



2016/17 Season

The English-Speaking Union  
**National Shakespeare  
Competition**

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**Suggested  
Sonnets**





The English-Speaking Union  
National Shakespeare Competition  
**INDEX OF SUGGESTED SONNETS**

Below is a list of suggested sonnets for recitation in the ESU National Shakespeare Competition.

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*Sonnet 2*

When forty winters shall beseige 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.  
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,  
If thou couldst answer "This fair child of mine  
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,"  
Proving his beauty by succession thine.

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





*Sonnet 8*

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?  
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,  
By unions married, do offend thine ear,  
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds  
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.  
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,  
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering,  
Resembling sire and child and happy mother  
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing;  
Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,  
Sings this to thee: "Thou single wilt prove none."





*Sonnet 10*

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





*Sonnet 12*

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] silver'd o'er with white;  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 14*

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;  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 15*

When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment,  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;  
When I perceive that men as plants increase,  
Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky,  
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,  
And wear their brave state out of memory;  
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay  
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.







*Sonnet 17*

Who will believe my verse in time to come  
If it were filled with your most high deserts?  
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb  
Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.  
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  
Be scorned like old men of less truth than tongue,  
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage  
And stretched meter of an antique song.  
But were some child of yours alive that time,  
You should live twice—in it and in my rhyme.





*Sonnet 18*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 20*

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;  
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,  
Much steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.  
And for a woman wert thou first created,  
Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,  
And by addition me of thee defeated  
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.  
But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,  
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.





*Sonnet 23*

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;  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 27*

Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,  
But then begins a journey in my head  
To work my mind when body's work's expired.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 29*

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone bewep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 30*

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;  
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,  
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
The sad account of fore-bemoaned 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.

*Sonnet 34*





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?  
'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;  
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss.  
Th' 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.







*Sonnet 40*

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.  
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 willful taste of what thyself refuseth.  
I do forgive thy robb'ry, gentle thief,  
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.





*Sonnet 43*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 53*

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.  
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;  
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 like none, none you, for constant heart.

*Sonnet 54*





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 odour which doth in it live.  
The canker blooms have full as deep a dye  
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,  
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly  
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses;  
But, for their virtue only is their show,  
They live unwooded and unrespected fade,  
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so;  
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made:  
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,  
When that shall fade, my verse distills your truth.





*Sonnet 55*

Not marble, nor the gilded [monuments]  
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 60*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 61*

Is it thy will 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?  
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.  
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.





*Sonnet 62*

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.  
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  
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.







*Sonnet 63*

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  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 65*

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?  
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out  
Against the wreckful 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,  
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 [of] beauty can forbid?  
O, none, unless this miracle have might,  
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.





*Sonnet 66*

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,  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 69*

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, even so as foes commend.  
[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,  
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,  
The solve is this, that thou dost common grow.





*Sonnet 71*

No longer mourn for me when I am dead  
Then 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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 76*

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?  
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,  
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.

*Sonnet 78*





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.  
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing  
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,  
Have added feathers to the learned's wing  
And given grace a double majesty.  
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,  
Whose influence is thine and born of thee.  
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,  
And arts with thy sweet graces graced be.  
    But thou art all my art and dost advance  
    As high as learning my rude ignorance.





*Sonnet 83*

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.  
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,  
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.







*Sonnet 90*

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 afterloss.  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 91*

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,  
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,  
Some in their garments, though newfangled ill,  
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 97*

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!  
And yet this time removed was summer's time,  
The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,  
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,  
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease.  
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me  
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.





*Sonnet 102*

My love is strengthened, though more weak in seeming;  
I love not less, though less the show appear.  
That love is merchandized whose rich esteeming  
The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.  
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 her pipe in growth of riper days.  
Not that the summer is less pleasant now  
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.





*Sonnet 104*

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,  
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned  
In process of the seasons have I seen,  
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,  
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.  
Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,  
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.





*Sonnet 113*

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;  
For it no form delivers to the heart  
Of bird, of flower, 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,  
The most sweet favor or deformed'st creature,  
The mountain or the sea, the day or night,  
The crow or dove, it shapes them to your feature.  
Incapable of more, replete with you,  
My most true mind thus maketh mine [eye] untrue.





*Sonnet 116*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 120*

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 brass or hammered steel.  
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 remembered  
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.







*Sonnet 121*

'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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 124*

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 flowers with flowers gathered.  
No, it was builded far from accident;  
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls  
Under the blow of thrall'd discontent,  
Whereto th' inviting time our fashion calls.  
It fears not policy, that heretic,  
Which works on leases of short-numbered 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.





*Sonnet 126*

O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power  
Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;  
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st  
Thy lover's withering as thy sweet self grow'st.  
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 [minutes] kill.  
Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!  
She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure.  
Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,  
And her quietus is to render thee.





*Sonnet 129*

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;  
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;  
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.





*Sonnet 130*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 131*

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.  
Yet in good faith some say that thee behold,  
Thy face hath not the power 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,  
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.





*Sonnet 138*

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,  
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.  
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?  
And wherefore say not I that I am old?  
O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,  
And age in love loves not to have years told.  
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,  
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.





*Sonnet 140*

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.  
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,  
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 wide.







*Sonnet 141*

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.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 143*

Lo, as a careful housewife runs to catch  
One of her feathered creatures broke away,  
Sets down her babe, and makes an swift dispatch  
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay,  
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 runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,  
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.





*Sonnet 144*

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 worser spirit a woman coloured ill.  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 145*

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,  
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  
That followed it as gentle day  
Doth follow night, who, like a fiend,  
From heaven to hell is flown away.  
"I hate" from hate away she threw,  
And saved my life, saying "not you."





*Sonnet 147*

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.  
My reason, the physician to my love,  
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,  
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve  
Desire is death, which physic did except.  
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,  
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.





*Sonnet 148*

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?  
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,  
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.





*Sonnet 149*

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?  
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  
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.





*Sonnet 154*

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  
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,  
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.

