the praise that you deserve all by yourself.
 Oh absence, what a torment you would prove to be,
 If it weren't that your sour leisure ¹ gives sweet opportunity
 To fill the time with thoughts of love,
 You, absence, sweetly deceive time and thinking,
 You teach how to make one into two,
 By praising my love here, who is far away from me.

¹ Sour because it involve the speaker's absence from the young man.

Sonnet 40

Shakespeare

Take all my loves, my love; yea, take them all.
 What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
 No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call.
 All mine was thine before thou hadst this more.
 5 Then if for my love thou my love receivest,
 I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest.
 But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.
 I do forgive thy robb'ry, gentle thief,
 10 Although thou steal thee all my poverty;
 And yet love knows it is a greater grief
 To bear love's wrong than hate's known injury.
 Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.

Shakescleare Translation

Take all my loves, ¹ my love; yes, take them all.
 What have you now, that you didn't have before?
 No love, my love, that you could call true love.
 All that is mine was yours before you gained this additional thing.
 Then if you take my lover for ² my love,
 I cannot blame you, since you are making use of my love.
 But you are still to be blamed, if you are deceiving yourself
 By tasting what you yourself refuse. ³
 I forgive you for stealing, noble thief,
 Although you steal for yourself what little I have.
 Nevertheless love knows that it is a greater sorrow
 To be hurt by a mistake of love than an intentional injury of hate.
 Lustful beauty, in which every bad thing looks good,
 Kills me with insults. But we must not be enemies.

¹ All "the things that I love" and, perhaps also, "all of my former lovers."

² Either "in exchange for" or "instead of."

³ The speaker may be accusing the young man of hypocrisy, for having sex with one of his former lovers at the same time as refusing to have sex with the speaker.

Sonnet 41

Shakespeare

Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits
 When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
 Thy beauty and thy years full well befits,
 For still temptation follows where thou art.
 5 Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won;
 Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed;
 And when a woman woos, what woman's son
 Will sourly leave her till he have prevailed?
 Ay me, but yet thou might'st my seat forbear,
 10 And chide thy beauty and thy straying youth,
 Who lead thee in their riot even there
 Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth:
 Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
 Thine by thy beauty being false to me.

Shakescleare Translation

Those pleasing insults that freedom permits,
 When I am sometimes absent from your heart,
 They are appropriate to your beauty and your age,
 Since temptation follows you wherever you go.
 You are noble, and therefore a prize to be won;
 You are beautiful, and therefore to be seduced.
 And when a woman seduces, what kind of a man
 Will bitterly leave her alone until he has prevailed? ¹
 Oh but you might keep away from the seat of my love, ²
 And keep your beauty and naughty youth in check,
 Which lead you in their debauchery there too
 Where you are forced to break two different vows: ³
 Her vow to me, since your beauty tempts her to abandon me,
 And your vow to me, because your beauty is unfaithful to me.

¹ The speaker compares his lover to a woman who tries to court a man who refuses to recognize her until he has won her over. It is unclear why he would need to win her over, if she is already wooing him, but "prevailing" may have a stronger, more sexual connotation, suggesting that the man accepts the woman's courtship only once they have had sex.

² This could refer to the speaker's sexual organ.

³ The lover's "vow" in this case is a promise of love and loyalty.

Sonnet 42

Shakespeare

That thou hast her it is not all my grief,
 And yet it may be said I loved her dearly;
 That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,
 A loss in love that touches me more nearly.
 5 Loving offenders, thus I will excuse ye:
 Thou dost love her because thou knowst I love her;
 And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
 Suff'ring my friend for my sake to approve her.
 If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
 10 And losing her, my friend hath found that loss;
 Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
 And both for my sake lay on me this cross.
 But here's the joy; my friend and I are one;
 Sweet flatt'ry! Then she loves but me alone.

Shakescleare Translation

That you have her ¹ is not all of my sadness, ²
 And it is true to say that she was precious to me.
 The main cause of my wailing is that she has you,
 A loss in love that affects me more deeply. ³
 Criminals of love ⁴, I will forgive you for these reasons:
 You love her because you know I love her;
 And, similarly, she abuses me ⁵ because she knows I love you,
 Allowing my friend ⁶ to test ⁷ her for my sake.
 If I lose you, my loss is my lover's gain,
 And losing ⁸ her meant my friend found what I had lost;
 Both of them find each other, and I lose them both,
 And both of them make me suffer for my own sake.
 And this is why: ⁹ my friend and I are the same person.
 What a happy delusion! This means she loves only me.

¹ This sonnet refers, for the first time, to a woman who may be a former lover of the speaker, mentioned in Sonnet 40, or his current mistress, mentioned later in the sequence.

² Or, "the full source of my grief"

³ I.e. more deeply than losing her.

⁴ Or, "offenders whom I still love"

⁵ By loving you instead of me.

⁶ I.e. you, the young man.

⁷ The speaker seems to be suggesting, whether sincerely or ironically, that his mistress is having sex with the young man out of kindness to the speaker.

⁸ The original spelling is "loose," which has a connotation of sexual promiscuity.

⁹ I.e. why they are being unfaithful to me "for my sake."

Sonnet 43

Shakespeare

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
 For all the day they view things unrespected;
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
 And, darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
 5 Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright—
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
 How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
 10 By looking on thee in the living day,
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,
 And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

Shakescleare Translation

When I am most tired, then my eyes see most clearly,
 Since during the day they see unimportant things.
 But when I sleep, my eyes see you in my dreams.
 They are darkly bright, and shine in the darkness they are directed into.
 Then you, who are so bright that your shadow makes shadows bright:
 How would your shadow's form ¹ make a pleasing appearance
 In the bright day with your even brighter light,
 When your image shines so brightly to unseeing eyes?
 How would, I ask, my eyes be blessed
 By looking on you in the living day,
 When in the dead of night your imperfect ² shadow
 Survives on unseeing eyes in the deep sleep?
 All days are dark as nights until I see you,
 And nights are bright days when dreams show you to me.

¹ I.e. your body.

² Or, "incomplete"

Sonnet 44

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;
 For then, despite of space, I would be brought
 From limits far remote where thou dost stay.
 5 No matter then although my foot did stand
 Upon the farthest earth removed from thee,
 For nimble thought can jump both sea and land
 As soon as think the place where he would be.
 But ah, thought kills me that I am not thought
 10 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
 But that so much of earth and water wrought,
 I must attend time's leisure with my moan,
 Receiving naughts by elements so slow
 But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

If the heavy substance of my flesh was thought instead,
 Harmful distance should not keep me from you;
 For then, despite the distance, I would be brought
 From lands far away to where you are staying.
 It wouldn't matter if my foot were standing
 Upon the point on the earth furthest removed from you,
 Quick thought can jump across both sea and land
 As soon as it thinks of the place where he would be.
 But ah, thought kills me when I think I am not thought ¹
 To leap many miles when you are gone,
 Since my body is made of so much earth and water ²,
 I must wait on the whim of time with my complaints,
 Receiving nothing from the slow elements ³
 But heavy tears, the tokens of their grief.

¹ This could mean either "when I am not thought about by my lover" or "when my lover does not believe that I am thinking of him."

² Early modern notion of what the human body was made of included two heavy elements (earth and water) and two light elements (air and fire). The balance of these elements was believed to influence how the mind and the body functioned. To have two heavy elements is to be slow and weighed down in both mind and body.

³ Earth and water.

Sonnet 45

Shakespeare

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
 Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
 The first my thought, the other my desire,
 These present absent with swift motion slide.
 5 For when these quicker elements are gone
 In tender embassy of love to thee,
 My life, being made of four, with two alone
 Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;
 Until life's composition be recured
 10 By those swift messengers returned from thee,
 Who ev'n but now come back again, assured
 Of thy fair health, recounting it to me.
 This told, I joy, but then no longer glad,
 I send them back again and straight grow sad.

Shakescleare Translation

The other two elements, ¹ light air and cleansing fire,
 Are both with you, wherever I am;
 Air is my thought, and fire is my desire,
 Whenever they are present they quickly slide away.
 When these quicker elements are gone
 And make a tender embassy of love to you,
 My life, being made of four elements, is only two
 And sinks down to death, sinking into melancholy.
 Until the proper composition of my life can be restored
 By the return of those swift messengers ² from you,
 Who now come back once more, assured
 Of your good health, recounting it to me.
 This being confirmed, I am overjoyed, but then no longer glad,
 I send them back again and straight again become sad.

¹ While Sonnet 44 focused on earth and water, this sonnet focuses on two other elements: light and fire.

² The elements, air and fire, are in this image the medium of a message from the young man.

Sonnet 46

Shakespeare

Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war
 How to divide the conquest of thy sight;
 Mine eye my heart thy picture's sight would bar;
 My heart mine eye the freedom of that right.
 5 My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,
 A closet never pierced with crystal eyes;
 But the defendant doth that plea deny,
 And says in him thy fair appearance lies.
 To 'cide this title is empanellèd
 10 A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,
 And by their verdict is determinèd
 The clear eye's moiety and the dear heart's part:
 As thus—mine eye's due is thy outward part,
 And my heart's right, thy inward love of heart.

Shakescleare Translation

My eye and heart are at war over
 How to divide the spoils of their conquest of the sight of you.
 My eye denies my heart the sight of your picture;
 My heart denies my eye the exercise of that right. ¹
 My heart begs you to live in him,
 A private chamber never pierced by the clearest eyes.
 But the eye denies that plea,
 And says your beautiful image lies within him instead.
 To decide who gets to own your image,
 A jury of thoughts have gathered, all tenants of the heart, ²
 And it is decided by their verdict which is
 The clear eye's half and the dear heart's half:
 As follows: my eye receives your outward appearance,
 And my heart's right is your inner love of heart. ³

¹ I.e. the act of denial itself.

² Being "tenants of the heart," this jury will presumably be prejudiced in the heart's favor.

³ The heart receives the right to the love that is in the lover's own heart and the right to command the love for itself.

Sonnet 47

Shakespeare

Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
 And each doth good turns now unto the other.
 When that mine eye is famished for a look,
 Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother,
 5 With my love's picture then my eye doth feast
 And to the painted banquet bids my heart.
 Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
 And in his thoughts of love doth share a part.
 So either by thy picture or my love,
 10 Thyself away are present still with me;
 For thou no farther than my thoughts canst move,
 And I am still with them, and they with thee;
 Or if they sleep, thy picture in my sight
 Awakes my heart to heart's and eye's delight.

Shakescleare Translation

Between my eye and heart a peace treaty ¹ is established,
 And now each of them does good turns to the other.
 When my eye is starving for a look of that,
 Or when my heart, in love, is smothered by his own sighs,
 My eye feasts on my love's picture
 And invites my heart to join the painted banquet. ²
 Another time my eye is my heart's guest,
 And shares a part of the heart's thoughts of love.
 So either by your picture or my love,
 You are still present with me even when you are away.
 Since you can't leave my thoughts,
 And I am with my thoughts, and they are with you.
 And when they sleep, the sight of your image
 Awakes my heart, to the joy of both my heart and my eye.

¹ Following the battle of the previous sonnet.

² I.e. the banquet of the young man's beautiful image.

Sonnet 48

Shakespeare

How careful was I, when I took my way,
 Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
 That to my use it might unused stay
 From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust.
 5 But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
 Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
 Thou best of dearest, and mine only care,
 Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
 Thee have I not locked up in any chest,
 10 Save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,
 Within the gentle closure of my breast,
 From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part;
 And even thence thou wilt be stol'n, I fear,
 For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

Shakescleare Translation

How careful I was, when I set off on my journey,
 Thrusting each trifle ¹ under the most trustworthy bars,
 So that, for my own use, it might stay unused
 By unfaithful hands, in a trustworthy container.
 But you, who make my jewels seem like trifles,
 My best comfort, are now my greatest grief,
 You are the best of my most valued things, and my only concern,
 Are left to be the prey of every common thief.
 You I have not locked in any chest,
 Except for where you are not, though I feel that you are,
 Within the noble enclosure of my breast. ²
 From where you may come and go;
 And I am even afraid that you will be stolen from there,
 Since even truth ³ might become a thief for a prize as valuable as you.

¹ A thing of little value.

² Playing with the double meaning of chest: "box" and "heart."

³ I.e. truth that is another resident of the speaker's heart.

Sonnet 49

Shakespeare

Against that time (if ever that time come)
 When I shall see thee frown on my defects;
 Whenas thy love hath cast his utmost sum,
 Called to that audit by advised respects;
 5 Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass,
 And scarcely greet me with that sun, thine eye;
 When love, converted from the thing it was,
 Shall reasons find of settled gravity;
 Against that time do I ensconce me here
 10 Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
 And this my hand against myself uprear
 To guard the lawful reasons on thy part:
 To leave poor me, thou hast the strength of laws,
 Since why to love I can allege no cause.

Shakescleare Translation

Preparing for that time (if that time should come)
 When I will see you frown on my flaws;
 And the time when your love has counted his final total ¹,
 Called to that counting by judicious reasons;
 Preparing for that time when you pass by like a stranger,
 And barely greet me with that sun, your gaze;
 When love, converted from the thing that it was,
 Will justify itself with arguments from established authorities;
 Preparing for that time, I shelter myself here
 Within the knowledge of my own merit,
 And raise this hand, against myself, ²
 To protect your lawful arguments:
 To leave poor me, you have the strength of laws
 Since why you should love me, I can provide no cause.

¹ With this the speaker returns to financial and legal language used in many of the "procreation sonnets."

² The speaker raises his hand, perhaps, as a witness in a legal trial. He is taking the side of his lover, who has become his opponent.

Sonnet 50

Shakespeare

How heavy do I journey on the way
 When what I seek (my weary travel's end)
 Doth teach that ease and that repose to say,
 "Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend."
 5 The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
 Plods dully on to bear that weight in me,
 As if by some instinct the wretch did know
 His rider loved not speed, being made from thee.
 The bloody spur cannot provoke him on
 10 That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide,
 Which heavily he answers with a groan,
 More sharp to me than spurring is to his side;
 For that same groan doth put this in my mind:
 My grief lies onward and my joy behind.

Shakescleare Translation

How heavily do I travel on my journey
 When what I am looking for (the end of my weary travels),
 Will only permit my ease and repose to say:
 "I measure the miles I've travelled by how far I am from my friend."
 The beast that carries me, tired with my sorrow,
 Plods slowly from bearing that weight ¹ in me,
 As if by some instinct, the wretched creature knew
 His rider did not love speed, since it makes me further from you.
 This bloody spur can't provoke him to ride more quickly
 That I sometimes thrust angrily into his hide,
 Which he answers sadly with a groan,
 More painful to me than spurring is to his side
 Because that same groan makes me think this:
 My grief lies ahead, and my joy ² behind.

¹ I.e. the weight of the speaker's sadness.

² Happiness, or the origin of that happiness, which is the young man.

Sonnet 51

Shakespeare

Thus can my love excuse the slow offense
 Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed:
 From where thou art, why should I haste me thence?
 Till I return, of posting is no need.
 5 O what excuse will my poor beast then find,
 When swift extremity can seem but slow?
 Then should I spur, though mounted on the wind;
 In wingèd speed no motion shall I know:
 Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
 10 Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made,
 Shall neigh no dull flesh in his fiery race,
 But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade:
 Since from thee going he went wilful slow,
 Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave to go.

Shakescleare Translation

This is the thought with which my love ¹ excuses the slowness
 Of my slow bearer ², when I travel away from you:
 "Why should I make haste away from where you are?"
 Until my return journey, there is no need for hurrying.
 Oh what excuse will my poor horse then have,
 When extreme speed can only seem slow?
 I would spur him on, even if I were riding the wind itself;
 If I travel like the wind, I would not feel any movement:
 So no horse can keep pace with my desire;
 Therefore desire, being made of the most perfect love,
 Shall not neigh ³ any slow flesh in his burning race
 But love, for love, I will excuse my slow horse like this:
 Since he went intentionally slowly away from you,
 I'll run to you, and allow him to walk.

¹ A common ambiguity: "my love" means both "the love that I have for my lover" and "my lover."

² Presumably the horse of Sonnet 50.

³ Editors have disagreed on the meaning of this. The noise commonly made by a horse, possibly responding to a spur? Possibly a pun on "nay," meaning to deny or refuse.

Sonnet 52

Shakespeare

So am I as the rich whose blessed key
 Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
 The which he will not every hour survey,
 For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure .
 5 Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
 Since seldom coming in the long year set,
 Like stones of worth they thinly placèd are,
 Or captain jewels in the carcanet.
 So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
 10 Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
 To make some special instant special blest
 By new unfolding his imprisoned pride.
 Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,
 Being had, to triumph; being lacked, to hope.

Shakescleare Translation

I am like the rich man whose blessed key
 Can bring him to his sweet locked-up treasure,
 Which he does not look over every hour,
 In order not to blunt the fine point of pleasure ¹.
 This is why religious festivals are so serious and so infrequent,
 Since they arrive so rarely during the long year,
 Like expensive jewels they are placed sparingly,
 Or the main jewels in a necklace.
 The time that keeps you in my chest,
 Or a closet in which an expensive robe is kept,
 To make a special occasion especially blessed
 By once again revealing its concealed splendor.
 You are blessed, and your value provides a scope ²
 To have you is to triumph, to lack you is to long for you.

¹ The pleasure of looking is compared to a tool.

² A "scope" could mean a number of things, including: "a range of opportunities" (i.e. the lover's presence or absence, which are both valued) or "a target."

Sonnet 53

Shakespeare

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since everyone hath every one, one shade,
And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
5 Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you.
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new.
Speak of the spring and foison of the year;
10 The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you are like none, none you, for constant heart.

Shakescleare Translation

What is the substance of which are you made,
Such that millions of strange shadows follow you ¹?
Since everyone each has, to themselves, one shadow,
And you, although you are only one, can lend everyone a shadow. ²
Describe Adonis, and the description ³
Is a poor imitation of you.
Apply the entire art of make-up to Helen of Troy's ⁴ face
And you will find a representation of yourself in Greek dress!
Talk of the springtime or harvest of the year
And spring is no more than a shadow of your beauty,
And the harvest appears equivalent to your goodness,
We recognize you in every blessed shape.
You have some part in every external thing that is beautiful,
But you are like none, and none like you, because of how faithful you are.

¹ This is ambiguous. It suggests at least three different things: there are many people who are kind to the young man (presumably because of his beauty); that he is surrounded by many others, who are unworthy of him; that everyone else is no more than an imitation of him.

² The young man is the definition of beauty, so that anyone else who is beautiful must be borrowing his shadow.

³ "Counterfeit" has the moral suggestion of falseness or inauthenticity, but it can mean, more neutrally, an imitation.

⁴ Helen of Troy was the most beautiful woman, according to Greek mythology, and the speaker claims that the young man is even more beautiful.

Sonnet 54

Shakespeare

O how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give!
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odor which doth in it live.
5 The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumèd tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly,
When summer's breath their maskèd buds discloses;
But for their virtue only is their show,
10 They live unwooded, and unrespected fade,
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made;
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth;
When that shall vade, my verse distills your truth.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh how much more beautiful does beauty seem
When it has the sweet ornament of truth!
The rose looks beautiful, but we think of it as more beautiful
For the sweet aroma that lives in it.
Dog-roses are dyed just as deeply
As the perfumed color of the roses,
They have similar thorns ¹, and show off just as promiscuously,
When summer's warm air unfolds their closed buds.
But their only value is only for their looks,
They are unloved and fade away without having been admired,
Dying on their own. Sweet roses do not do this:
Sweetest perfumes are distilled from their sweet deaths.
And same is true of you, beautiful and lovely youth;
When those qualities fade, my verse will distill ² your true essence.

¹ Dog roses look like roses, and have thorns, but are scentless.

² As perfume distills the essence of roses.

Sonnet 55

Shakespeare

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
5 When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire, shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity
10 Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Shakescleare Translation

Neither marble nor the golden monuments
Of princes will outlive this powerful poem,
But you will shine brighter in its contents
Than unswept stone, made foul by dirty time.
When wasteful war topples statues,
And commotions root out the work of masons ¹,
Neither Mars's sword ² or war's quick fire, will burn
The living record of your memory.
Against death and all the forces of forgetfulness
You will evade; your praise will still occupy
The eyes of all posterity
That will exhaust this world until the end of time.
So until the Last Judgement, when you rise as yourself,
You live in this poem, and dwell ³ in lovers' eyes.

¹ The art of stonemasons: i.e. a statue, monument or building.

² The Roman god of war.

³ "Dwell" stresses that this is a more permanent inhabitation

*than that of the princes' who live
on in their monuments.*

Sonnet 56

Shakespeare

Sweet love, renew thy force; be it not said
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
Which but today by feeding is allayed,
Tomorrow sharpened in his former might.
5 So love be thou; although today thou fill
Thy hungry eyes even till they wink with fullness,
Tomorrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love with a perpetual dullness.
Let this sad int'rim like the ocean be
10 Which parts the shore, where two contracted new
Come daily to the banks, that when they see
Return of love, more blest may be the view;
Else call it winter, which being full of care,
Makes summer's welcome, thrice more wished, more rare.

Shakescleare Translation

Sweet love, renew your strength. Don't let it be said
That your effect should be duller than your appetite,
Which by feeding is satisfied today,
But tomorrow returns in its former intensity.
So love be yourself; although today you fill
Your hungry eyes until they wink with fullness,
Tomorrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love with a permanent lack of interest.
Imagine this **sad gap** as like the ocean
Which divides two shores, where two newly married
Come to the shores every day, so that when they see
The return of the one they love, the view is more blessed.
Or else call it the winter, which being full of worries,
Greets the summer, three times more wishes, more valuable.

 Presumably the two lovers' separation from each other.

Sonnet 57

Shakespeare

Being your slave, what should I do but tend
Upon the hours and times of your desire?
I have no precious time at all to spend,
Nor services to do, till you require.
5 Nor dare I chide the world without end hour
Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you,
Nor think the bitterness of absence sour
When you have bid your servant once adieu.
Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
10 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
But, like a sad slave, stay and think of nought
Save, where you are, how happy you make those.
So true a fool is love that in your will,
Though you do anything, he thinks no ill.

Shakescleare Translation

Being your servant, what can I do but wait
During the hours and appointments of your desire?
My time is not precious at all
And I don't have work to do until you require me.
Nor do I complain of the endlessness of the time
That I wait for you, my king,
Nor do I think that the bitterness of absence is sour
When you have dismissed your servant (me).
Nor do I dare to ask possessive questions
About where you are, or about your business,
But, like a sad slave, I wait and think of nothing
Except how happy you make those who are where you are.
I am such an absolutely faithful fool in love, that
I think you can do no wrong, whatever you do.

Sonnet 58

Shakespeare

That god forbid, that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure,
Or at your hand th' account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure.
5 O let me suffer, being at your beck,
Th' imprisoned absence of your liberty;
And patience tame to sufferance bide each check,
Without accusing you of injury.
Be where you list, your charter is so strong
10 That you yourself may privilege your time
To what you will; to you it doth belong
Yourself to pardon of self-doing crime.
I am to wait, though waiting so be hell,
Not blame your pleasure, be it ill or well.

Shakescleare Translation

Cupid, the god who first made me your slave,
Forbid me from thinking I can control when you seek pleasure,
Or want you to tell me how you have been spending the hours,
Being your tenant and therefore obliged to wait on you.
Oh let me suffer, being absolutely under your control,
In the imprisoned absence, which is your right;
And let patience teach me endure each hardship,
Without blaming you for my suffering.
Be wherever you want, you have so strong a claim
That you can spend your time
Doing whatever you like. You may also
Pardon yourself of any crime you commit
I have to wait, although waiting like this is hell,
And not criticize you for your desires, good or bad.

 "Self-doing" suggests that the lover is guilty of a crime, and possibly one against themselves.

 Both as in to "wait for him to return" and "to wait on him as a servant."

Sonnet 59

Shakespeare

If there be nothing new, but that which is
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,
Which, lab'ring for invention, bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child!
5 O that recórd could with a backward look,
Ev'n of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some ántique book,
Since mind at first in character was done,
That I might see what the old world could say
10 To this composèd wonder of your frame;
Whether we are mended, or where better they,
Or whether revolution be the same.
O sure I am the wits of former days
To subjects worse have giv'n admiring praise.

Shakescleare Translation

If there is nothing truly new, and everything that exists
Has existed before, how are our brains so misguided
That, striving to invent something new, and fail
Giving birth to something that has already been born!
Oh that the memory could looking back
Even five hundred orbits of the sun,
Show me your image in some ancient book,
Since the time when thought was first written down,
So that I could see what the old world could speak
Of the wonderful composition of your body.
And  know if we have improved, or if they were better,
Or whether the cycle of time means we are the same. 
Oh, I am sure that the writers of the old days
Gave to inferior subjects their admiring praise.

 This would suggest the linear shape of time.

 This points to the circular model of time.

Sonnet 60

Shakespeare

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end,
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
5 Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And time that gave doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
10 And delves the parallels in beauty's brow;
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

Shakescleare Translation

Like the waves that move towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes  hurry to their death,
Each taking the place of the one that went before,
All of them in a sequence, striving forwards.
A newborn thing, which was once in the wide sea of life,
Crawls to maturity, where once it is crowned,
Is fought against by sinister eclipses ,
And time ruins the gift that it gave to him.
Time pierces  the beauty that adorns youth
And digs wrinkles into beauty's forehead;
It feeds on the rare treasures of nature's truth,
And nothing stands that his scythe can't mow down.
And yet until future times I hope my poetry will stand,
Praising your value, despite time's cruel hand.

 Like Sonnet 12, which discusses time, the number of this sonnet reflects the number of minutes in an hour.

 When a child is born, an alignment of the stars determines their future, character and fate. Picking up on the astrological imagery of earlier sonnets.

 In both senses of "to physically stab through", and "to pierce emotionally with sensations of grief, pain, etc."

Sonnet 61

Shakespeare

Is it thy wish, thy image should keep open
My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?
5 Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home into my deeds to pry,
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?
O no; thy love, though much, is not so great.
10 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake,
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake.
For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
From me far off, with others all too near.

Shakescleare Translation

Is it your wish, for your image to keep open
My heavy eyelids throughout the tiring night?
Do you wish for my sleep to be broken up,
While shadows that look like you mock my sight?
Is it your ghost, that you send me from you
So far from home to pry into my private affairs,
To discover shameful things and how I spend my free time,
Which is the focus and object of your jealousy?
Oh no: your love is a lot but it is not so great.
It is my love that keeps my eye awake,
My own true love that defeats my ability to sleep,
To always watch over for you for your own sake.
I keep a lookout for you  while you are awake elsewhere,
Far away from me, but all too close to others.

 Or "keep watch to see if you are coming to me."

Sonnet 62

Shakespeare

Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye
 And all my soul, and all my every part;
 And for this sin there is no remedy,
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.
 5 Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
 No shape so true, no truth of such account;
 And for myself mine own worth do define,
 As I all other in all worths surmount.
 But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
 10 Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity,
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.
 'Tis thee, myself, that for myself I praise,
 Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

Shakescleare Translation

The sin of self-love possesses my eyes
 And my soul, and every part of my body;
 And this sin there is no remedy,
 It is so rooted inside my heart.
 I think no other face is as gracious as mine,
 No shape as perfect, no truth so valuable;
 And I define my own worth by myself,
 As I am worth more than all others combined.
 But when my mirror shows me myself,
 Beaten and chapped and aged by the sun,
 I interpret my own self-love in quite the opposite way:
 Self, to love your self so much would be a sin.
 Thus I praise *you*, my self, instead of myself,
 Dressing up my age with the beauty of your youth.

Sonnet 63

Shakespeare

Against my love shall be as I am now,
 With time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn;
 When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
 With lines and wrinkles; when his youthful morn
 5 Hath traveled on to age's steepy night,
 And all those beauties whereof now he's king
 Are vanishing or vanished out of sight,
 Stealing away the treasure of his spring;
 For such a time do I now fortify
 10 Against confounding age's cruel knife,
 That he shall never cut from memory
 My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
 His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
 And they shall live, and he in them still green.

Shakescleare Translation

Preparing for the time when my lover will be as I am now,
 Crushed and worn out by the hand of cruel time;
 When hours have drained his blood ¹, and filled his forehead
 With lines and wrinkles; when the morning of his youth
 Has journeyed on to the deep night of old age,
 And all those beauties that he rules over in the present
 Are vanishing or already vanished from sight,
 Stealing the treasure from his spring. ²
 For that time, I fortify myself now
 To fight against the cruel knife of destructive time,
 So that he can never cut from memory
 My sweet love's beauty, though he may cut down my lover's life.
 His beauty will be seen in these black lines ³,
 And they will live on, and in them he will still be green ⁴.

¹ Blood was believed to be the bodily liquor of vitality.

² The beauty of his youth.

³ The lines of the poem.

⁴ Here "green" means youthful and innocent.

Sonnet 64

Shakespeare

When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
 The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
 When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
 And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
 5 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
 And the firm soil win of the watery main,
 Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
 When I have seen such interchange of state,
 10 Or state itself confounded to decay,
 Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat,
 That time will come and take my love away.
 This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
 But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Shakescleare Translation

When I have seen defaced by time's savage hand
 The rich monuments of worn out and buried past ages;
 When I see towers that were once lofty razed to the ground,
 And even brass become subject to human destruction.
 When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
 Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
 And the firm soil conquer territory from the ocean,
 Increasing its store with the other's loss, and vice versa.
 When I have seen that interchange of states,
 And the state itself demolished into nothing,
 Ruin has taught me in this way to think
 That time will come and take my love away.
 This thought is like death, and I can't help
 But weep to have something that I fear to lose.

Sonnet 65

Shakespeare

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
 But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
 5 O how shall summer's honey breath hold out
 Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?
 O fearful meditation! Where, alack,
 10 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
 Or who his spoil or beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Shakescleare Translation

Since brass nor stone nor earth nor the uncontained sea,
 Can help being over-powered by sad mortality,
 Given this destruction how can beauty survive,
 Who is no stronger than a flower?
 Oh how can summer's honey breath hold out
 Against the destructive siege of battering days ¹,
 When invincible rocks are not so hard,
 Nor gates of steel strong enough to withstand decay over time?
 What a frightening thought! Where, alas,
 Will time's most prized gem escape being put away in time's jewelry box ²
 ?
 What strong hand can hold back time's quick steps?
 Who can prevent his spoiling of beauty?
 None, unless this miracle is powerful enough
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

¹ In this image time is an army that besieges the city of youthful beauty.

² This suggests that even precious gems can age and become forgotten, when they are kept in the "chest" of time.

Sonnet 66

Shakespeare

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
 As to behold desert a beggar born,
 And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
 And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
 5 And gilded honor shamefully misplaced,
 And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
 And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
 And strength by limping sway disabled,
 And art made tongue-tied by authority,
 10 And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
 And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
 And captive good attending captain ill.
 Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
 Save that to die, I leave my love alone.

Shakescleare Translation

I cry out for restful death, tired with all of these things:
 For example seeing worth itself born as a beggar,
 And worthlessness itself dressed in expensive clothes,
 And purest faith herself unhappy abandoned,
 And golden honor shamefully put on the wrong person,
 And virgin virtue herself rudely rumored to be a whore,
 And correct perfection itself wrongfully insulted,
 And strength itself disabled by crippled power,
 And art itself made tongue-tied by authority,
 And foolishness himself, like a doctor, over-powering skill,
 And plain truth itself wrongfully labeled as simplicity,
 And good itself made a prisoner and servant of evil.
 Tired with all of this, I would like to leave them all behind ¹,
 Except that if I die, I leave my love alone. ¹ And leave the world.

Sonnet 67

Shakespeare

Ah, wherefore with infection should he live,
 And with his presence grace impiety,
 That sin by him advantage should achieve
 And lace itself with his society?
 5 Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
 And steal dead seeming of his living hue?
 Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
 Roses of shadow, since his rose is true?
 Why should he live, now nature bankrupt is,
 10 Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins?
 For she hath no exchequer now but his,
 And, proud of many, lives upon his gains.
 O him she stores, to show what wealth she had
 In days long since, before these last so bad.

Shakescleare Translation

Ah, why should he live with contamination,
 And grace impiety itself with his presence,
 That sin should use him to take advantage
 And decorate itself with his company?
 Why should others use makeup to imitate his face,
 And make lifeless copies from his living color?
 Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
 Roses in the images of beauty, since his rose ¹ is true?
 Why should he live now that nature is bankrupt,
 Lacking the blood to blush through living veins?
 She has no treasury now other than his,
 And, admired by many, she lives on his profits.
 Oh him she stores, to show what wealth she had,
 A long time ago, before the bad new days.

¹ The blush of the young man's cheek, perhaps.

Sonnet 68

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
 When beauty lived and died as flow'rs do now,
 Before these bastard signs of fair were born,
 Or durst inhabit on a living brow;
 5 Before the golden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchers, were shorn away,
 To live a second life on second head;
 Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay.
 In him those holy antique hours are seen,
 10 Without all ornament, itself and true,
 Making no summer of another's green,
 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
 And him as for a map doth nature store,
 To show false art what beauty was of yore.

Thus ¹ his cheek is the map of worn out days,
 When beauty lived and died as flowers do now,
 Before these illegitimate signs of beauty ² were born,
 Or dared to put them on a living body.
 Before the golden hair of the dead,
 Which belong in the tomb, were cut off,
 To live a second life on another person's head;
 Before beauty's dead hair made another happy.
 In him those holy ancient hours are seen,
 Without any ornament, true to itself,
 Not making itself look like summer with another's green,
 Stealing no old thing to make his beauty look new;
 And nature keeps him as a map,
 To show false art what beauty used to be.

¹ Sonnet 68 builds upon the conclusion of the previous sonnet.

² Make-up and other techniques for enhancing beauty.

Sonnet 69

Shakespeare

Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view
 Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend.
 All tongues, the voice of souls, give thee that due,
 Utt'ring bare truth, ev'n so as foes commend.
 5 Thy outward thus with outward praise is crowned;
 But those same tongues that give thee so thine own
 In other accents do this praise confound
 By seeing farther than the eye hath shown.
 They look into the beauty of thy mind,
 10 And that in guess they measure by thy deeds;
 Then, churls, their thoughts (although their eyes were kind)
 To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds;
 But why thy odor matcheth not thy show,
 15 The soil is this, that thou dost common grow.

Shakescleare Translation

The parts of you that the world are able to see
 Lack nothing that the thought of hearts could improve.
 All tongues, which give voice to everyone's souls, give you the praise you
 deserve,
 Speaking naked truth, even your enemies praise you like this.
 Your outer beauty matches the praise your appearance inspires,
 But those same tongues that praise you, as you deserve,
 In other accents destroy that praise
 By seeing farther than just their eyes have shown them.
 They look into the beauty of your mind,
 And they estimate the quality of your mind by your actions.
 Then, ungrateful people, their thoughts (although their eyes were kind)
 Add the sour smell of weeds to the beautiful flower of your beauty.
 But why your smell does not match your appearance,
 Is for this reason: you have become common.

Sonnet 70

Shakespeare

That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect,
 For slander's mark was ever yet the fair;
 The ornament of beauty is suspect,
 A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
 5 So thou be good, slander doth but approve
 Thy worth the greater, being wooed of time;
 For canker vice the sweetest buds doth love,
 And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.
 Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,
 10 Either not assailed, or victor being charged;
 Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
 To tie up envy evermore enlarged.
 If some suspect of ill masked not thy show,
 Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe.

Shakescleare Translation

It is not your fault that you will be criticized,
 Since slander has always been aimed at beautiful people;
 The ornament of beauty is suspicious,
 Like a crow ¹ that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
 If you are good, slander will only confirm
 That your worth is greater, since you are wooed by time ².
 For vice, the canker-worm, loves to eat the sweetest buds,
 And you present a pure, uncorrupted youth.
 You have survived the traps that target young people,
 Either by not being attacked, or the victor taking the blame. ³
 But this praise of yours can't be your praise
 To prevent the attacks of envy.
 If some suspicion of evil did not cover your appearance,
 Then you alone would rule over the kingdoms of lovers.

¹ The bird of ill-omen, or bad luck.

² Ambiguous. The moral person is the target of more attempts at slander, therefore, perversely, slander becomes a sign of good morality.

³ I.e. the trap itself or the person who set the trap being accused of the fault, rather than the lover.

Sonnet 71

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
 Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
 Give warning to the world that I am fled
 From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
 5 Nay, if you read this line, remember not
 The hand that writ it, for I love you so
 That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
 If thinking on me then should make you woe.
 O if, I say, you look upon this verse
 10 When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
 Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
 But let your love even with my life decay,
 Lest the wise world should look into your moan
 And mock you with me after I am gone.

Do not mourn for me when I am dead longer
 Than the sound of the surly funeral bell that you hear
 That announces to the world that I have fled
 From dwelling in this low world with the lowest worms:
 No, if you read this line, do not remember
 The hand that wrote it, for I love you so much
 That I would rather be forgotten by your sweet thoughts
 If thinking about me would cause you sadness.
 Oh if, I say, you look at this poem
 When I am perhaps mingling with [clay](#) ¹,
 Do not repeat so much as my poor name,
 But let your love decay with my life,
 So that the wise world doesn't investigate your moaning
 And mock you for your association with me after I am gone.

¹ The dirt in the grave.

Sonnet 72

Shakespeare

O lest the world should task you to recite
 What merit lived in me that you should love
 After my death, dear love, forget me quite,
 For you in me can nothing worthy prove;
 5 Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
 To do more for me than mine own desert,
 And hang more praise upon deceased I
 Than niggard truth would willingly impart.
 O lest your true love may seem false in this,
 10 That you for love speak well of me untrue,
 My name be buried where my body is,
 And live no more to shame nor me nor you.
 For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,
 And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh, in case the world makes you recite
 What merits I had that would justify your love
 After my death, dear love, completely forget me,
 Since you would be able to prove that there was nothing worthy in me;
 Unless you would make up some virtuous lie,
 To praise me more than I deserve,
 And hang more praise on my dead self
 Than miserly truth would willingly give out.
 Oh so that your true love does not seem false in this
 That you, out of love, speak well of me untruthfully,
 Let my name be buried where my body is,
 And die with it to shame neither me nor you.
 For I am ashamed by what I produce,
 And so should you be, to love worthless things like me.

Sonnet 73

Shakespeare

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
 Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
 5 In me thou seest the twilight of such day
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,
 Which by and by black night doth take away,
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
 10 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
 As the deathbed whereon it must expire
 Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
 This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Shakescleare Translation

You may see in me that time of the year
 When yellow leaves, or none, or a few, hang
 On those branches that shake against the cold,
 Naked, ruined choirs ¹ where once the sweet birds sang.
 You see in me the twilight of the kind of day
 That fades after the sunset in the west,
 Which is gradually taken away by the black night,
 Death's second self, that seals up everything in rest.
 You see in me the glowing of a kind of fire
 That lies on the ashes of his youth ²,
 The deathbed on which it will surely die out,
 Choked by the same thing it was once nourished by.
 This you perceive, which makes your love stronger,
 To love what you must leave before long.

¹ The part of the church where the choir sings, perhaps referring to the churches ruined after the Reformation. A metaphor for the naked branches of a tree during the winter.

² I.e. the youth of the fire.

Sonnet 74

Shakespeare

But be contented when that fell arrest
 Without all bail shall carry me away;
 My life hath in this line some interest,
 Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
 5 When thou reviewest this, thou dost review
 The very part was consecrate to thee.

Shakescleare Translation

But ¹ be content when that savage arrest ²
 Carries me away without bail ³;
 My life has some interest in this line
 Which will stay with you as a reminder.
 When you re-read this, you review
 The very line that which was dedicated to you.

¹ This is a continuation of the previous sonnet.

² Death.

The earth can have but earth, which is his due;
My spirit is thine, the better part of me.
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
10 The prey of worms, my body being dead,
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be rememb'ed.
The worth of that is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.

The earth can have only earth, which is what he deserves;
My spirit is yours, the better part of me.
So then **4** you will have lost only the worst parts of life,
The food of worms, after my body is dead,
The cowardly reward of a wretched person's knife,
Too low for you to remember.
The value of that is what it contains **5**,
And that is this poem, which remains with you.

4 A legal metaphor.

4 When the speaker dies.

5 I.e. the speaker's soul or, perhaps, their love.

Sonnet 75

Shakespeare

So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet seasoned show'rs are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found;
5 Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure;
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure;
Sometime all full with feasting on your sight
10 And by and by clean starvèd for a look;
Possessing or pursuing no delight,
Save what is had or must from you be took.
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

Shakescleare Translation

You are to my thoughts as food is to life,
Or as sweet occasional showers to the ground.
And to obtain the peace of loving you, I submit to the kind of conflict
That is found between a miser and their wealth.
One moment proud of its possession, and then
Suspecting that the thieving world will steal his treasure;
One moment deciding I want to be with you privately,
Then that it would be better that the world can see my pleasure.
Sometimes full with feasting on your sight
And sometimes completely starved for a look;
Having and looking for no delight,
Except what is had or must be taken from you.
Therefore I pine and feast day by day,
Either feasting on everything, or lacking what that is absent.

Sonnet 76

Shakespeare

Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
5 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?
O know, sweet love, I always write of you,
10 And you and love are still my argument.
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

Shakescleare Translation

Why is my verse so empty of new ornaments,
So lacking in variety or lively change?
Why don't I follow the times and divert
To new methods and strange compounds **4**?
Why do I always write one thing, always the same,
And give my creations a familiar dress,
That every word I write reveals my authorship,
Showing their origin, and where they came from?
Oh my love, please know that I always write about you,
And you and love are still my subjects.
So the best I can do is rearranging old words,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the same sun is daily new and old,
So my love involves still telling what has already been told.

4 "Compounds" refers to the production, by poets like Shakespeare, of a new word by connecting two existing words.

Sonnet 77

Shakespeare

Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste;
The vacant leaves thy mind's impr'nt will bear,
And of this book this learning mayst thou taste:
5 The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show
Of mouthèd graves will give thee memory;
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know
Time's thievish progress to eternity.
Look what thy memory cannot contain,
10 Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
Those children nursed, delivered from thy brain,

Shakescleare Translation

Your mirror will show you how your beauty wears away,
Your clock how your precious minutes are wasted;
Blank sheets will bear your mind's imprint,
And from this book you may taste learning.
The wrinkles which your mirror shows
Will remind you of graves gaping open;
From your watch's slow-moving shadow you may know
How time is stealing everything from eternity.
Look, whatever your memory cannot contain,
Write on these empty sheets, and you will find
These children of your brain nurtured here,

To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
Shall profit thee and much enrich thy book.

To take on a new appearance of your mind.
These duties, as often as you like,
Will benefit you and enrich your book a lot.

Sonnet 78

Shakespeare

So oft have I invoked thee for my muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.
5 Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learnèd's wing
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
10 Whose influence is thine and born of thee.
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces gracèd be;
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance.

Shakescleare Translation

So often I have called you to be my inspiration,
And found such beautiful assistance with my poetry,
That every other writer has adopted my practice,
And circulates their verse under your patronage.
Your eyes, that taught mutes to sing from the heavens,¹
And raised heavy ignorance to new heights,
Have added feathers to the wing of the educated
² And gave grace twice its majesty.
But please be proudest of what I compose,
Which is influenced by you and born out of you.
In others' works you only improve their style,
And their arts are graced by your sweet graces;
But you are all of my art, and you advance
My ignorance as high as learning.

¹ "On high" also means loudly.

² In other words, made educated people even smarter.

Sonnet 79

Shakespeare

Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace,
But now my gracious numbers are decayed,
And my sick muse doth give another place.
5 I grant, sweet love, thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen,
Yet what of thee thy poet doth invent
He robs thee of and pays it thee again.
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word
10 From thy behavior; beauty doth he give
And found it in thy cheek; he can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee thou thyself dost pay.

Shakescleare Translation

When I, alone, called for your help,
Only my verse had all of your noble grace,
But now my graceful lines are decayed,
And my sick muse gives my place to another person.
I admit, my sweet love, that you are a lovely subject
And deserve the labors of a better writer,
But whatever the other poet writes about you,
He steals it from you and pays it back to you ¹.
He attributes virtue to you, and he stole that word
10 From your behavior; the beauty that he describes
Was found in your cheek; he can offer
To you only the praise that already lives in you.
Do not thank him for what he says,
Since what he owes to you, you yourself pay.

¹ As praise.

Sonnet 80

Shakespeare

O how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame.
5 But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth willfully appear.
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
10 Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride;
Or, being wracked, I am a worthless boat,
He of tall building and of goodly pride.
Then, if he thrive and I be cast away,
The worst was this: my love was my decay.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh how weak I feel when I write about you,
Knowing that a better spirit ¹ uses your name,
And spends all his power praising it,
So as to make me speechless in speaking of your fame.
But since your value is as wide as the ocean,
It holds the most humble and the richest boats,
My presumptuous little boat, far inferior to his,
Still stubbornly appears on your broad expanse.
Your slightest assistance ² will help me to stay afloat,
While he can ride out even out to the deepest parts;
Or, since I am already wrecked, I am a worthless boat,
While he is built to be tall and magnificent.
Then, if he thrives and I am cast away,
This is the the worst part: my love ³ caused my decay.

¹ A rival poet.

² Unlike some large boats, a small boat can stay afloat even in the shallowest waters.

³ In both senses of "my lover" and "my love for my lover."

Sonnet 81

Shakespeare

Or I shall live, your epitaph to make,
 Or you survive, when I in earth am rotten,
 From hence your memory death cannot take,
 Although in me each part will be forgotten.
 5 Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
 Though I, once gone, to all the world must die.
 The earth can yield me but a common grave,
 When you entombèd in men's eyes shall lie.
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
 10 Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
 And tongues to be your being shall rehearse
 When all the breathers of this world are dead.
 You still shall live—such virtue hath my pen—
 Where breath most breathes, ev'n in the mouths of men.

Shakescleare Translation

Either I outlive you and write your epitaph,
 Or you will survive when I am rotting in the earth,
 From now on death cannot take your memory,
 Although all of your parts in me will be forgotten.
 From now on your name will have an immortal life,
 Though I, once I am gone, will be dead to the world.
 The earth can only give me an ordinary grave,
 When you will be preserved in the eyes of men.
 Your monument will be my lovely verse,
 Which the eyes of future generations will read over,
 And their tongues to repeatedly speak of you
 When all the living creatures of this world are dead.
 You will live on—my pen has that power—
 Wherever there is poetry, especially in the mouths of men.

Sonnet 82

Shakespeare

I grant thou wert not married to my muse,
 And therefore mayst without attain't o'erlook
 The dedicated words which writers use
 Of their fair subject, blessing every book.
 5 Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
 Finding thy worth a limit past my praise,
 And therefore art enforced to seek anew
 Some fresher stamp of the time-bett'ring days.
 And do so, love; yet when they have devised
 10 What strained touches rhetoric can lend,
 Thou, truly fair, wert truly sympathized
 In true plain words by thy true-telling friend.
 And their gross painting might be better used
 Where cheeks need blood—in thee it is abused.

Shakescleare Translation

I accept that you were not obliged to be my muse,
 And, therefore, can read without dishonor
 The words that other writers devote
 To their beautiful subject, blessing every book.
 You are as beautiful in knowledge as you are in complexion,
 And finding your merit beyond my capacity to praise,
 You therefore you are forced to look once again
 For some newer writer of these improving times.
 And do so, my love; but while they have created
 What artificial touches rhetoric can provide,
 You, who are purely beautiful, are truly represented
 In simple, honest words by your truthful friend.
 And their artificial praise might be better used
 On people who lack beauty—on you, it is unnecessary.

 *With your attention.*

 *i.e. the speaker.*

 *The other writers.*

Sonnet 83

Shakespeare

I never saw that you did painting need,
 And therefore to your fair no painting set.
 I found, or thought I found, you did exceed
 The barren tender of a poet's debt.
 5 And therefore have I slept in your report,
 That you yourself, being extant, well might show
 How far a modern quill doth come too short,
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow.
 This silence for my sin you did impute,
 10 Which shall be most my glory, being dumb.
 For I impair not beauty, being mute,
 When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
 There lives more life in one of your fair eyes
 Than both your poets can in praise devise.

Shakescleare Translation

I never thought you needed makeup,
 And therefore added no artifice  to your beauty.
 I found, or I thought I found, that you were better
 Than the barren words with which a poet pays their debt .
 And therefore I have not been active in singing your praise,
 So that you yourself, being alive, might well show
 How far a modern pen can fall too short,
 Speaking of worth, what worth in you is growing.
 This silence of mine you did condemn
 Which will be my biggest triumph, being dumb.
 Because I do not harm beauty, being mute,
 When others want to give you life , but only make your tomb.
 There is more life in one of your beautiful eyes
 Than what your two poets can come up with in your praise.

 *Adding to the argument at the end of Sonnet 82.*

 *The debt is the praise that the beautiful young man is due.*

 *By writing verse.*

Sonnet 84

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Who is it that says most, which can say more
 Than this rich praise, that you alone are you—
 In whose conf'ne immurèd is the store
 Which should example where your equal grew?
 5 Lean penury within that pen doth dwell
 That to his subject lends not some small glory.
 But he that writes of you, if he can tell
 That you are you, so dignifies his story.
 Let him but copy what in you is writ,
 10 Not making worse what nature made so clear,
 And such a counterpart shall fame his wit,
 Making his style admired everywhere.
 You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
 Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.

Who is it that says the most, that can say more
 Than this rich praise: that only you are you—
 In whose body is contained all the store
 Of what any equal of yours would be measured by.
 Lean poverty exists in that pen 
 Which does not lend to his subject even a small glory.
 But whoever writes about you, if he can describe
 That you are you, his story is worthy enough.
 Let him simply copy down what you are,
 Not making worse what nature has made so bright,
 And that image of you will make his skill famous,
 Making his style admired by everyone.
 You add a curse to your beautiful blessings:
 Being eager to be praised, you make your praise worse. 

 A writer.

 Because being fond of praise is not a virtue, the young man would deserve less praise.

Sonnet 85

Shakespeare

My tongue-tied muse in manners holds her still,
 While comments of your praise, richly compiled,
 Reserve their character with golden quill
 And precious phrase by all the muses filed.
 5 I think good thoughts, whilst other write good words,
 And like unlettered clerk still cry "Amen"
 To every hymn that able spirit affords,
 In polished form of well-refined pen.
 Hearing you praised, I say "'Tis so, 'tis true,"
 10 And to the most of praise add something more;
 But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
 Though words come hindmost, holds his rank before.
 Then others for the breath of words respect,
 Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

Shakescleare Translation

My tongue-tied muse politely stays silent,
 While commentary on your beauty, rich compositions,
 Reserve for their writing a golden pen
 And precious phrases that are polished by all the muses.
 I think good thoughts about you while others write good words,
 And like an illiterate priest, I join in with the "Amen"
 To every poem that an able poet offers to you,
 In the polished form of a well-refined pen.
 When I hear you being praised, I say "It is so, it is true,"
 And add something more to the highest praise;
 But what is in my thought, since my love for you,
 Is of the highest rank, despite the fact that my words are the lowest.
 Then respect others for their spoken words,
 And respect me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in reality. 

 "In effect" suggests that the speaker's thoughts correspond to reality, even though they are silent and can have no rhetorical effect.

Sonnet 86

Shakespeare

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
 Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
 That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
 Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?
 5 Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
 Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
 No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
 Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
 He, nor that affable familiar ghost
 10 Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
 As victors of my silence cannot boast.
 I was not sick of any fear from thence;
 But when your countenance filled up his line,
 Then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.

Shakescleare Translation

Was it the magnificent sail of his great verse,
 Sailing towards the all-too precious prize that you are,
 That buried my ripe thoughts in my brain,
 Making the womb in which they grew a tomb?
 Was it his spirit, guided by spirits  to write
 Better than any mortal can, that struck me dead?
 No, neither he, nor his associates who at night
 Helped him write, astonished my writing into silence.
 Neither he, nor that friendly ghost
 Which tricks him with false information,
 Are responsible for my silence.
 I was not afraid of any of them;
 But when your face delighted at his verse,
 Then I lost my subject, that made my writing feeble.

 Supernatural beings, maybe demons.

Sonnet 87

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Farewell, thou art too dear for my possessing,
 And like enough thou know'st thy estimate.
 The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
 My bonds in thee are all determinate.
 5 For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
 And for that riches where is my deserving?
 The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
 And so my patent back again is swerving.
 Thyself thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
 10 Or me, to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking;
 So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
 Comes home again, on better judgment making.
 Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter:
 In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

Goodbye. You are too precious ¹ to be my possession,
 And you probably know how valuable you are.
 The privileges ² of your worth frees you from obligations;
 My rights over you have all expired.
 For how can I hold you unless by your permission,
 And how can I be deserving of such riches?
 The only cause for this beautiful gift is wanting ³,
 And so my right to have you returns to you.
 You gave yourself when you didn't know your own worth,
 Or you thought differently of me, who you gave yourself to;
 So your great gift to me, which started from a mistake,
 Comes back to you, so you can make a better decision.
 Thus I possessed you like a flattering dream:
 In sleep I am a king, but when I wake I am no such thing.

¹ With both connotations of "lovely" and "expensive".

² A charter is a document in which a monarch assigns certain privileges to someone.

³ Meaning both "desiring you" and "lacking you."

Sonnet 88

Shakespeare

When thou shalt be disposed to set me light
 And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
 Upon thy side against myself I'll fight,
 And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn.
 5 With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
 Upon thy part I can set down a story
 Of faults concealed, wherein I am attainted,
 That thou in losing me shalt win much glory.
 And I by this will be a gainer too,
 10 For bending all my loving thoughts on thee,
 The injuries that to myself I do,
 Doing thee vantage, double vantage me.
 Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
 That for thy right myself will bear all wrong.

Shakescleare Translation

When you are able to value me at a low rate ¹
 And to expose my merit to be questioned by a scornful eye,
 I'll fight on your side against myself,
 And prove that your virtue, though you've broken your promise ².
 Since I know my own flaws best,
 Taking your side ³ I can offer my testimony
 Of the hidden faults I have, where I am morally tainted,
 So that you, by losing me, can go on to bigger and better things.
 But I will also benefit from losing you,
 Since I fixate all my loving thoughts on you,
 The harm that I do to myself,
 Gives you an advantage, and therefore gives me a double advantage ⁴.
 This is the nature of my love: I belong to you so much,
 That in order to preserve your right to liberty I will take all the blame.

¹ Following from the previous sonnet in considering the relationship between the speaker and the young man in economic terms.

² A promise of romantic loyalty to the speaker, presumably.

³ Continuing the legal metaphor of earlier sonnets, in which the speaker makes an accusation against the young man and then takes his side.

⁴ As the speaker has suggested in previous sonnets, any benefit done to the young man is a double benefit for the speaker. So if the loss of the speaker liberates the young man, the speaker will be rewarded also.

Sonnet 89

Shakespeare

Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
 And I will comment upon that offense.
 Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt,
 Against thy reasons making no defense.
 5 Thou canst not, love, disgrace me half so ill,
 To set a form upon desired change,
 As I'll myself disgrace, knowing thy will;
 I will acquaintance strangle and look strange,
 Be absent from thy walks, and in my tongue
 10 Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,
 Lest I, too much profane, should do it wrong
 And haply of our old acquaintance tell.
 For thee against myself I'll vow debate,
 For I must ne'er love him whom thou dost hate.

Shakescleare Translation

Suppose ¹ you left me because of some fault,
 And I will explain that offense.
 Speak about my lameness, and I will immediately limp,
 Making no defense against your argument.
 You can't, my love, disgrace me half as badly
 Giving reasons for a change that you want,
 As I will disgrace myself, knowing what you want;
 I will suppress all signs of familiarity ², and look at you like a stranger,
 I won't go to the places you frequent, and in my tongue
 Your sweet beloved name will not live any longer,
 In case I, too unholy, should contaminate it
 By revealing our old familiarity.
 For you I vow to debate against myself,
 Since I must never love anyone you hate.

¹ This sonnet follows the previous sonnet in anticipating separation between the speaker and the young man.

² In Shakespeare's time,

Sonnet 90

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now,
 Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross;
 Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
 And do not drop in for an after-loss:
 5 Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
 Come in the rearward of a conquered woe.
 Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
 To linger out a purposed overthrow.
 If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
 10 When other petty griefs have done their spite
 But in the onset come; so shall I taste
 At first the very worst of fortune's might;
 And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
 Compared with loss of thee will not seem so.

So hate me whenever you want to, but if you ever do it, do it now,
 Now while the world is determined to frustrate my actions.
 Join with spiteful fortune, make me bow down,
 And don't drop an additional loss on me:
 Ah, do not, when my heart has escaped this sorrow,
 Attack my sorrows from behind when it has already been conquered.
 Do not give to a windy night a rainy tomorrow,
 To prolong an intended conquering.
 If you will leave me, do not leave me at the very end,
 When other trivial sadnesses have already done their harm;
 Instead, come at the first opportunity, so that I will experience
 The very worst that fortune can do to me;
 And other kinds of suffering, which seem heartbreaking now,
 Will be nothing compared to losing you.

Sonnet 91

Shakespeare

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
 Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill,
 Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;
 5 And every humor hath his adjunct pleasure,
 Wherein it finds a joy above the rest.
 But these particulars are not my measure;
 All these I better in one general best.
 Thy love is better than high birth to me,
 10 Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
 Of more delight than hawks or horses be;
 And having thee, of all men's pride I boast;
 Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
 All this away, and me most wretched make.

Shakescleare Translation

Some people revel in their social status, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their body's strength,
 Some in their clothes, even though they are badly made,
 Some **1** in their hunting birds and dogs, some in their horses;
 And every personality has its own kind of pleasure,
 In which it finds pleasure above all the others.
 But these preferences do not matter to me **2**;
 All these I improve on with one pleasure that is general.
 Your love is better than high birth to me,
 10 Richer than wealth, more impressive than expensive clothes,
 More delightful to me than hunting birds or horses;
 And having you, I boast my pride over all other men.
 I am unhappy only for this reason: that you can take
 All this away, and make me the most unhappy.

1 The repetition of "some" in the first four lines build contrast in preparation for the "but" in line 7.

2 Or, "are not the scale of measurement that I use".

Sonnet 92

Shakespeare

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
 For term of life thou art assurèd mine,
 And life no longer than thy love will stay,
 For it depends upon that love of thine.
 5 Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
 When in the least of them my life hath end.
 I see a better state to me belongs
 Than that which on thy humor doth depend.
 Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
 10 Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
 O what a happy title do I find,
 Happy to have thy love, happy to die!
 But what's so blessèd-fair that fears no blot?
 Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.

Shakescleare Translation

Try your hardest to sneak away from me,
 For as long as life **1** lasts you are promised to be mine,
 And life **2** will not stay longer than your love,
 Since it depends on that love of yours.
 Therefore I do not need to fear the worst kind of harm,
 Since the least of them will cause me to die.
 I see that a better state **3** is available to me,
 Than being dependent on your disposition.
 You cannot trouble me with your personality,
 Since my life hangs on your changes of heart.
 Oh what a happy right I have over you:
 Happy to have your love, happy to die!
 But what is so beautiful and blessed that it does not fear corruption?
 You may be unfaithful, and I don't know it yet.

1 It is not clear whether this refers to the speaker's life or the young man's.

2 Again, it is unclear whether this refers to the speaker's life or the young man's life. If the latter, this could be a threat.

3 Heaven, presumably.

Sonnet 93

Shakespeare

So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
 Like a deceived husband; so love's face
 May still seem love to me, though altered new:
 Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place.
 5 For there can live no hatred in thine eye,
 Therefore in that I cannot know thy change.

Shakescleare Translation

I will live this way **1**, believing that you are faithful,
 Like a deceived husband; in this way, love's face
 May still seem like love to me, even though it has just been changed:
 Your appearance is present, but your heart is elsewhere.
 Since your eyes cannot hold signs of hatred,
 I cannot know the change of your heart.

1 This continues the argument of the previous sonnet.

In many's looks, the false heart's history
Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange,
But heav'n in thy creation did decree
10 That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;
Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,
Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.
How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,
If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show.

In many people's faces, the deceitful heart
Is expressed in moods, frowns, and strange wrinkles,
But heaven mandated, in creating you,
That love should always live in your sweet face;
Whatever your thoughts, or what is happening in your heart,
Your looks should tell of sweetness and nothing else.
How much like Eve's apple does your beauty become,
If your sweet virtue does not reflect your appearance.

Sonnet 94

Shakespeare

They that have pow'r to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others are themselves as stone,
Unmovèd, cold, and to temptation slow,
5 They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense.
They are the lords and owners of their faces;
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flow'r is to the summer sweet,
10 Though to itself it only live and die.
But if that flow'r with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity.
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

Shakescleare Translation

People who have the power to hurt, but will not do any,
Who do not do the thing that they most seem to be doing,
Who move others but are themselves like stone ¹,
Unmoved, cold, and slow to respond to temptation,
They correctly inherit heaven's blessings,
And manage nature's riches so that they are not wasted.
They are the masters of their own emotions;
Others are only the caretakers of their ² virtues.
The summer's flower is sweet to the summer,
Although by itself it only lives and dies.
But if that flower meets a disgusting infection ³,
The lowliest weed surpasses its dignity.
Sweetest things turn the most sour by the wrong actions;
Lilies that are rotten smell far worse than weeds.

¹ I.e. emotionally unmoved.

² "Their" could also refer to "the lords and owners," suggesting that the "stewards" do not possess their own excellence but only look after it for those who are greater.

³ Also moral corruption.

Sonnet 95

Shakespeare

How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame
Which, like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name!
O in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
5 That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
Making lascivious comments on thy sport,
Cannot dispraise but in a kind of praise;
Naming thy name blesses an ill report.
O what a mansion have those vices got
10 Which for their habitation chose out thee,
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turns to fair that eyes can see!
Take heed, dear heart, of this large privilege;
The hardest knife ill used doth lose his edge.

Shakescleare Translation

You make shame sweet-smelling and lovely
Which, like an infection in the fragrant rose,
Taints the beauty of your growing reputation!
Oh, you encase your sins in such sweet beauty!
A person that tells stories about you,
Making lustful comments on your pleasure,
He cannot help but turn his insult into a praise;
The using of your name blesses a bad report.
Oh what a glorious body houses those bad deeds,
Which chose you as their home,
Because that is where beauty covers every stain,
And where all things the eyes can see become beautiful!
Take care, dear heart, of this large privilege;
The hardest knife badly used loses its edge ¹.

¹ Like the previous sonnet, here the speaker warns the young man not to undermine their beauty with immoral actions.

Sonnet 96

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness,
 Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
 Both grace and faults are loved of more and less;
 Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.
 5 As on the finger of a thronèd queen
 The basest jewel will be well esteemed,
 So are those errors that in thee are seen
 To truths translated, and for true things deemed.
 How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,
 10 If like a lamb he could his looks translate;
 How many gazers mightst thou lead away,
 If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state!
 But do not so. I love thee in such sort,
 As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Some say that your flaw is youth, some say it is promiscuity,
 Some say your charm is youthfulness and noble past-times;
 High- and low-born people love these charms and flaws;
 You turn faults into charm, when they flock to you.
 As on the finger of a crowned queen
 The smallest jewel will be highly prized,
 Those flaws that you have are also
 Translated into virtues, and judged to be virtues.
 How many lambs could the stern wolf deceive,
 If he could transform his looks into those of a lamb?
 How many onlookers could you mislead,
 If you used all the powers of all your condition!
 But do not do so. I love you in such a way that
 Since you are mine, your good reputation is also mine .

 This is the same exact couplet that ends Sonnet 36.

Sonnet 97

Shakespeare

How like a winter hath my absence been
 From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
 What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
 What old December's bareness everywhere!
 5 And yet this time removed was summer's time,
 The teeming autumn big with rich increase,
 Bearing the wanton burthen of the prime,
 Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease.
 Yet this abundant issue seemed to me
 10 But hope of orphans, and unfathered fruit.
 For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
 And thou away, the very birds are mute.
 Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
 That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.

Shakescleare Translation

How like a winter my absence for you has been
 You are the pleasure of a quickly-passing year!
 What freezing cold I have felt, what dark days I have seen!
 The bleakness of old December  was everywhere!
 And yet this time away was also like summer,
 The fertile autumn had a bountiful harvest ,
 Bearing the playful offspring from the prime of the year,
 Like widows pregnant after the death of their husbands.
 Yet this abundant produce seemed to me
 No more than the hope of orphans and fatherless fruit,
 Since summer and its pleasures depend on you,
 And when you are away, even the birds are mute.
 Or if they sing, it is in such a low mood
 That the leaves look pale, dreading the approach of winter.

 Winter was often compared with the old age of the year.

 Perhaps referring to the speaker's production of poems in the absence of the young man.

Sonnet 98

Shakespeare

From you have I been absent in the spring,
 When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
 Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
 That heavy Saturn laughed and leapt with him.
 5 Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of different flow'rs in odor and in hue,
 Could make me any summer's story tell,
 Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew.
 Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
 10 Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
 They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
 Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
 Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,
 As with your shadow I with these did play.

Shakescleare Translation

I have been separated from you all spring,
 When multi-colored April, all dressed up,
 Has put a youthful spirit in everything,
 So that heavy Saturn  laughed and danced with him.
 Yet neither the songs of the birds, nor the sweet smell
 Of flowers different in scent and color,
 Could make me tell any story of summer,
 Or pluck the flowers from the proud earth.
 Nor did I wonder at the whiteness of the lily,
 Nor praise the deep red of the rose;
 They were only sweet, no more than appearances of delight,
 Drawn after you, you who are the archetype of all of them.
 And it still seemed like winter, and, you were away,
 I played with these as if I were playing with your shadow .

 Saturn was considered the planet of melancholy, and associated with the slower and denser humors that made it literally "heavy" in both physical and emotional sense.

 "Representation" or "reflection," the image without the substance.

Sonnet 99

Shakespeare

The forward violet thus did I chide:
 Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that
 smells,

Shakescleare Translation

I chastised the early  violet in this way:
 "Sweet thief, where did you steal your sweet smell,
 If not from my lovers's breath? The proud purple color

 Also meaning "impertinent."

If not from my love's breath? The purple pride
 5 Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells
 In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.
 The lily I condemnèd for thy hand,
 And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair;
 The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
 10 One blushing shame, another white despair;
 A third, nor red nor white, had stol'n of both,
 And to his robb'ry had annexed thy breath;
 But for his theft, in pride of all his growth
 A vengeful canker ate him up to death.
 15 More flow'rs I noted, yet I none could see
 But sweet or color it had stol'n from thee.

Which is on the complexion of your soft cheeks
 You have dyed excessively in my love's veins."
 I condemnèd the lily for stealing its whiteness from your hand,
 And the marjoram buds had stolen their curls from your hair;
 The roses stood by anxiously on their thorns,
 One blushing red with shame, another white with despair,
 A third, neither red nor white, had stolen from both colors,
 And even added to his stolen goods the sweetness of your breath;
 But for his theft, at the peak of his growth
 A vengeful caterpillar ate him to death.
 I saw more flowers ¹, but I could see none
 That had not stolen their smell or color from you.

¹ This Sonnet has 15 lines, and the extra line seems to mark the difficulty of registering all the things that have stolen their beauty from the young man.

Sonnet 100

Shakespeare

Where art thou, Muse, that thou forget'st so long
 To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
 Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
 Dark'ning thy pow'r to lend base subjects light?
 5 Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem
 In gentle numbers time so idly spent;
 Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
 And gives thy pen both skill and argument.
 Rise, resty Muse; my love's sweet face survey,
 10 If time have any wrinkle graven there;
 If any, be a satire to decay,
 And make time's spoils despisèd everywhere.
 Give my love fame faster than time wastes life;
 So thou prevent'st his scythe and crookèd knife.

Shakescleare Translation

Where are you, my Muse, that you forgot for so long
 To speak of that person who gives you all your power?
 Are you wasting your inspiration on some worthless song,
 Dulling your power to brighten some lowly subjects?
 Return, forgetful Muse, and immediately make up for
 The time that you spent writing noble verses;
 Sing to the ear that appreciates your songs,
 And gives your pen its ability to write and its subject.
 Rise, sleepy Muse; examine my love's sweet face,
 See if Time has carved any wrinkles there;
 If it has, then mock its power of decay,
 And make time's triumph hated everywhere.
 Give my love fame faster than time wastes life;
 So that you stop Time's sickle and his crooked knife.

Sonnet 101

Shakespeare

O truant Muse, what shall be thy amends
 For thy neglect of truth in beauty dyed?
 Both truth and beauty on my love depends;
 So dost thou too, and therein dignified.
 5 Make answer, Muse: wilt thou not haply say
 Truth needs no color, with his color fixed,
 Beauty no pencil, beauty's truth to lay;
 But best is best if never intermixed?
 Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
 10 Excuse not silence so, for 't lies in thee
 To make him much outlive a gilded tomb,
 And to be praised of ages yet to be.
 Then do thy office, Muse. I teach thee how
 To make him seem long hence as he shows now.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh absent Muse, how will you compensate
 For your neglect of truth that is dyed ¹ with beauty?
 Both truth and beauty depend on my love;
 And so are you, and you are made worthy by it.
 Answer me, Muse: won't you perhaps say:
 "Truth does not need any color, since it has his ² own color,
 Beauty does not need a pencil to apply beauty's truth.
 The best things are best when not mixed with other things."
 But because my lover doesn't need praise, are you going to stay mute?
 Do not excuse this silence, since you can
 Make my beloved outlive a golden tomb ³,
 And have him be praised through time to come.
 Then do your duty, Muse. I will teach you how
 To make my beloved appear for a long time as he does now.

¹ Like a cloth dyed in a particular color.

²

³ Just as in Sonnet 55, poetry will enable the young man to outlive any monument.

Sonnet 102

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming;
 I love not less, though less the show appear.
 That love is merchandised whose rich esteeming
 The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.
 5 Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
 When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
 As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
 And stops his pipe in growth of riper days.
 Not that the summer is less pleasant now
 10 Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
 But that wild music burthens every bough,
 And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
 Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,
 Because I would not dull you with my song.

My love is stronger, although it seems weaker;
 I don't love less, though my love shows less.
 Love is made commercial when its high esteem
 Is publicized everywhere by its owner.
 Our love was new, and then in the springtime,
 When I was inclined to celebrate it with my poems,
 As a [nightingale](#) ¹ sings in the beginning of summer,
 And stops to do so when summer advances towards fall.
 Not that the summer is less pleasant now
 Than when she [silenced the night with her sad songs](#) ²,
 But now every branch is weighed down with wild music,
 And sweet expensive things have lost their appeal by becoming cheap.
 Therefore, like the nightingale, I sometimes stay silent,
 Because I wouldn't like to [bore you](#) ³ with my song.

¹ In Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses*, Philomela was turned into a nightingale.

² The nightingale in this sonnet is specifically named to be Philomela, who, in ancient mythology, was kidnapped and raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, who cut off her tongue so that she would not reveal the crime. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Philomela is turned into a nightingale, and sings sad songs.

³ Also "make you seem dull."

Sonnet 103

Shakespeare

Alack, what poverty my muse brings forth,
 That having such a scope to show her pride,
 The argument all bare is of more worth
 Than when it hath my added praise beside!
 5 O blame me not if I no more can write!
 Look in your glass, and there appears a face
 That overgoes my blunt invention quite,
 Dulling my lines and doing me disgrace.
 Were it not sinful then, striving to mend,
 10 To mar the subject that before was well?
 For to no other pass my verses tend
 Than of your graces and your gifts to tell;
 And more, much more than in my verse can sit
 Your own glass shows you, when you look in it.

Shakescleare Translation

Dear me, what bad poetry my muse produces,
 That despite having such a [range](#) ¹ in which to show her prowess,
 The subject matter of the poem is more valuable
 Than when it has my praise added to it!
 Oh don't blame me if I can't write any more!
 Look in your mirror, and there is a face
 That surpasses my lame creative powers,
 Making my verses dull, and disgracing me.
 Would it not be a sin, trying to improve something,
 And ruining something that was good before?
 Since my verses strive for no other goal
 But to tell your beauty and excellent qualities;
 And more, much more, than what my verse can praise
 Your own mirror shows you, when you look in it.

¹ This may refer to the young man, who has a great range of qualities that could be praised.

Sonnet 104

Shakespeare

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
 For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
 Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
 Have from the forests shook three summers' pride;
 5 Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned
 In process of the seasons have I seen;
 Three April p'rfumes in three hot Junes burned,
 Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
 Ah yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
 10 Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
 So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
 Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived.
 For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred:
 Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

Shakescleare Translation

To me, beautiful friend, you can never be old,
 For as you were when I first saw your gaze.
 Your beauty seems no less now. Three cold winters
 Have passed, shaking the leaves out of the trees;
 Three beautiful springs have turned into yellow autumn
 During the progress of the seasons that I have seen;
 Flowers from three Aprils have burned in three hot Junes
 Since I first saw you, you who are still young.
 Ah but beauty, like the hand of a clock,
 Sneaks away from my lover, without any hint of motion;
 So your sweet color, which I think remains the same,
 Is changing, and my eye may be deceived.
 Out of fear for this, hear this, you generations yet unborn:
 Before you were born, the summer of beauty was dead.

Sonnet 105

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Let not my love be called idolatry,
 Nor my beloved as an idol show,
 Since all alike my songs and praises be
 To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
 5 Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
 Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
 Therefore my verse to constancy confined,
 One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
 Fair, kind, and true is all my argument,
 10 Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words;
 And in this change is my invention spent—
 Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
 Fair, kind, and true have often lived alone,
 Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

Don't let my love be called idolatry,
 And don't say that my lover appears as an idol,
 Since my songs and praises are all the same,
 Dedicated to one person, about one person, and will always be like this.
 My love is the same **1** today, and the same tomorrow,
 Consistent in its wonderful excellence;
 Therefore my verse, restricted to fidelity,
 Expresses one thing only, leaving out difference.
 My verse has one theme: that you are "fair, kind, and true,"
 And all I do is describe this theme in different words;
 And this rewording is where my creative powers are spent,
 Three themes in one **2**, a wonderful range of subject matter.
 Fair, kind, and true have often lived alone,
 But the three **3**, until now, have never existed in one person.

1 "Kind" can mean "the same" and also "benevolent."

2 In one person.

3 In emphasizing the three different virtues combined in the lover, this sonnet plays with Christian language of the trinity.

Sonnet 106

Shakespeare

When in the chronicle of wasted time
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,
 5 Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
 I see their antique pen would have expressed
 Ev'n such a beauty as you master now.
 So all their praises are but prophecies
 10 Of this our time, all you prefiguring,
 And for they looked but with divining eyes,
 They had not skill enough your worth to sing.
 For we which now behold these present days,
 Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

Shakescleare Translation

When in the history of past time,
 I see descriptions of the most beautiful people,
 And that beauty making beautiful old poems
 Praising ladies who are now dead and lovely knights;
 Then in the praise **1** of the most beautiful things,
 Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of forehead,
 I see that the writers of the past would have expressed
 The beauty that you effortlessly possess now.
 So their praises were only prophecies
 Of the present, all of them predicting you.
 And because they only looked through their predictions,
 They did not have enough skill to praise you properly:
 For we, who can actually see the present days,
 Have eyes to admire you with, but lack tongues **2** to praise.

1 A "blazon" is a list of beautiful qualities of a woman that the writer wished to praise.

2 The speaker seems to be tongue-tied again.

Sonnet 107

Shakespeare

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
 Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
 Can yet the lease of my true love control,
 Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
 5 The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured
 And the sad augurs mock their own preságe;
 Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
 And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
 Now with the drops of this most balmy time
 10 My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes,
 Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.
 And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
 When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

Shakescleare Translation

Neither my fears nor the prophetic soul
 Of the whole world, imagining the future,
 Can control the lease **1** of my true love,
 Which is thought to be subject to a certain destruction.
 The mortal moon has experienced her own eclipse **2**,
 And the sad prophets now refute their own predictions;
 Uncertainties **3** now appear to be certain,
 And peace brings eternal olive branches. **4**
 Now with the healing drops **5** of this time
 My lover looks young, and even death submits to me,
 Since despite death I will live in this poor poetry,
 While he rules over boring and mute tribes.
 And you in this poem will find your memorial,
 When kings' crests and brass tombs are worn away.

1 Either the length of the young man's life, or the length of the speaker's own love.

2 Possibly an allusion to the death of Elizabeth I, who was associated with images of chastity, including the moon.

3 Possibly an allusion to the confusion about who would succeed Queen Elizabeth I after her death, which was resolved by the crowning of James I.

4 A symbol of peace.

5 Balm refers to the resin of certain trees, which has various healing properties. It was sometimes used in coronation ceremonies.

Sonnet 108

Shakespeare

What's in the brain that ink may character
Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit?
What's new to speak, what now to register,
That may express my love or thy dear merit?
5 Nothing, sweet boy; but yet, like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same,
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Ev'n as when first I halloved thy fair name.
So that eternal love in love's fresh case
10 Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page,
Finding the first conceit of love there bred
Where time and outward form would show it dead.

Shakescleare Translation

What thought in my mind that ink can represent
That has not represented to you my true spirit?
What is new to speech, or what new to writing,
That can express my love or your excellent quality?
Nothing, sweet boy; but, like holy prayers,
I must write my love for you every day,
Considering no old thing old, you mine, I yours ,
Just like when I first honored your beautiful name.
So that eternal love in love's new body
Does not suffer the dust and harm of aging,
Or provide a place for wrinkles to appear,
But makes old age forever his page .
Finding the first idea of love grown from there
Where time and appearance makes it look like it's dead.

 This phrase might be one of the "old things," or clichés, that the speaker repeats. Or it could follow from the verb, "Counting," suggesting that the speaker repeats this phrase over and over again.

 "Page" also means servant.

Sonnet 109

Shakespeare

O never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify.
As easy might I from myself depart
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie.
5 That is my home of love; if I have ranged,
Like him that travels I return again,
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
So that myself bring water for my stain.
Never believe, though in my nature reigned
10 All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good.
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose; in it thou art my all.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh never say that I was unfaithful,
Although my absence seemed to diminish my passion.
It would be easier to part me from myself
Than to leave my soul behind, which lies in your chest.
Your heart is the home of my love; if I have strayed,
Like a traveler I am coming home again,
At the appointed time, unchanged by the passing of time,
So that I can wash away the stain of my absence.
Never believe, although my nature is dominated by
All the weaknesses that besiege all kinds of blood,
That I could be so absurdly corrupted
To exchange all your goodness for something worthless.
I call the whole universe worthless,
Except you, my rose. In it you are my everything.

Sonnet 110

Shakespeare

Alas 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offenses of affections new.
5 Most true it is that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely; but by all above,
These blenches gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love.
Now all is done, save what shall have no end;
10 Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confined.
Then give me welcome, next my heav'n the best,
Ev'n to thy pure and most most loving breast.

Shakescleare Translation

Alas it is true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a fool in front of everyone,
Cut up my own thoughts, sold cheaply what is more precious,
Repeated old offenses because of new passions.
It is true that I have treated fidelity
In an unfriendly way; but despite this,
These sideways glances  rejuvenated my affections,
And bad experiences proved that you are the best.
Now all that is done, except for what will last forever;
I will no longer whet my appetite
With new lovers, to test an older friend,
Who is a god of love, and to whom I belong.
Then please, welcome me into what is next to heaven:
Your pure and most loving heart.

 Or infidelities.

Sonnet 111

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

O for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
 The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
 That did not better for my life provide
 Than public means which public manners breeds.
 5 Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
 And almost thence my nature is subdued
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand:
 Pity me then, and wish I were renewed,
 Whilst like a willing patient I will drink
 10 Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection;
 No bitterness that I will bitter think,
 Nor double penance, to correct correction.
 Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure ye,
 Ev'n that your pity is enough to cure me.

Oh blame fortune ¹ for my sake,
 The goddess responsible for my harmful actions,
 Who did not provide me with better life
 That of living in the public eye, which breeds public manners ².
 Thus it has happened that my name has been disgraced ³,
 And that has almost entirely dominated my nature
 To the medium it works in ⁴, like the cloth's dyer's hand:
 Have pity on me, and wish that I can be restored,
 While I will, like a willing patient, drink
 Bitter potions to cure my strong infection;
 There is no bitterness that I will think of as bitter,
 Nor will I consider it a second act of penance to correct again something
 that has been corrected.
 Pity me then, dear friend, and I assure you,
 Just your pity is enough to cure me.

¹ Fortune was the pagan goddess that governed all chance events.

² Or "common manners".

³ Criminals were sometimes branded so that everyone would know their crime.

⁴ I.e. the public eye.

Sonnet 112

Shakespeare

Your love and pity doth th' impression fill
 Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow;
 For what care I who calls me well or ill,
 So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow?
 5 You are my all the world, and I must strive
 To know my shames and praises from your tongue;
 None else to me, nor I to none alive,
 That my steeled sense or changes right or wrong.
 In so profound abysm I throw all care
 10 Of others' voices, that my adder's sense
 To critic and to flatt'rer stoppèd are.
 Mark how with my neglect I do dispense:
 You are so strongly in my purpose bred
 That all the world besides methinks y'are dead.

Shakescleare Translation

Your love and sympathy fills in ¹ the mark
 That a public disgrace has stamped on my forehead;
 But what do I care who calls me good or bad,
 Since you cover my badness, and accept my goodness?
 You are all the world to me, and I must strive
 To know my disgrace and praise from your speech;
 No one else exists for me, or I to anyone alive,
 And you change right and wrong in my stubborn mind.
 Into a deep abyss I through all worries
 About other peoples' opinions, so that my deaf mind
 Is closed to critics and flatterers.
 See how I neglect everything:
 You are so much a part of my plan
 That the whole world besides me thinks you are dead.

¹ To "fill in" the mark could be to erase it or to make it even more visible.

Sonnet 113

Shakespeare

Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
 And that which governs me to go about
 Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
 Seems seeing, but effectually is out;
 5 For it no form delivers to the heart
 Of bird, of flow'r, or shape which it doth latch.
 Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch;
 For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
 10 The most sweet favor or deformed'st creature,
 The mountain, or the sea, the day, or night,
 The crow, or the dove, it shapes them to your feature.
 Incapable of more, replete with you,
 My most true mind thus makes mine untrue.

Shakescleare Translation

Since I left you, what I see is only in my mind,
 And the eye that directs me when I am walking
 Gives up his function, and is partly blind,
 And seems to see, but is effectively blind.
 Since it does not deliver images to the heart ¹
 A bird, a flower, or any shape that it grasps,
 The mind ² can't contain the living objects that the eye sees,
 Nor in its own vision can it hold what it sees.
 Since if it sees the most vulgar, or the gentlest sight,
 The sweetest sight or the most deformed creature,
 The mountain, or the sea, the day or the night,
 The crow or the dove, it transforms them into you.
 Incapable ³ of receiving more, since it is full with you,
 My mind is so true ⁴ that it makes mine ⁵ untrue ⁶.

¹ The heart was thought to be the central organ in which passions and senses were processed, and not the brain.

² In this sonnet the mind and the heart seem to be the same entity.

³ The first usage of this word, according to the OED.

⁴ "True" in the sense of faithful or loyal in love.

⁵ Scholars disagree about what "mine" refers to, but the line seems to suggest that the speaker's love has disrupted their ability to perceive the external world.

⁶ "Untrue" in the sense of false or inaccurate.

Sonnet 114

Shakespeare

Or whether doth my mind, being crowned with you,
 Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery?
 Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,
 And that your love taught it this alchemy,
 5 To make of monsters and things indigest
 Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,
 Creating every bad a perfect best
 As fast as objects to his beams assemble?
 O 'tis the first; 'tis flattery in my seeing,
 10 And my great mind most kingly drinks it up.
 Mine eye well knows what with his gust is greening,
 And to his palate doth prepare the cup.
 If it be poisoned, 'tis the lesser sin
 That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.

Shakescleare Translation

Or is my mind, being full of thoughts of you,
 Drinking up the plague of kings, this flattery? ¹
 Or should I say that my eye is correct,
 And your love taught it this alchemy, ²
 Making monsters and disgusting things
 Look like angels that resemble your beautiful self,
 Creating from every bad thing a perfect thing
 As fast as objects are seen by the eye?
 Oh, the first is true: it is the flattery of my vision,
 And my great mind drinks it up like a king.
 My eye knows my mind's taste ³ very well,
 And prepares a drink to please his palate.
 If it is poisoned, it is still not the greatest crime,
 Because my eye loves the poison, and drinks it first.

¹ Shakespeare's plays often register the danger that flattery poses to kings. What flatters here is the young man's beauty.

² Like alchemy, which aimed to turn worthless metals into gold, the speaker's eye turns monsters into angels.

³ Or, "What the mind would like to see." In this metaphor, the eye is a servant, tasting a cup before offering it to the king, and the mind is the king, who will drink the cup.

Sonnet 115

Shakespeare

Those lines that I before have writ do lie,
 Ev'n those that said I could not love you dearer.
 Yet then my judgment knew no reason why
 My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.
 5 But reck'ning time, whose millioned accidents
 Creep in 'twixt vows, and change decrees of kings,
 Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
 Divert strong minds to the course of alt'ring things.
 Alas, why, fearing of time's tyranny,
 10 Might I not then say, "Now I love you best,"
 When I was certain o'er uncertainty,
 Crowning the present, doubting of the rest?
 Love is a babe; then might I not say so,
 To give full growth to that which still doth grow?

Shakescleare Translation

The lines that I have written before are lies,
 Even those that said that I could not love you more.
 But then my judgment didn't have reason to believe
 That my most perfect passion would later be more intense.
 But taking into account time, whose millions of chance events
 Come between promises and change the decrees of kings,
 Ruin sacred beauty, and blunt the most eager intentions,
 And divert strong minds into the course of mutable things.
 Alas, fearing time's tyranny, why
 Could I not have said, "I love you most right now,"
 When I was certain beyond any uncertainty,
 Certain of my present, and suspecting everything else?
 Love is a baby; so why can't I say that, ¹
 To make fully grown what is still growing?

¹ "I love you best right now."

Sonnet 116

Shakespeare

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove.
 5 O no, it is an ever-fixed mark
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
 Love's not time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 10 Within his bending sickle's compass come:
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Shakescleare Translation

Let me not to the marriage of two true minds,
 Admit ¹ any obstacles. Love is not love
 If it changes when it encounters any changes ²,
 Or agrees to withdraw when another removes his love ³.
 Oh no, love is a mark always fixed in place
 That looks down on storms and is never shaken;
 It is the star that guides every boat lost at sea,
 Whose worth is unknown, although its height can be measured.
 Love is not time's fool, although rosy lips and cheeks
 Come within the range of time's sickle ⁴:
 Love does not change with time's short hours and weeks,
 But endures even until the edge of death.
 If this is untrue, and I am proved wrong,
 I never wrote, and no man ever loved.

¹ As in "to accept" or "to let in."

² I.e. changes in the other person.

³ Or "ceases to love."

⁴ Time is figured as the reaper, coming to cut down every living thing with his scythe.

Sonnet 117

Shakespeare

Accuse me thus: that I have scanted all
Wherein I should your great deserts repay,
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day;
5 That I have frequent been with unknown minds,
And giv'n to time your own dear purchased right;
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds
Which should transport me farthest from your sight.
Book both my willfulness and errors down,
10 And on just proof surmise accumulate.
Bring me within the level of your frown,
But shoot not at me in your wakened hate,
Since my appeal says I did strive to prove
The constancy and virtue of your love.

Shakescleare Translation

Accuse me like this: that I have neglected everything
That I should have done to repay your great rewards,
Forgot to call upon your dearest love,
Which all bonds tie me to every day,
That I have frequently been with strangers,
And given to time the right that you bought expensively;
That I have myself raised the sail to all the winds
That transport me furthest from your sight.
Record both my willfulness and errors,
And add suspicions to this list of just accusations.
Bring me into the range of your frown,
But do not shoot at me with your awakened hatred
Since my defense is that I did strive to prove
The constancy and power of your love.

Sonnet 118

Shakespeare

Like as to make our appetites more keen
With eager compounds we our palate urge;
As, to prevent our maladies unseen,
We sicken to shun sickness when we purge;
5 Ev'n so, being full of your ne'er-cloying sweetness,
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding;
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness
To be diseased ere that there was true needing.
Thus policy in love, t' anticipate
10 The ills that were not, grew to faults assured,
And brought to medicine a healthful state
Which, rank of goodness, would by ill be cured;
But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

Shakescleare Translation

Just as we, to sharpen our appetites,
Stimulate our palates with strong mixtures;
Just so, to prevent illnesses we have not foreseen,
We become sick by purging to avoid sickness.
Even so, being full of your sweetness, which is never too much,
I ate bitter sauces to help my appetite ¹;
And, sick of good health, found it suitable
To make myself sick before I actually became sick.
This cunning strategy of love, to anticipate
Future problems, became a problem in itself, ²
And caused a healthy state to need medicine
Which, full of goodness, would be cured by badness;
And from this I learn, and find the lesson true,
Medicine poison him who became sick of you

¹ An excuse for the speaker's infidelity, also mentioned in the previous sonnet.

² The speaker's policy, of practicing infidelity in order to strengthen their love, has actually caused his love to become weaker.

Sonnet 119

Shakespeare

What potions have I drunk of siren tears,
Distilled from limbecks foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
Still losing when I saw myself to win!
5 What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never!
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted
In the distraction of this madding fever!
O benefit of ill, now I find true
10 That better is by evil still made better;
And ruined love when it is built anew
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
So I return rebuked to my content,
And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent.

Shakescleare Translation

What potions ¹ have I drunk, made from siren ² tears,
Distilled from vessels as foul as the pits of hell,
Using fears to remedy hopes, and hopes to remedy fears,
Still losing when I anticipated winning!
What wretched mistakes my heart has committed,
While it thought itself to be never more blessed!
My eyes have burst out of their sockets,
In the confusion of this maddening fever!
Oh the benefit of badness is that I now know it is true
That something good is made even better by evil; ³
And ruined love, when it is built up again,
Grows more beautiful, stronger, and greater than before.
So I return, chastized, to my contentment,
And gain by evil three times more than I have spent.

¹ Can be both medicinal, or intoxicating.

² Sirens are mythical sea monsters that have the heads of beautiful women and the bodies of birds. They sing beautiful songs that lead sailors to shipwreck.

³ Presumably "by comparison with evil."

Sonnet 120

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

That you were once unkind befriends me now,
 And for that sorrow which I then did feel
 Needs must I under my transgression bow,
 Unless my nerves were made of brass or hammered steel.
 5 For if you were by my unkindness shaken,
 As I by yours, you've passed a hell of time,
 And I, a tyrant, have no leisure taken
 To weigh how once I suffered in your crime.
 O that our night of woe might have rememb'ed
 10 My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,
 And soon to you as you to me then tendered
 The humble salve which wounded bosoms fits!
 But that your trespass now becomes a fee;
 Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

The fact that you were once unkind is a friend to me now,
 And for the sorrow that I felt back then,
 I would feel for my own transgression ,
 Unless my nerves were made of brass or hammered steel.
 For if you were shaken by my unkindness,
 As I was by yours, you must have gone through hell,
 And I, like a tyrant, have not considered
 How I once suffered similarly under your crime.
 Oh if our night of sadness could have reawakened
 My deepest feeling, how hard true sorrow hits,
 And if only I had tended to you as quickly as you did to me
 The humble  remedy that heals wounded hearts!
 But your offense now becomes a fee;
 My mistake forgives yours, and yours must forgive me.

 The speaker has made a mistake, possibly the infidelity mentioned in Sonnet 118.

 Humility itself infuses the remedy.

Sonnet 121

Shakespeare

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,
 When not to be receives reproach of being,
 And the just pleasure lost which is so deemed
 Not by our feeling but by others' seeing.
 5 For why should others' false adulterate eyes
 Give salutation to my sportive blood?
 Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
 Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
 No, I am that I am, and they that level
 10 At my abuses reckon up their own;
 I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel.
 By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown,
 Unless this general evil they maintain:
 All men are bad, and in their badness reign.

Shakescleare Translation

It's better to be vile than to have a vile reputation,
 When not to be (vile) is reproached for being (vile),
 And the legitimate pleasure is lost when it is labeled as vile
 Not by our feeling but by others who see us.
 For why should the false and unfaithful eyes of others,
 Point out my playful behavior?
 Or why should weaker people spy on my weaknesses,
 Which in their desires seem bad what I think is good?
 No, I am what I am, and those who aim
 At my flaws should count their own sins;
 Maybe I am straight, and they are crooked.
 My actions shouldn't be revealed by their disgusting thoughts,
 Unless they maintain this universal maxim:
 All men are bad, and they prevail in their wickedness.

Sonnet 122

Shakespeare

Thy gift, thy tables, are within my brain
 Full characterized with lasting memory,
 Which shall above that idle rank remain
 Beyond all date, ev'n to eternity;
 5 Or at the least, so long as brain and heart
 Have faculty by nature to subsist;
 Till each to razed oblivion yield his part
 Of thee, thy record never can be missed.
 That poor retention could not so much hold,
 10 Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score;
 Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
 To trust those tables that receive thee more;
 To keep an adjunct to remember thee
 Were to import forgetfulness in me.

Shakescleare Translation

Your gift , your note-book, is in my brain
 Written in lasting memory,
 Which will remain above the rank of physical things
 Beyond all end, even to eternity;
 Or at the least, as long as the brain and the heart
 Have their natural faculty of survival;
 Until they have submitted to erased oblivion their parts
 Of you, your memory can never be forgotten.
 That weak receptacle of memory  could not hold so much,
 Nor do I need records to remind me of my love for you;
 Therefore I gave away the book,
 To trust my memory to retain your image better;
 To keep a helper to remember you
 Would imply I could forget you.

 The speaker seems to be excusing the loss of a composition book that was a gift from the young man.

 The note-book.

Sonnet 123

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change.
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
 They are but dressings of a former sight.
 5 Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
 What thou dost foist upon us that is old,
 And rather make them born to our desire
 Than think that we before have heard them told.
 Thy registers and thee I both defy,
 10 Not wond'ring at the present nor the past;
 For thy records and what we see doth lie,
 Made more or less by thy continual haste.
 This I do vow and this shall ever be:
 I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.

No! Time, you will not boast that I change.
 Your pyramids, built up with new power
 To me are not new or strange;
 They are only versions of what has been seen before.
 Our lifetimes are brief, and therefore we admire
 Whatever old thing you force on us,
 And rather make them suit our desires
 Than think that we have heard of them before.
 I defy both your history books and you,
 Refusing to admire the present or the past;
 For your records and what we see both deceive,
 And are made unreliable as time passes.
 But I promise this, and it will always be true:
 I will be true ¹, despite you, time, and your destruction.

¹ "True" can mean "faithful in love" or "true in speech," or both.

Sonnet 124

Shakespeare

If my dear love were but the child of state,
 It might for Fortune's bastard be unfathered,
 As subject to time's love or to time's hate,
 Weeds among weeds, or flow'rs with flowers gathered.
 5 No, it was builded far from accident;
 It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
 Under the blow of thrallèd discontent,
 Whereto th' inviting time our fashion calls.
 It fears not policy, that heretic,
 10 Which works on leases of short numb'rd hours.
 But all alone stands hugely politic,
 That it nor grows with heat nor drowns with showers.
 To this I witness call the fools of time,
 Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

Shakescleare Translation

If my love was only a product of circumstances,
 It might be considered the illegitimate child of Fortune,
 And made subject to time's love or hate,
 A weed among weeds, or a flower among flowers.
 No, it was built far away from accident;
 It does not experience the vulnerability of kings,
 Or falls because of the disapproval of its own subjects,
 Which is the fashion that these inviting days call for.
 It is not afraid of strategy, that heretic,
 Whose influence only lasts for a short time.
 But stands all alone, very prudently,
 So that it does not grow with heat ¹, or drown in showers. ²
 As witnesses to this I call those who are the fools of time,
 Who die for goodness, when they have lived for crime.

¹ I.e. experience distracting desires.

² I.e. experience distraction from flattery.

Sonnet 125

Shakespeare

Were't ought to me I bore the canopy,
 With my extern the outward honoring,
 Or laid great bases for eternity,
 Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
 5 Have I not seen dwellers on form and favor
 Lose all and more by paying too much rent,
 For compound sweet forgoing simple savor,
 Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent?
 No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
 10 And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
 Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
 But mutual render, only me for thee.
 Hence, thou suborned informer! A true soul
 When most impeached stands least in thy control.

Shakescleare Translation

Would it mean anything to me if I held the canopy ¹,
 Honoring with an outward showing of dignity,
 Or if I put down the foundations to ever-lasting monuments,
 Which prove to be more short-lived than waste itself or ruin ²?
 Have I not seen those who live for beauty and favor
 Lose everything and more by spending too much
 On lavish, sweet things instead of simple flavors,
 Those pitiful spenders, who spend too much by looking?
 No, let me be obedient in your heart,
 And take my simple but free offering,
 Which is unadulterated and undecieving,
 In return I can only offer what is mine for what is yours.
 Go away, you false witnesses ³! A true soul,
 Even when accused of terrible things, is least in your power.

¹ This refers to the canopy held over a monarch at a state occasion, a role reserved for people of high social status.

² A complicated way of saying, as in earlier sonnets, that all monuments will be subject to decay and destruction.

³ Referring back to those ambitious people mentioned earlier in the sonnet, who flatter and deceive in order to be successful.

Sonnet 126

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy pow'r
 Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle hour,
 Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
 Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st—
 5 If nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
 As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,
 She keeps thee to this purpose: that her skill
 May time disgrace, and wretched minute kill.
 Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure;
 10 She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure.
 Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
 And her quietus is to render thee.
 ()
 ()

Oh you, my lovely boy, in your power
 You hold time's fickle hourglass, ¹ his sickly hour ²,
 Aging has made you grow more beautiful, and in doing so you reveal
 The withering of your lovers, as your sweet self grows--
 If nature, who is the queen and master of destruction,
 Will jerk you back as you proceed towards death,
 She is keeping you for this reason: so that her skill
 Can disgrace time, and destroy his wretched minutes.
 But you, the subject of her pleasure, ³ should still fear her;
 She may detain you from death, but not ultimately keep you from it.
 Her bill, although delayed, must eventually be paid,
 And the satisfaction of her debt is to give you up.
 ()
 () ⁴

¹ As previous sonnets have argued, time causes everything to change. The hourglass is a symbol of time's constant work.

² A play on words: time is often represented as a reaper, carrying a sickle, and time also causes the sickness and death of all things.

³ The cause of nature's pleasure and therefore also someone who is vulnerable to changes in her desire.

⁴ The sonnet ends with a rhyming couplet and then these blank bracketed lines. The shape of the brackets (really parentheses) might symbolize death's scythe.

Sonnet 127

Shakespeare

In the old age black was not counted fair,
 Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name.
 But now is black beauty's successive heir,
 And beauty slandered with a bastard shame.
 5 For since each hand hath put on nature's pow'r,
 Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face,
 Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bow'r,
 But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
 Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
 10 Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem
 At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
 Sland'ring creation with a false esteem.
 Yet so they mourn, becoming of their woe,
 That every tongue says beauty should look so.

Shakescleare Translation

In olden times, dark coloring ¹ was not seen as fair, ²
 Or if it was considered fair it wasn't called beautiful.
 But now, black is beauty's next heir,
 And beauty is slandered with the shame of illegitimacy.
 Since each hand has captured nature's power,
 Making a foul face fair with the false and borrowed face of cosmetics,
 Sweet beauty has no legitimate title to claim, and no sacred temple,
 But is defiled or, if not, then it lives in disgrace.
 Therefore my mistress' eyes are black like ravens,
 Her eyes are dressed similarly, and they look like they are in mourning
 For those who, not born beautiful, have become beautiful,
 Slandering nature with a false reputation ³.
 But those dark eyes mourn, looking so good in their sorrow,
 That everyone says beauty should look dark like them.

¹ Sonnet 127 begins a series of sonnets that refer to a woman who has dark eyes and dark hair, who scholars sometimes call "The Dark Lady," but who here is only ever called "my mistress."

² Fair means both "beautiful" and "light-colored."

³ Cosmetics give nature a false reputation, perhaps, because they make nature seem like something that can be improved or surpassed.

Sonnet 128

Shakespeare

How oft when thou, my music, music play'st
 Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
 With thy sweet fingers, when thou gently sway'st
 The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
 5 Do I envy' those jacks that nimble leap
 To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
 Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
 At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand.
 To be so tickled they would change their state
 10 And situation with those dancing chips,
 O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
 Making dead wood more blest than living lips.
 Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
 Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

Shakescleare Translation

How often when you, who are my music, play music
 On that blessed wood instrument, which vibrates
 With your sweet fingers, and when you gently move
 The harmony of strings that amazes my ears,
 I envy those keys that leap nimbly
 To kiss the tender inside of your hand,
 While my poor lips, which should be collecting the harvest of your kiss,
 Stand blushing at the boldness of the wooden keys.
 To be tickled like that, my lips would gladly change place
 With those dancing wooden blocks,
 Over which your fingers walk with gentle steps,
 Making dead wood more blessed than living lips.
 Since those cheeky upstarts ¹ are so happy to be there,
 Give them your fingers, but give me your lips to kiss.

¹ "Jacks" refers not only to the keys but also to impolite or low-born people.

Sonnet 129

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action, and till action, lust
 Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
 5 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bait
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so,
 10 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

The spending of spirits in a wasteful and shameful act ¹
 Is the activity of lust, and, until the real action, lust
 Is unfaithful, murderous, bloody, and deserving of blame,
 Savage, violent, crude, cruel, untrustworthy;
 It is no sooner enjoyed but it is hated straight after;
 It is sought unreasonably, and no sooner had
 But it is hated unreasonably, as a swallowed bait ²
 That was laid intentionally to make whoever takes it mad:
 Mad when they pursue it, and mad when they have it,
 Violent in having, having had, and wanting to have more;
 Blissful to taste, but miserable to have tasted;
 Before consummation, it is a joy promised; after, a mere dream.
 All the world knows this but no one knows it well enough
 To resist the heaven of lust, which leads men to this hell ³.

¹ The sexual act described here is wasteful, unlike the productive acts mentioned in earlier sonnets.

² Bait, in hunting, allures and then kills.

³ Also a slang term for vagina.

Sonnet 130

Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
 If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head;
 5 I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
 And in some perfumes is there more delight
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
 10 That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
 I grant I never saw a goddess go;
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
 As any she belied with false compare.

Shakescleare Translation

My mistress's eyes are nothing like the sun;
 Coral is far redder than the red of her lips;
 If snow is white, then her breasts are a dull brown;
 If hairs are wires ¹, black wires grow on her head;
 I have seen Damask roses ², red and white,
 But I do not see the color of roses in her cheeks;
 And some perfumes are more delightful
 Than the breath that reeks out of my mistress.
 I love to hear her speak, but I also know that
 That music has a much more pleasing sound.
 I admit that I never saw a goddess walking, ³
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
 But, by heaven, I think my love ⁴ as rare
 As any other woman misrepresented by false comparisons.

¹ Poets in Shakespeare's time would often compare the hair of women with golden wire.

² The color of Damask roses is usually pink, somewhere between white and strong red.

³ When goddesses walk, they float; they do not touch the ground.

⁴ As elsewhere, there is an ambiguity in the phrase "my love," which can mean either "my lover" or "the love that I have for my lover."

Sonnet 131

Shakespeare

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
 As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
 For well thou know'st, to my dear dotting heart
 Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
 5 Yet in good faith some say, that thee behold,
 Thy face hath not the pow'r to make love groan.
 To say they err I dare not be so bold,
 Although I swear it to myself alone;
 And to be sure that is not false, I swear
 10 A thousand groans but thinking on thy face;
 One on another's neck do witness bear
 Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
 In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
 And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.

Shakescleare Translation

You are as tyrannous as you are ¹,
 As cruel as those whose beauty proudly makes them cruel;
 For as you know well, to my tender dotting heart,
 You are the most beautiful and most precious jewel.
 Yet some who have seen you say, in all honesty,
 That your face does not have the power to make love itself groan.
 I dare not be so bold to say that they are wrong,
 Although I swear to myself that you do make love groan;
 And to be sure that this is not false, I swear
 A thousand groans just by thinking of your face,
 Which come one after another, to attest
 That your blackness is the most beautiful in my judgment ².
 You are not black in any way, other than in your actions,
 And that is where, I think, this slander against you comes from.

¹ The speaker's mistress is such a tyrant that they can't be compared to anyone else, therefore they must be compared to themselves.

² This has another possible meaning: that the mistress's beauty is more beautiful inside the speaker's judgment than it is in the real world.

Sonnet 132

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Thine eyes I love, and they, as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain;
5 And truly, not the morning sun of heav'n
Better becomes the gray cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the ev'n
Doth half that glory to the sober west,
As those two mourning eyes become thy face.
10 O let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me, since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part.
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

I love your eyes, and they, as if pitying me,
Knowing that your heart torments me with its disdain,
Have put on black, and have become loving mourners,
Looking on my pain with pretty compassion;
And truly, not even the morning ¹ sun
Looks as good in the gray clouds of the eastern sky,
Nor does the shining star that bring forth the evening
Look half as good in the calm western sky,
As those two mourning eyes look on your face.
Oh let it then suit your heart as well
To mourn for me, since mourning suits you,
And mourning dress ² suits your pity in every way.
Then I will swear that beauty herself is black,
And anyone who doesn't have your complexion is foul.

¹ A play on "mourning".

² i.e. the wearing of blackness, which is compared here to the dark eyes of the speaker's lover.

Sonnet 133

Shakespeare

Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me;
Is't not enough to torture me alone,
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be?
5 Me from myself thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou harder hast engrossed;
Of him, myself, and thee I am forsaken,
A torment thrice threefold thus to be crossed.
Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward,
10 But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail.
Whoe'er keeps me, let my heart be his guard;
Thou canst not then use rigor in my jail.
And yet thou wilt, for I being pent in thee,
Perforce am thine, and all that is in me.

Shakescleare Translation

Curse that heart that makes my heart groan
For that deep wound it gives to my friend ¹ and me;
Is it not enough to torture me,
Must you also completely make my friend your slave?
Your cruel eye has taken me from myself,
And you have possessed my next self ² even more powerfully;
I have been deserted by him, myself, and you,
A triple torment multiplied three times to be crucified like this.
Prison my heart in the steel custody of your chest,
But let my poor heart be the bail for my friend's heart.
Whoever imprisons me, let my heart protect him;
Then you cannot use cruelty in my prison.
And yet you will, since I am imprisoned in you,
I am yours by force ³, and all that is in me is yours.

¹ Here it is implied that the speaker's cruel mistress has also seduced the young man, perhaps one of the black "deeds" that is mentioned in Sonnet 132.

² i.e. the friend.

³ "Perforce" means violently or necessarily.

Sonnet 134

Shakespeare

So now I have confessed that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,
Myself I'll forfeit, so that other mine
Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still.
5 But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
For thou art covetous, and he is kind.
He learned but surety-like to write for me,
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
10 Thou usurer, that put'st forth all to use,
And sue a friend came debtor for my sake;
So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
Him have I lost; thou hast both him and me;
He pays the whole, and yet am I not free.

Shakescleare Translation

So now I have admitted that he is yours,
And I am contractually bound ¹ to your will,
I will give myself up, so that the other me ²
You will return to be my comfort once again.
But you will not, nor does he wish to be free,
For you are greedy, and he is kind.
He learnt to write only to stand as my forfeit,
And in that bond he is bound as strongly as I am.
You will exercise the full rights of your beauty,
You money-lender, using everything for profit,
And will sue my friend ³, who became a debtor for my sake;
I have lost him because of my mistreatment of him.
I have lost him; you have both him and me;
He pays the whole debt, and yet I am not free.

¹ Financial language of lending and paying returns again, but this time in a three-part relationship. The mistress has bound both the speaker and the young man bound to her because the young man was the speaker's guarantor when he borrowed from the mistress, and now she compels the young man pay with his love the speaker's debt.

² The young man.

³ The legal metaphor implies the fear that the mistress will pursue the young man.

Sonnet 135

Shakespeare

Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy Will,
And Will to boot, and Will in overplus;
More than enough am I, that vex thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
5

Shakescleare Translation

Other women may have their wish come true, but you have your Will ¹,
And Will additionally, and Will in excess;
I am more than enough, annoying you still,
To your sweet will making my addition like this ².

¹ The

Wilt thou, whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine?
 Shall will in others seem right gracious,
 And in my will no fair acceptance shine?
 The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
 10 And in abundance addeth to his store;
 So thou, being rich in Will, add to thy Will
 One will of mine, to make thy large Will more.
 Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill;
 Think all but one, and me in that one Will.

Will you, whose will is large and spacious,
 Not once allow me to hide my will in yours?
 Shall other people's will seem attractive,
 While my will gets no kind attention from you?
 The sea is all water but still it receives rain,
 And in abundance adds it to its store;
 So you, being rich in Will ¹, should add to your Will ²
 One more will ³ from me, to make your Will larger ⁴.
 Let no ungenerous refusals kill any handsome suitors;
 Consider all of them ⁵ as one, and me in that one Will.

¹ As in Sonnet 20, what is referred to as an "addition" to the body of a woman may be a penis.

³ Having lots of desire or possessing the speaker's love.

⁴ Desire.

⁵ Wish.

⁶ Referring to the mistress's desire or, alternatively, to make the speaker's penis become erect.

⁷ The speaker refers either to all of his mistress's wishes or all of her suitors.

Sonnet 136

Shakespeare

If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
 Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy Will,
 And will, thy soul knows, is admitted there;
 Thus far for love my love-suit sweet fulfill.
 5 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.
 Then in the number let me pass untold,
 10 Though in thy store's account I one must be.
 For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold
 That nothing me, a something sweet to thee.
 Make but my name thy love, and love that still;
 And then thou lov'st me, for my name is Will.

Shakescleare Translation

If your soul stops me from coming so close to you,
 Tell your blind soul that I was your Will ¹,
 And will, as your soul knows, is allowed to enter there ²;
 Do that much for love and sweetly fulfill my love-suit ³.
 "Will" ⁴ will fill up the treasure chest of your love,
 Yes, fill it full with wills ⁵, and with my one will ⁶.
 In something that can fit many things inside (like your vagina),
 A single thing in it is not worth counting on its own.
 So, among those many men who fill you up, let me be uncounted,
 Although I must be considered a part of your complete tally of men.
 Consider me to be nothing, provided that
 My being nothing is sweet to you.
 Just love only my name, and love it always;
 And then you will love me, since my name is Will.

¹ As in Sonnet 135, "will" can refer to desire, to the penis or to the first name of the poet.

² "There" might refer to the mistress's presence, into which the speaker begs to be admitted, or her body.

³ The speaker's romantic pursuit of his mistress.

⁴ This could refer, as before, to the poet or to their penis.

⁵ Desires.

⁶ The speaker's desire or his penis.

Sonnet 137

Shakespeare

Thou blind fool love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
 That they behold, and see not what they see?
 They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
 Yet what the best is take the worst to be.
 5 If eyes corrupt by over-partial looks
 Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
 Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
 Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?
 Why should my heart think that a several plot
 10 Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?
 Or mine eyes, seeing this, say this is not,
 To put fair truth upon so foul a face?
 In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,
 And to this false plague are they now transferred.

Shakescleare Translation

Love ¹, you blind fool, what have you done to my eyes,
 That they look, but do not see what they see?
 They know what beauty is, and can see where it lies,
 But they take the ugliest woman to be the most beautiful.
 If eyes, corrupted by prejudiced glances,
 Remain on the person who has slept with everyone,
 Why have you made hooks out of those false visions
 To which the judgement of my heart is tied?
 Why should my heart think it is a private possession
 When my heart knows it is publicly available ² to everyone?
 And why should my eyes, seeing this, say that it isn't true
 In order to make beautiful truth cover such a foul face?
 My heart and eyes have been unable to see the truth,
 And they have been infected by this plague of falseness.

¹ As in Cupid, the god of love.

² The speaker uses a metaphor of land ownership to imply that his mistress is sexually promiscuous.

Sonnet 138

Shakespeare

When my love swears that she is made of truth
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth
Unlearnèd in the world's false subtleties.
5 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false speaking tongue;
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
10 And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not t' have years told.
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

Shakescleare Translation

When my love swears that she is essentially faithful,
I believe her although I know she is lying,
So that she thinks I am a naive young man
Unaware of the false tricks of the world.
Thus vainly imagining that she thinks that I am young,
Although she knows that my best days are behind me,
I stupidly pretend to believe her lies;
Therefore, on both sides truth is suppressed.
But why does she not say that she is unfaithful?
And why do I not say that I am old?
Oh because love's best habit is the appearance of trust,
And older people in love do not like to hear their age discussed.
Therefore I lie with her , and she lies with me,
And in our flaws we are flattered by lies.

 This could mean that the speaker and his mistress are lying to each other and also that they are lying in bed together.

Sonnet 139

Shakespeare

O call not me to justify the wrong
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart.
Wound me not with thine eye, but with thy tongue;
Use pow'r with pow'r, and slay me not by art.
5 Tell me thou lov'st elsewhere; but in my sight,
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside.
What need'st thou wound with cunning when thy might
Is more than my o'er-pressed defense can bide?
Let me excuse thee: Ah, my love well knows
10 Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries.
Yet do not so, but since I am near slain,
Kill me out'rght with looks, and rid my pain.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh do not ask me to excuse the harm
That your unkindness has caused to my heart. 
Do not hurt me with your expression, but by speaking;
Use your power directly, and don't hurt me subtly.
Tell me you love someone else; but while I can see you,
My love, please stop looking at other people.
Why do you need to wound in such a cunning way, when your power
Is stronger than what my overwhelmed defense can bear?
Let me make excuses for you: "Ah, my love knows well that
Her pretty glances have hurt me,
And therefore she turns her eyes away from my face,
So that they might hurt someone else instead."
But actually don't do that, but since I am almost dead anyway,
Kill me directly with your looks, and put me out of my misery.

 Or, alternatively, "the harm that you unkindly blame me of."

Sonnet 140

Shakespeare

Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain,
Lest sorrow lend me words, and words express
The manner of my pity-wanting pain.
5 If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
Though not to love, yet love, to tell me so,
As testy sick men, when their deaths be near,
No news but health from their physicians know.
For if I should despair, I should grow mad,
10 And in my madness might speak ill of thee.
Now this ill-wresting world is grown so bad,
Mad slanderers by mad ears believed be.
That I may not be so, nor thou belied,
Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go
15 wide.

Shakescleare Translation

Be as wise as you are cruel; do not torment
My silent patience with too much disdain,
In case my sorrow makes me express myself
And the pitiful  pain that I am in.
If I could teach you common sense, it would be better
To tell me you love me even when you don't,
Just as irritable sick men, who are near their deaths,
Hear no news from their doctors other than they are healthy.
For, if I despair, I would go crazy,
And in my madness I might speak badly of you.
Now this cynical world has grown so bad
That mad insults are believed by mad ears. 
So that I do not spread bad words about you, or have you be slandered,
Look straight at me , even if your heart is wandering.

 And also "lacking in pity."

 The speaker may be threatening to slander his lover.

 This can also mean "look honest."

Sonnet 141

Shakespeare

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,
 For they in thee a thousand errors note;
 But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
 Who in despite of view is pleased to dote.
 5 Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted,
 Nor tender feeling to base touches prone,
 Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited
 To any sensual feast with thee alone.
 But my five wits, nor my five senses, can
 10 Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
 Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man,
 Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be.
 Only my plague thus far I count my gain,
 That she that makes me sin awards me pain.

Shakescleare Translation

Truly, I do not love you with my eyes,
 Which notice a thousand flaws in you;
 It is my heart that loves what my eyes despise,
 Who in despite of the sight, is happy to love you.
 Nor are my ears delighted by hearing your voice,
 Nor are my tender feelings inspired by your crude touch,
 Nor taste, nor smell, want to be invited
 To any banquet of senses ¹ with you alone.
 But neither my five faculties ², nor my five senses, can
 Dissuade my foolish heart from obeying you,
 Which leaves behind the appearance of masculinity,
 To be the slave and vassal of your heart.
 However I count my disease so far as a gain,
 Since she, making me sin, rewards me ³ with pain.

¹ This sonnet plays on the "gradis amoris" theme, listing how the senses are pleasantly stimulated by the lover.

² The five mental faculties were believed to be common sense, imagination, fantasy, right estimation and memory.

³ This could be a reference to the eternal torments of hell that are the reward of sin and, at the same time, to the pain that the speaker already experiences.

Sonnet 142

Shakespeare

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
 Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving.
 O but with mine compare thou thine own state,
 And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
 5 Or, if it do, not from those lips of thine,
 That have profaned their scarlet ornaments
 And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine,
 Robbed others' beds' revénués of their rents.
 Be it lawful I love thee as thou lov'st those
 10 Whom thine eyes woo as mine impórtune thee.
 Root pity in thy heart, that when it grows,
 Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.
 If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
 By self-example mayst thou be denied.

Shakescleare Translation

Love is my sin, and your best virtue is hate,
 You hate my sin, both of them come from sinful love.
 Oh, if you would only compare my state with yours,
 You would see that it does not deserve to be condemned;
 Or, if it does, at least not by your lips,
 Which have disgraced their scarlet ornaments ¹,
 And kissed the lips of others in unfaithful liasons as often as mine ²,
 Robbing other people of the sex to which they have a right.
 Let it be lawful for me to love you as you love those
 Who your eyes woo even as mine beg for your attention.
 Plant pity in your heart, so that when it grows,
 Through pity you may deserve to be pitied.
 If you seek to have what you are hiding ³ from others,
 You would be denied it by your own example.

¹ The lips' redness is compared to scarlet robes, perhaps those of a priest.

² This could either mean that the lover's lips have kissed the lips of others as often as they have kissed the speaker.

³ Referring to pity again, which also used to refer to the ability to request sexual favors from someone else.

Sonnet 143

Shakespeare

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch
 One of her feathered creatures broke away,
 Sets down her babe and makes all swift dispatch
 In púrsuit of the thing she would have stay;
 5 Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
 Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent
 To follow that which flies before her face,
 Not prizing her poor infant's discontent:
 So run'st thou after that which flies from thee,
 10 Whilst I, thy babe, chase thee afar behind.
 But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me,
 And play the mother's part, kiss me, be kind.
 So will I pray that thou mayst have thy Will,
 If thou turn back and my loud crying still.

Shakescleare Translation

Behold, as an anxious housewife runs to catch
 One of her birds, that has broken out of its cage,
 She puts down her baby and makes haste
 In pursuit of the thing that she would like to keep;
 While her neglected child runs after her,
 Crying to catch her, whose busy care is focused
 To follow that thing fleeing just ahead of her,
 Neglecting her poor child's unhappiness:
 Similarly, you run after that which runs away from you,
 While I, your baby, chase you from far behind.
 But if you catch the thing you want, turn back to me,
 And play the role of the mother, kiss me, be kind.
 So I will pray that you have your Will ¹,
 If you turn back and stop my loud crying.

¹ As in earlier sonnets, this means "your desire," "your

William," and perhaps also, "the penis that belongs to you."

Sonnet 144

Shakespeare

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
Which, like two spirits, do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worse spirit a woman colored ill.
5 To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turned fiend
10 Suspect I may, but not directly tell;
But being both from me both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

Shakescleare Translation

I have two loves, one of comfort and one of despair,
Which, like two spirits, tempt me:
They better angel is a very beautiful man,
And the worse spirit a evil-colored woman.
To seduce me to hell , my female evil
Tempt my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to become a devil,
Seducing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether my angel is turned into monster
I can only suspect, but not directly know;
But since both are absent from me and friends with each other,
I guess that the one angel is in another's hell.
Yet I will never know this, and must live in doubt,
Until my bad angel burns  my good one.

 Also a slang term for "vagina" in Shakespeare's time.

 Burn with the fires of her hell, perhaps, or with the sting of sexually transmitted disease.

Sonnet 145

Shakespeare

Those lips that love's own hand did make
Breathed forth the sound that said "I hate"
To me that languished for her sake;
But when she saw my woeful state,
5 Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue that, ever sweet,
Was used in giving gentle doom,
And taught it thus anew to greet:
"I hate" she altered with an end
10 That followed it as gentle day
Doth follow night, who like a fiend
From heav'n to hell is flown away.
"I hate" from hate away she threw,
And saved my life, saying "not you."

Shakescleare Translation

Those lips that love's own hand made
Breathed out the sound that means "I hate"
To me, who was yearning for her love;
But when she saw my sorrowful state,
Her heart immediately became merciful,
Chastising that tongue which, always sweet,
Was used to offer gentle judgments,
And taught it to greet me in a different way:
She changed "I hate," with a different ending
That followed it like noble day
Follows night, which like a monster
Flies away from heaven to hell.
She tore the words "I hate" away from hate
And saved my life, by adding "not you."

Sonnet 146

Shakespeare

Poor soul, the center of my sinful earth,
[Thrall to] these rebel pow'rs that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
5 Why so large cost, having so short a lease,

Shakescleare Translation

My poor soul, which is the centre of my sinful body,
Dressed in the rebel powers of the body,
Why do you starve within the body and suffer poverty,
Decorating your outer walls  with such costly splendor?
Why do you spend so much on such a short lease

 The "outer walls" of the soul are, presumably, the body.

Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
 Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
 Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
 10 And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
 Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
 Within be fed, without be rich no more.
 So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
 And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

In a fading mansion that you will only stay shortly?
 Will worms, the inheritors of this excess,
 Eat up what you have spent? Is this how the body will end?
 Then, soul, live instead on your servant's loss ²,
 And let it starve to increase your store;
 Buy divine terms ³ by selling worthless hours;
 Be well fed within, and do not be rich on the outside.
 In this way, you will feed on death, which feeds on men,
 And once death itself is dead, there will be no more dying.

² Some moral restraint, perhaps.

³ A "divine term" might refer to eternity, as opposed to the mortal hours of the body, or the favourable terms of a contract with God.

Sonnet 147

Shakespeare

My love is as a fever, longing still
 For that which longer nurseth the disease,
 Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
 Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.
 5 My reason, the physician to my love,
 Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
 Hath left me, and I desp'rate now approve
 Desire is death, which physic did except.
 Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
 10 And frantic mad with evermore unrest,
 My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
 At random from the truth vainly expressed;
 For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
 Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

Shakescleare Translation

My love is like a fever, still longing
 For the thing that makes the disease last longer,
 Feeding on the thing that preserves the harm,
 To please the fickle, sickly appetite.
 My reason, which is the doctor of my love-sickness,
 Became angry that his advice was not followed,
 And has left me. And I, now desperate, accept that
 Desire, which my doctor forbade me, is indeed deadly.
 I am past cure, now that reason no longer cares for me,
 Frantic and mad with increasing unrest,
 My thoughts and my speech are like a madman's,
 Wandering between truth and ridiculous expressions;
 This is because I swore that you were fair, and thought you were bright,
 You who are are black as hell and dark as night.

Sonnet 148

Shakespeare

O me! what eyes hath love put in my head,
 Which have no correspondence with true sight!
 Or, if they have, where is my judgment fled,
 That censures falsely what they see aright?
 5 If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
 What means the world to say it is not so?
 If it be not, then love doth well denote
 Love's eye is not so true as all men's: no,
 How can it? O how can love's eye be true,
 10 That is so vexed with watching and with tears?
 No marvel then, though I mistake my view;
 The sun itself sees not till heaven clears.
 O cunning love! With tears thou keep'st me blind,
 Lest eyes well seeing thy foul faults should find.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh! What kind of eyes has love put into my head,
 Which have no correspondence with what is truly there!
 Or, if they do, where has my judgment gone,
 So that I judge as false what they see correctly?
 If the thing that my false eyes dote upon is beautiful,
 Why does the world say that it is not so?
 If it is not, then love does improve what it sees
 Love's eye is not as accurate as everyone else's: No,
 How can it be? Oh, how can love's eye be true,
 When it is so irritated from staying up and crying?
 No wonder, then, that I see inaccurately;
 The sun itself does not see until the sky clears up.
 Oh clever love! You keep me blind with tears,
 In case the eyes, seeing accurately, find your foul flaws.

Sonnet 149

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not,
 When I against myself with thee partake?
 Do I not think on thee, when I forgot
 Am of myself, all, tyrant, for thy sake?
 5 Who hateth thee that I do call my friend?
 On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon?
 Nay, if thou lour'st on me, do I not spend
 Revenge upon myself with present moan?
 What merit do I in myself respect,
 10 That is so proud thy service to despise,
 When all my best doth worship thy defect,
 Commanded by the motion of thine eyes?
 But, love, hate on, for now I know thy mind;
 Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

Can you, oh cruel one, say that I don't love you,
 When I take your side against myself?
 Do I not think about you, even when I forget
 I have my own interests, all for your sake, you tyrant?
 Who hates you that I call my friend?
 On whom do you frown that I fawn over?
 No, if you frown on me, don't I inflict
 Revenge upon myself with a moan?
 What quality do I have to call my own,
 That is proud enough not to want to serve you,
 When all of my best qualities worship your flaws
 Commanded by the motion of your eyes?
 But, love, keep on hating, for now I know what you think;
 You love those who see clearly, and I am blind.

 As in the previous sonnet, the rest of the world can see that the speaker's mistress is flawed.

Sonnet 150

Shakespeare

O from what pow'r hast thou this pow'rful might,
 With insufficiency my heart to sway,
 To make me give the lie to my true sight,
 And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
 5 Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
 That in the very refuse of thy deeds
 There is such strength and warrantise of skill
 That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds?
 Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
 10 The more I hear and see just cause of hate?
 O, though I love what others do abhor,
 With others thou shouldst not abhor my state.
 If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
 More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

Shakescleare Translation

Oh, from what power do you get this powerful might,
 Which controls my heart with insufficiency,
 To make me deny what I truly see,
 And swear that brightness does not beautify the day?
 From where do you get this power to make ugly things beautiful,
 That in the least noble of your actions
 There is such strength and guarantee of skill
 That, in my mind, your worst is better than the best of anything else?
 Who taught you how to make me love you more,
 The more I hear and see reasons to hate you?
 Oh, although I love what others hate,
 You should not abhor my love with others.
 If your unworthiness provoked love in me,
 I am even more worthy of your love.

 The speaker seems to be claiming that his mistress controls him by making him feel that he is insufficient.

 Given the proximity of "abhor" and "whore," this phrase might also mean "while sleeping with others".

Sonnet 151

Shakespeare

Love is too young to know what conscience is,
 Yet who knows not conscience is born of love?
 Then, gentle cheater, urge not my amiss,
 Lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove;
 5 For, thou betraying me, I do betray
 My nobler part to my gross body's treason.
 My soul doth tell my body that he may
 Triumph in love—flesh stays no father reason,
 But, rising at thy name, doth point out thee
 10 As his triumphant prize—proud of this pride,
 He is contented thy poor drudge to be,
 To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.
 No want of conscience hold it that I call
 Her "love" for whose dear love I rise and fall.

Shakescleare Translation

Love  is too young to know what conscience is,
 But who doesn't know that conscience is born of love?
 Then, gentle cheater, do not accuse me of being evil,
 In case you prove yourself to be guilty of my faults.
 Since, when you betray me, I reveal
 My noble soul to be betrayed by my lowly body.
 My soul tells my body that he may
 Triumph in love, and the flesh doesn't wait any longer,
 But, rising at your name, and points you out
 As his triumphant prize—proud of this pride,
 He is happy to be your poor servant,
 To stand in your duties, and fall by your side.
 It is not from lack of a sense of duty that I call
 Her "love," since for her love I rise and I fall.

 Cupid, the god of love, is portrayed as a baby.

 An erection.

Sonnet 152

Shakespeare

Shakescleare Translation

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn;
 But thou art twice forsworn to me love swearing,
 In act thy bed-vow broke and new faith torn,
 In vowing new hate after new love bearing.
 5 But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
 When I break twenty? I am perjured most,
 For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee,
 And all my honest faith in thee is lost;
 For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness,
 10 Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy,
 And, to enlighten thee, gave eyes to blindness,
 Or made them swear against the thing they see.
 For I have sworn thee fair: more perjured eye,
 To swear against the truth so foul a lie.

In loving you I know I am being unfaithful;
 But you break two vows by swearing love to me:
 You broke your wedding vows by adultery, and you tore apart a new
 relationship
 By hating him, breaking your vow to love your new lover.
 But why do I accuse you of breaking two vows,
 When I break twenty? I have lied the most,
 Since all my vows are promises to abuse you,
 And all my honest trust in you is lost.
 For I have sworn deep oaths that you are deeply kind,
 Oaths about your love, truthfulness, and constancy,
 And, to give me you seem better than you are, made myself blind,
 Or made others deny what they saw.
 For I have sworn you are fair ¹: the eye ² is the worst liar,
 To swear against the truth to support such a foul lie.

¹ Fair as in both "beautiful" and "bright".

² The speaker confesses his guilt in lying to preserve a fair image of the mistress, when she is not fair.

Sonnet 153

Shakespeare

Cupid laid by his brand and fell asleep.
 A maid of Dian's this advantage found,
 And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
 In a cold valley-fountain of that ground,
 5 Which borrowed from this holy fire of love
 A dateless lively heat, still to endure,
 And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove
 Against strange maladies a sovereign cure.
 But at my mistress' eye love's brand new fired,
 10 The boy for trial needs would touch my breast;
 I, sick withal, the help of bath desired,
 And thither hied, a sad distempered guest,
 But found no cure; the bath for my help lies
 Where Cupid got new fire—my mistress' eye.

Shakescleare Translation

Cupid put his torch ¹ down and fell asleep.
 One of Diana ²'s nymphs took advantage of this situation
 And quickly plunged his love-kindling torch
 Into a cold spring in a valley nearby,
 Which borrowed the fire of love from the torch
 An eternal and vital heat, which still endures,
 And became a bubbling bath which men still use,
 The best cure against strange diseases.
 But love's torch is lighted again by my mistress's eye,
 And Cupid, wanting to test it, touched my breast with it;
 I, sick with love, and desired the help of the bath,
 And went there as a sad, diseased guest.
 However, I found no cure; the only bath that can help lies
 Where Cupid got his new fire—my mistress's gaze.

¹ Cupid holding a torch sometimes symbolizes Platonic love (love between minds, not bodies) but here it seems to be an instrument of phallic, sexual love.

² Roman goddess of the moon, chastity, and hunting. Goes by "Artemis" in Greek mythology.

Sonnet 154

Shakespeare

The little love-god lying once asleep
 Laid by his side his heart-inflaming brand,
 Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep
 Came tripping by; but in her maiden hand
 5 The fairest votary took up that fire,
 Which many legions of true hearts had warmed;
 And so the general of hot desire
 Was, sleeping, by a virgin hand disarmed.
 This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
 10 Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,
 Growing a bath and healthful remedy
 For men diseased; but I, my mistress' thrall,
 Came there for cure, and this by that I prove:
 Love's fire heats water; water cools not love.

Shakescleare Translation

The little love God, once lying asleep
 Put down by his side his heart-inflaming torch,
 While many nymphs that swore to remain chaste
 Came walking by. But, in her virgin hand,
 The most beautiful of all who had vowed virginity took the torch,
 Which had warmed many faithful hearts;
 And so the commander of hot desire
 Was, while sleeping disarmed by a virgin's hand.
 This torch she plunged in a cool well nearby,
 Which took endless heat from love's fire,
 Becoming a bath and a healthy remedy
 For sick men; but I, enslaved by my mistress,
 Came there for a cure, and so by that I experience I can prove this:
 Love's fire heats water, water does not cool love.

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