

# Ambiguous Speaker and Storytelling in Shakespeare's Sonnets

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The nature of a sonnet sequence as a poetic art form is essentially two-fold: it contains self-sufficient, prosodically complex poems, each seeking to develop an idea to its conclusion; but it also typically functions as a *sequence*, an integrated work in which poems have been ordered, and characters fashioned, to make sense when the work is read from beginning to end. It seems hardly necessary to point this out; yet, while the sonnets of the Petrarchan discourse receive what appears to be continuous critical attention, acknowledgment of their “sequentiality” is rare and at best tacit. There is a need to turn critical attention to mechanisms that sonneteers employ to foster a perception of cohesion, as well as to acknowledge that such preoccupations betray the presence of novelistic thinking.

The sonnet sequence genre constructs a double sense of immediacy: drawing on the lyricism of its constituent sonnets, it also often generates a perception of a personal narrative when the sequence is read from beginning to end. Sonneteers use many speaker figures or voices in the sonnets that constitute a sequence; one of the more striking examples is certainly Petrarch's giving of the first-person plural voice to “little animals” in his sonnet 8.<sup>1</sup> Yet varied uses of voice in individual sonnets detract little, if at all, from the impression created in the mind of the reader that they are reading a love story told in the first person. The disjointed nature of the sonnet sequence “voice” is an important part of its effect. Thus, talking about the birth of the sonnet sequence vogue, Jacques Barzun writes: “[Petrarch] fashioned into a shapely quasi narrative work, a kind of allusive autobiography . . . Sonnet sequences like Petrarch's or Shakespeare's make possible a narrative-by-episode; the poet need not versify any connective matter as he must in an epic. Rather, he anticipates by five or six hundred years the technique of film and television”;<sup>2</sup> and Roland Greene considers the history of Petrarchism from the fourteenth to the twentieth century representative of the staged development of the sequence's “fictional” mode.<sup>3</sup> As such, it is a rare literary genre to offer first-person fictions to the medieval and early modern reader, and for a long time the only one to deal with erotic subject

matter in the first person.<sup>4</sup>

The link between medieval first-person genres and Dante and Petrarch, originators of the genre, is clear: St. Augustine's *Soliloquia* and *Confessions*, and Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae* are considered to be standard sources for Dante's work as well as Petrarch's *Secretum*.<sup>5</sup> The public letter, another one of Petrarch's favorite genres, also relies on the first-person voice and self-fictionalization, a unique, creative process of authored selfhood based on literary and cultural subtext, as well as the essentially documentary processes such as self-betrayal, self-representation, self-fashioning, and auto-ethnography.<sup>6</sup> Petrarch's decision to remove the first-person prose surrounding the poems in Dante's *La Vita Nuova*, the resulting complexity of his *Il Canzoniere*, and the subsequent popularity of the Petrarchan (proseless) sonnet sequence model may all have had implications for the development of first-person narration.

The context within which individual sonnets in a sequence are considered is a question of importance where sequences initially circulated in manuscript form (yet carefully numbered by their authors), such as Petrarch's *Il Canzoniere* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, are concerned. It is equally important for linear and circular sequences; seemingly disjointed or frequently revised sequences, such as Michael Drayton's *Idea*; as well as those sequences, such as Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, that have the best of both worlds: printed to be read in a linear manner yet, as James Schiffer has suggested, potentially brilliantly constructed to make the collection *seem* as if it originally had an exclusive primary audience.<sup>7</sup> Whether read more or less linearly, the voices of the sonnet sequence speakers are constructed by their authors, and it is methods used to construct them in a way that generates reader interest, sympathy, and involvement that deserve closer attention.

Perhaps, however, a caveat is in order. I have structured my analysis outside the current scholarly debate on whether all English sonnet sequences follow a tripartite, “Delian” structure that unites a sequence of sonnets, Anacraeontics, and a longer narrative poem—usually a complaint, or in Edmund Spenser's case,

*Epithalamion*—into an integral work in which each section plays a carefully orchestrated role.<sup>8</sup> I have made Shakespeare's sonnet sequence itself my primary concern for two main reasons: first, ambiguous characterization and its role in reader involvement can be traced back to Petrarch, a poet who worked two hundred years before the "Delian structure"; and second, narrativity of the complaints and the *Epithalamion* is not a category that warrants contesting.

Despite occasional mentions in critical literature of tension as an important mainstay of a sonnet sequence, little attempt has been made to examine the role that ambiguous characterization plays in building this tension. Spenser studies provide a good example. As early as 1956, J. W. Lever noted the characterization shifts in *Amoretti*, but dismissed them as "structural inconsistencies."<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Kenneth Larsen acknowledged the "unease" present in some of the sonnets, but ascribed this to insufficient poetic skill.<sup>10</sup> Carol Kaske noted the ambiguity of Spenser's speaker's character, but explained it in terms of character development, of "emotional progression from sexual conflict to Christian-humanist resolution of *Epithalamion*."<sup>11</sup> While Donna Gibbs saw irony (an invitation to the reader to sub-read) as the structural principle of *Amoretti*, she denied a division between the historic author and his first-person speaker, and thus the primacy of self-fictionalization over autobiography.<sup>12</sup> Roger Kuin acknowledged the role of characterization in promoting the narrativity of the sequence, but viewed the dynamic between the two main characters, "the unstable space (gap) between them," as the main narrative motor. He also suggested the presence of two plots in *Amoretti*, one based on the fidelity/cruelty topos, and the other on a "love conformable to . . . the bold equation of *eros* and *agape*," yet ambiguous characterization, which clearly forms the basis for both of these "plots," remains unexplored.<sup>13</sup> Lisa Klein saw the clash of "irreconcilable ethics—love as domination versus love as freely chosen submission"—as the "main conflict in Spenser's poetic tribute," but sought to examine this conflict for the insight it might provide into the author's philosophical standpoint rather than its potential for reader involvement.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps unlike any other aspect of the discussion on Shakespeare's sequence, there appears to be little critical disagreement that the character of Shakespeare's speaker is indeed ambiguous. He has been described in terms of his "anomaly" and "unpredictability,"<sup>15</sup> his "claims undercut by slippery language"<sup>16</sup> and defiance

of "sequential logic,"<sup>17</sup> as well as a "poetics of narcissism" that emerges from "relationships between consecutive sonnets that are bewilderingly unstable."<sup>18</sup> Yet the link between the speaker's contradictions and sonnet sequence integrity has not, to my knowledge, been explicitly made. Because I wish to suggest character ambiguity as the aspect bridging the space between lyric and fictional aspects of a sonnet sequence, in this essay I will look at how an ambiguous character has been built out of remodeled myth, interactions of disparagement and praise, and sophisticated voice-gendering. Then, seeking to show how character ambiguity relates to reader involvement and a sense of sonnet sequence integrity, I will propose that ambiguous characterization in a sonnet sequence triggers an intellectual and emotional response I would call splintered identification, whereby the reader simultaneously sympathizes with some of the speaker's aspects while resenting others. This process generates tension, but what may be called catharsis is never reached, so the reader's mind is recruited to connect individual lyrical units into an integral work. Instantiated by Petrarch, the mechanism draws on the tendency of a reader's narrative consciousness to make up logical connections where they appear to be missing, and is ideally suited to an environment with no conventional narrative, informed by the complexity, polarity, and viscosity of the first-person voice.<sup>19</sup>

As I have argued elsewhere, ambiguous speakers appear and perform their integrating functions in Petrarch's as well as all the major sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan period.<sup>20</sup> However, the difference between Shakespeare's and other great Elizabethan sonnet sequences lies in the degree and complexity of his main character's ambiguity, as well as in the skill with which this complexity is managed. Shakespeare's contradictory speaker stands as one of the most important elements of the artistic impact and lasting vitality of the sequence. His never-resolved ambiguities provide thematic links between the two parts of the work, inducing the reader to question the speaker's motives. This silent questioning acts as a fictional motor, fostering the perception of the sequence as an integral work with the (disjointed and contradictory) speaker at its center. The constant shifting of Shakespeare's speaker's voice could thus be seen to betray what Mikhail Bakhtin called "creative disorder and the plurality of voices" or "narrative polyphony," a sign of a novelistic principle at work within a genre.<sup>21</sup>

The question of Shakespeare's authorization of the order of the *Sonnets* is implicit in any discussion that

treats his sequence as a whole. As is well known, Shakespeare's authorization of the sequence is questioned by many, on various grounds;<sup>22</sup> more often than not, questioning authorization implies questioning the ability of the sequence to function as a work of fiction. Yet many of these doubts are presented in contradictory terms, probably due to the unease that excessive biography making of the *Sonnets* has inspired. For instance, according to Heather Dubrow, "Critics impose a narrative and dramatic framework on a sequence that resists those modes," but she subsequently proposes a variant reading that offers an alternative fiction.<sup>23</sup> Paul Ramsay denies the *Sonnets* authorization and integrity, to reaffirm them shortly afterward: "Had Shakespeare invented a story to build poems on, it would have been more . . . realized . . . What else are we to think? . . . That Shakespeare wrote some 500 sonnets creating a full story, and that only these 154 remain, sonnets 1–126 somehow having preserved chronological order?"<sup>24</sup> (What he seems to be saying is that a story is present but unfinished, and that chronological development can be perceived in sonnets 1–126.<sup>25</sup>) Helen Vendler argues, on one hand, that a lyric poem is judged memorable if the reader's "self" can seamlessly inhabit the poem's "I" (a definition of the lyric that in itself seems dangerously close to identification—a fictional, rather than lyrical, reader response usually linked to characterization), yet she also predicates the success of the sequence on Shakespeare's ability to sustain "feelings in form over 154 sonnets," which would imply a sense of integrity as crucial to the effect of the sequence.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, recent scholarship demonstrates a growing confidence in the idea of authorization. In the 2003 Arden edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, Katherine Duncan-Jones puts forward a seemingly incontrovertible case in favor of authorization,<sup>27</sup> and the traditional, bipartite structure of the sequence is also, more or less apologetically, supported or implied by many Shakespearean critics and editors since Edmond Malone.<sup>28</sup> Evidence demonstrating that Shakespeare's sonnets were not in fact written in the order in which they appear in Thomas Thorpe's 1609 edition also supports the idea of order-related authorial intent,<sup>29</sup> as does the internal evidence of deliberation, notorious for defying attempts at reordering.<sup>30</sup> Most important, exciting as it is to imagine a discovery of Shakespeare's autograph different from Thorpe's 1609 text, such a discovery would not change the cultural influence that Shakespeare's sequence exerted over the past 450 years or diminish its value as a

field of study.<sup>31</sup> On balance, in this article I will consider the order of the poems in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* to be based on Thorpe's 1609 text and indicative of authorial intent.

Even the briefest and most general of attempts to summarize Shakespeare's *Sonnets* reveals more characters than a reader of sonnet sequences is accustomed to, deployed with elements of plot and suspense. Despite the paucity of gendered pronouns,<sup>32</sup> the first part of the sequence gives the impression of being concerned primarily with the young man, and the text allows for a possibility of a homoerotic reading. The second, shorter story maps the speaker's attempts to comprehend the continued and profound emotional impact of a consummated relationship with a female protagonist. The two "stories" also have complications: jeopardy to loyalty, the rival poet, the periodic absences and suggested dalliances, and, last but not least, the speaker's devastating suspicion of an affair between his two beloveds. Both "stories" remain unresolved, and the sequence ends at the highest point of the reader's intellectual and emotional involvement, leaving a lasting impression of the speaker's emotional turmoil. It also leaves a sense that an integral work has been read.

Rather than showing neglect for the depth of Shakespeare's themes or the volumes of criticism attesting to them, this rudely brief synopsis underpins my conviction that not unlike his plays, Shakespeare's sequence works to enhance the intellectual impact of its themes by underwriting them with the emotional engagement of the audience.<sup>33</sup> Granted, a summary of a poem sequence is nothing but a snapshot of an individual receptive consciousness at work. However, it is precisely our ability to summarize—as well as the points of similarity that inevitably arise between individual retellings of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*—that suggests that the connective ability of our minds has been successfully recruited to piece a story out of 154 distinct, self-contained lyrical poems, most of which employ classic second-person address or explore complex material not directly related to the "plots." This is a remarkable feat—and one, I would like to suggest, achieved by the presence in the *Sonnets* of original decisions that are essentially novelistic. Shakespeare's sequence has two plots, combined into an overarching third story: a voice that fosters a sense of intimacy with the reader and foils its richly polyvalent subtexts; and the absence in the sequence of a professed erotic rhetorical goal, which results in a focus on the speaker's emotional outcomes beyond the pursuit of consummation.

All of these aspects of Shakespeare's sequence involve ambiguous characterization of the speaker, and none of them are to be found at the same level of development in other contemporaneous sequences.

Although his final result circuitously reclaims a fundamentally Petrarchan purpose (to tell a story of the journey of the speaker's writing self as he is abased and ennobled by a multifaceted experience of love), Shakespeare arrives at this purpose by non-Petrarchan means. Reading the *Sonnets*, the reader recognizes the speaker's frustration, which is crucial to the genre; yet its objective of sexual gratification, which the sonnet sequence reader has come to expect, is missing. Both of Shakespeare's "stories" contain non-Petrarchan elements, connected by formal means (characters recur in both "stories," the second foreshadowed in the first) as well as thematically (by themes employed in both stories). Remodeling of myth, ambiguous gendering of the speaker's voice, as well as the interaction of disparagement and praise are all such elements; they have been used to highlight the aimlessness of the sequence and dramatize the speaker's inner fluctuations between authority and weakness, enhancing the appeal of the character.

Shakespeare's speaker applies to a man what by now have become commonplaces of Petrarchan misogynist insult. Purporting to praise the addressee's beauty, he implies in the man an inability to love (10.4), an obsession with deceitful appearances (53.5–8), vacuity, lack of constancy (53.13–14), and insufficient intelligence or vanity (84.9–14). Embedded in a sonnet of praise, disparaging couplets are revealed only once the alternating rhymes have been removed:

*Look in thy glass, and there appears a face*  
 .....  
*Dulling my lines, doing me disgrace.*  
 .....  
*And more, much more, than in my verse can sit*  
*Your own glass shows you when you look in it.*  
 (103.7–14)

Ostensibly expressing idolatrous sentiment akin to the Trinitarian rhetorical formulas of the Athanasian Creed,<sup>34</sup> the speaker could also be accusing the young addressee of promiscuity:

*Fair, kind and true have often lived alone,*  
*Which three, till now, never kept seat in one*  
 (105.13–14)

At this point Shakespeare had already used "seat" to suggest female sexuality in the *Sonnets* ("Ay me, but yet thou mightst my seat forbear" [41.9]), and Samuel Daniel used it in similar way in *Delia* ("There my soules tyrant ioyes her, in the sack / Of her owne seate, whereof I made her guide" [39.5–8]).<sup>35</sup> The feminine focus of the metaphor also allows for the possibility that the accusation to the young man quietly employs an element of misogyny.

The speaker has similar motives in appropriating the Ovidian figure of Philomela, semantically inseparable from the ideas of rape and speaking out by alternative means after a violent silencing:<sup>36</sup>

*As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,*  
*And stops her pipe in growth of riper days*  
 .....  
*Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue,*  
*Because I would not dull you with my song.*  
 (102.8–14)

Here, "Philomel" has been employed to project tension between inspiration and loathing, and by "stopping her pipe" the speaker is revealed as his own violator. First, the seemingly misaligned pronouns in my previous sentence will already have called attention to the gender ambiguity of Shakespeare's image. The ambiguity does not seem to arise solely from the uncertainty that surrounds the use of pronouns in the quarto, where the text reads "stops his pipe" (120.9) ("her pipe" is an emendation favored by Katherine Duncan-Jones, based on the clash with Q "Therefore, like her" [120.13] and a proposal that the Q "his" is a misreading of the manuscript "hir,"<sup>37</sup> whereas C. Knox Pooler, Stephen Booth, and Gwynne Blakemore Evans all retain "stops his pipe"<sup>38</sup>) but primarily from Shakespeare's decision to use a female figure for his speaker. Gwynne Blakemore Evans unwittingly acknowledges this even as he proposes a factual error on Shakespeare's part ("The error may well be Shakespeare's," he writes, "who . . . is thinking of himself as Philomel"<sup>39</sup>). And second, the speaker's self-imposed silence is supremely ambiguous. In one possible reading the speaker is submissive and "holds his tongue," because he does not wish to "dull," or bore, the addressee; in another, he assumes ironic authority and suggests that his tongue could render the addressee dull.<sup>40</sup> Lest the latter meaning of the verb "dull" escape the reader, it is reemployed in the very next sonnet, which purports to praise the addressee's glorified indescribability:



.....a face  
 That overgoes my blunt invention quite,  
 Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.

(103.6–8)

Even when it claims Petrarchan *sobramar*, “love which surpasses speech”<sup>41</sup> (102.3–4), the speaker’s silence could imply contempt. By the same token, calling the youth a “pattern” for all human flowers (98)<sup>42</sup> acquires a deeply ironic meaning when we consider Shakespeare’s variations on the Petrarchan comparison of the beloved with flowers. These variations involve, among other things, using the lily (94.14)—a flower that elicits a dual response in the contemporary imagination as a symbol of purity, but also toxicity linked to malodorous putrefaction and disease,<sup>43</sup> as well as terms of criminality, unease, and threat:

*The forward violet thus did I chide:*  
 .....  
*the purple pride*  
 .....  
*in my love’s veins thou hast too grossly dyed.*  
 .....  
*The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,*  
*One blushing shame, another white despair;*  
*A third, nor red, nor white, had stol’n of both,*  
 .....  
*But for his theft, in pride of all his growth,*  
*A vengeful canker ate him up to death.*

(99)<sup>44</sup>

Indeed, insult to the young man, concealed beneath the rhetoric of respect, often draws on the subversion of social norms. Having presented his young addressee with a notebook (77), the speaker scornfully rejects his reciprocal gift of tables (a hand-bound notebook) and reports having given it to someone else (122). Although written in a way that stages submission, such rejection breathes disrespect as it contravenes Elizabethan decorum of patronage, founded on the reciprocal Senecan theory of gift giving.<sup>45</sup> Signaling offense and, particularly, giving away the addressee’s gift are rude and potentially dangerous gestures. By making them the speaker rejects socially sanctioned reciprocity out of hand. The device quietly but effectively implies that the speaker’s need for equality has reached a desperate stage. The speaker’s rudeness repels, his despair attracts; splintered identification leaves the reader’s reactions divided.

Some of the speaker’s most powerful expressions of disparagement depend on the reader’s recognition of subtext. Sonnet 20 offers a prime example of this. The poem begins by describing the addressee as both male and female. This is presented as perfection, yet this sonnet has a long history of eliciting unease in its readers.<sup>46</sup> A cultural duality surrounds androgynous myths: the laudatory “layer” works by association with the “positive” androgynous figures, such as Androgynos, a Platonic being of near-divine perfection, power, and hubris;<sup>47</sup> Hermaphroditus, a symbol of unity in marriage;<sup>48</sup> *Phoebus Kitharoidos* or *Apollo Citaredo* (Apollo with the Lyre), a personification of complete poetic consciousness;<sup>49</sup> *Venus biformis*, a figure of generative self-sufficiency;<sup>50</sup> and many other mythical figures symbolizing greatness, with ambiguous gender as a subsidiary characteristic.<sup>51</sup> The “disparaging” layer, on the other hand, draws on the “negative” associations that androgynous figures evoke: Ovid’s contempt for Hermaphroditus (*Met.* IV.379) finds many echoes in early modern iconography,<sup>52</sup> and some contemporary writers represent androgyny as a monstrosity to be scrupulously concealed.<sup>53</sup> These dualities aside, however, Shakespeare’s concealed insult should be sought in the way Nature is shown to have created the addressee: she suddenly becomes so taken with her creation that she cannot resist turning her into a man. The sonnet presents this process as a compliment to the speaker’s beauty:

*And for a woman wert thou first created,*  
*Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting*

(20.9–10)

Yet a compliment this can never be. By representing a man hastily created from a woman, Shakespeare is consciously mocking three crucial subtextual frameworks: God’s creation of Man in the book of Genesis; the myth of Nature’s creation of (the male) Man, a process that was seen to symbolize the panegyric precisely because of the associated painstaking effort, care, and forethought it involved;<sup>54</sup> and the widely circulated Aristotelian and Galenic commonplaces of the defectiveness female-yielding gestation, clearly known to Shakespeare:

[S]ince nature always intends and plans to make things most perfect, she would constantly bring forth men if she could; and that when a woman is born, it is a defect and mistake of nature, . . . as is . . . one who is born blind, or lame, or with some

other defect . . . A woman can be said to be a creature produced by chance and accident.  
(Castiglione, *The Courtier*, III.11)<sup>55</sup>

**Macbeth:** *Bring forth men-children only!*  
*For thy undaunted mettle should compose*  
*Nothing but males.*  
(*Macbeth*, I.7.73–75)<sup>56</sup>

It is clear that instead of praise, sonnet 20 actually offers a two-pronged insult: not only has the addressee been created at whim and without forethought, but also by repairing a woman, a “defect of nature” and a product of a natural “accident.”

As has been shown, the sonnets to the young man conceal disparagement under the guise of praise. Sonnets to the dark lady mirror this approach: they conceal praise under the guise of disparagement. The lady’s appearance is the first example of this. The sonnets to the dark lady begin with an apology that “in the old age black was not counted fair” (127.1), which suggests that the lady’s looks, as well as the speaker’s taste in women, diverge from the Petrarchan norm. Nevertheless, the first descriptions of the lady seem carefully orchestrated to suggest beauty; the lady’s hair or skin will not have been mentioned for another three sonnets, and black eyes have no claim to historic novelty—they *are* the norm. The sum of contemporary precepts of female beauty, Federico Luigini da Udine’s *Libro della bella donna*, printed in Venice in the 1540s, defines ideally beautiful eyes as “black, like mature olives, pitch, velvet or coal, for such are the eyes that belong to Laura, Angelica, Alcina and the beloveds of Propertius, Horace and Boccaccio,”<sup>57</sup> and, as Shakespeare no doubt knew, to Sidney’s Stella. Golden locks and florid cheeks may have been fashionable, but it was not entirely anomalous to think a dark woman beautiful, as the reputation of Mary Queen of Scots attests.<sup>58</sup> The speaker is, in fact, circuitously claiming some legitimacy for his taste.

Yet the speaker does not seem attracted to the lady because of her physical, intellectual, or moral excellence. On the contrary, much care has been taken to represent this attraction as self-generated, with no basis in “reality.” Shakespeare’s speaker’s schizophrenic division occurs, remarkably, outside the classically Petrarchan standoff between the body (pro) and mind (contra); his self appears conflicted between intellectual and sensual reluctance pitched against an inexplicable emotional craving:

*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*  
(141.7–10)

Nor is the speaker’s frustration caused by the lady’s unavailability, for she is clearly available. Sonnet 129, the third sonnet of the dark lady group, acknowledges consummation as soon as plausible. What, then, is the reason for the speaker’s frustration? What is Shakespeare’s purpose in remodeling the Petrarchan convention of stymied desire?

The sequence represents two accounts of emotional subjugation lodged in aware (as opposed to frustrated) thralldom. Shakespeare’s focus on the impact of real relationships, superimposed on the Petrarchan poetics of unsatisfied desire, represents a genuine development in the history of first-person speech in the sonnet sequence genre. By moving his focus away from a time when a relationship is imagined and into the forum of real relationship/s, Shakespeare demonstrates that longing does not represent the end of a sonnet sequence, and that consummation does not represent the end of narrative. In fact, he demonstrates that the sonnet sequence genre in its original form is no longer sufficient unto itself. The strongest bid the *Sonnets* make to independence from Petrarchism is also one of their important contributions to literary history. It rests on the unlikely distinction of not having a rhetorical goal.<sup>59</sup> Unlike the other Petrarchan speakers, Shakespeare’s speaker does not seek to overcome a status quo; instead, the author’s focus is firmly on the speaker’s emotional outcomes. Frustration has moved away from external sources and become firmly rooted in the speaker’s consciousness.

Shakespeare’s placement of his speaker’s infatuation with the dark lady at a time in the “story” that follows consummation, as well as the un-Petrarchan loathing with which he describes the event, render the subsequent pleas for the attention of the lady—the one already won and loathed—all the more striking. In fact, begging for the same lady’s exclusive attention, Shakespeare divides the reader’s loyalties by superimposing the “feminine” rhetoric of entreaty (“dear heart,” “forbear”) on the patriarchal ideal of chaste female eyes directed only at their lord (139.4–5).<sup>60</sup> To a contemporary reader, the contrast projects an image of embattled masculinity, a character whose emotional needs pull in the opposite direction from social expectations. The

technique can involve considerable ethical ambiguity, as when the speaker's frustration finally erupts in a curious merging of the "feminine" rhetoric of entreaty with the "masculine" rhetoric of threat:

*Be wise as thou art cruel; do not press*  
(140.1)

*For if I should despair, I should grow mad*  
(140.9)

Similar fluctuations in the gendering of the voice are observable in the section to the young man. When the speaker feels that the young man's absences are sapping his strength, he reclaims his authority in a "masculine" voice that hints at inconsequential infidelities of his own:

*Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,  
As with your shadow I with these did play.*  
(98.13–14)

The speaker uses this "masculine" voice to say he is uninspired and bored, or to threaten that the addressee's role in his life could be temporary:

*do not kill  
The spirit of love with perpetual dullness*  
(56.7–8)

*From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!*  
(97.2)

The speaker also uses his "masculine" voice to imagine that the addressee is listening to his words from the perspective of "feminine," receptive docility:

*This is my home of love: if I have ranged,  
Like him that travels I return again*  
(109.5–6)

*For nothing this wide universe I call,  
Save thou, my rose*  
(109.13–14)

*And worse essays proved thee my best of love*  
(110.7–8)

*Mine appetite I never more will grind  
On newer proof*  
(110.10–11)

*Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,  
Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.*  
(110.13–14)

The last example uses the rhetorical figure of *ploce*, where a word is repeated to show that the opposite is meant.<sup>61</sup> the speaker's praise, once again, implies disparagement—even tacit violence.

The "masculine" voice is also used to describe the addressee in Petrarchan terms that are traditionally associated with female sexual or procreative appeal. Thus the addressee's "beauty's rose" must be opened and distilled,<sup>62</sup> his "fresh ornament" preserved, time's action to "dig deep trenches" in the addressee's "beauty's field" prevented—either by persuading the speaker to procreate or by immortalizing him in poetry. Each image appears to have been especially selected for its ability to elide the sexual and the autopoetic, as well as to imply in the addressee an enabling, "feminine" function for the speaker's "masculine" authority and creativity.

By contrast, the speaker also constructs a "female" voice, predicated on characteristics that are traditionally associated with women, such as submission or proneness to wiles in the context of seduction. The speaker uses his "female" voice when he employs the language of injured ownership to describe his feelings ("take," "robb'ry," "mine/thine," "usest," "bear" "hast/had," "steal"),<sup>63</sup> when he "forgives" the addressee's transgressions in a way that accuses him, or when he stages submission in order to determine the outcome of the dynamic:

*I do forgive thy robb'ry, gentle thief,  
Although thou steal thee all my poverty  
.....  
Lascivious grace, in whom all ill well shows,  
Kill me with spites; yet we must not be foes.*  
(40)

It is also in his "feminine" voice that Shakespeare's speaker claims ignorance where it is obvious that he is skilled, and the one in which he protests his emotional and sexual magnanimity:

*But thou art all my art, and dost advance  
As high as learning, my rude ignorance.*  
(78.13–14)

*Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.*  
(20.14)

Here, the speaker promises to the young man that he can tolerate his infidelities if he can refrain from being deliberately cruel toward him. The theme is echoed in the dark lady sonnets (140.14) and is exceptionally effective in portraying thralldom. Another similarly effective technique is that used in sonnet 144, which shows the speaker at once angered by the beloveds' suspected infidelity and voyeuristically attracted to it:

*Suspect I may, but not directly tell;  
.....  
I guess one angel in another's hell.*  
(144.10–12)<sup>64</sup>

Other interactions of disparagement and praise also offer thematic links between the two parts of the sequence. In both instances, love is represented as an addiction or an incurable disease (118.14, 147.1–2), and both of the beloveds possess the devil-like ability to make sin and corruption irresistibly attractive (95.1, 9; 150.6–8). Yet another such link, crucially, serves to signal that the speaker has seen through the deceit of both:

*And to the painted banquet bids my heart*  
(47.6)

*Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill*  
(147.2)

Ambiguous characterization underpins the thematic links that turn the speaker into the focus of the sequence and enhance the perception of the sonnet sequence as an integral work of fiction.

The speaker's ambiguous autopoetics add to the reader's fascination. Where the English Petrarchan convention dictates gentle disparagement of other poets to position oneself as original, Shakespeare's speaker achieves the same purpose by employing the opposite strategy. On one hand, he pretends to disparage his own style in a way that reads suspiciously like bragging:

*Why write I still all one, ever the same,  
.....  
That every word doth almost tell my name*  
(76.5–7)

On the other, by this stage the speaker has already voiced insecurity in terms more genuine and profound than Petrarchan staged modesty:

*For I am shamed by that which I bring forth  
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.*  
(72.13–14)

Similarly, Shakespeare's speaker promises to immortalize yet also explicitly claims the self-reflexive value of his praise (39.2). The speaker's subtle schizophrenic divisions attest to the author's characterization skill. The fluctuations of the speaker's tone from "masculine" to "feminine," his tenor from authority to self-abasement, his claims of grandeur undercut by dread, the intensity of his attempts to destabilize his beloveds with no apparent purpose; the intensity of his efforts is, in fact, inversely proportionate to hope.

By replacing consummation, the traditional sonnet sequence goal, with the addressee's and the lady's attention, loyalty, and thralldom—all elusive, emotional categories, not easily "pursued"—Shakespeare simultaneously harkens back to the Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas of wooing of the soul by rhetorical means, and heralds modern first-person writing and its quest to portray the multiplicity of personal reality. Self-contradicting characterization elicits splintered identification in the reader; this response generates interest and reader involvement, causing "narrative" responses ("What happens next? I wonder what will happen to him? Will he be all right?") rather than only lyrical ones ("How true—it could be me saying this"). Shakespeare's divided character promotes reader involvement and fosters perception of his sequence as an integral work.

*Danijela Kambaskovi-Sawers*

## Notes

1. Francesco Petrarch, *The Canzoniere; or, Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, ed. and trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1996).
2. Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: Five Hundred Years of Western Cultural Life* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2000), 49 and 51.
3. In Roland Greene's view, the "fictional" and "lyrical"



modes characterize the genre, and their prevalence within the sequence marks the direction in which the genre will develop. Roland Greene, *Post-Petrarchism: Origins and Innovations of the Western Lyric Sequence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1991).

4. As I have argued elsewhere, five "great" English sonnet sequences of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods (Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, Edmund Spenser's *Amoretti*, Samuel Daniel's *Delia*, Michael Drayton's *Idea*, and William Shakespeare's *Sonnets*) show important thematic links with emerging narrative genres exploring the pseudo-authenticity of the first-person voice. Foremost among them are the complaint (such as sonneteer Samuel Daniel's *Complaint of Rosamond*), emerging epistolary first-person narratives (such as sonneteer Michael Drayton's *Heroicall Epistles*), and narrative poems or popular romances. The latter two are, of course, not first person genres, but can contain segments written in the first person. See also my book, *Character Ambiguity and the Novelistic Impulse in the Petrarchan Sonnet Sequence* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2008).
5. See, for instance, *Petrarch's Secretum*, ed. and trans. with an introduction by Davy A. Carozza and H. James Shey (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 9–11, and Victoria Kahn, "The Figure of the Reader in Petrarch's *Secretum*," in *Petrarch: Modern Critical Views*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1989), 141.
6. For representative discussions, see Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox, eds. *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000); and James Buzzard, "On Auto-Ethnographic Authority," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 16, no. 1 (2003): 61–91. Also relevant is Steven Shurtleff, "The Archpoet as Poet, Persona and Self: The Problem of Individuality in the Confession," *Philological Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 373.
7. James Schiffer, "The Incomplete Narrative of the Sonnets," in *A Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Michael Schoenfeldt (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007), 47–56, esp. 50.
8. *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. John Kerrigan (London: Penguin, 1986), 13–14; Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997; London: Arden Shakespeare, 2003), 45; Colin Burrow, ed. *The Complete Sonnets and Poems* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 140; *The Sonnets and A Lover's Complaint*, ed. Martin Dodsworth (London: Charles E. Tuttle, 1995), xvii; *The Sonnets* and "A Lover's Complaint," ed. Walter Cohen, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, gen. ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 1997), 1916, which, unless otherwise specified, I will be using to cite Shakespeare's work other than the *Sonnets*; Margreta de Grazia, "Revolution in Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Schoenfeldt, 57–70; and Heather Dubrow, "'Dressing old words new?' Re-evaluating the 'Delian Structure,'" in *Companion to Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Schoenfeldt, 90–103.
9. J. W. Lever, *The Elizabethan Love Sonnet* (1956; London: Methuen: 1966), 94 and 101.
10. Kenneth J. Larsen, *Amoretti and Epithalamion: A Critical Edition* (Tempe: Arizona State University, 1997), 25.
11. Carol V. Kaske, "Spenser's Amoretti and Epithalamion of 1595: Structure, Genre, and Numerology," *English Literary Renaissance* 3 (Autumn 1978): 271–95, esp. 273.
12. Donna Gibbs, *Spenser's Amoretti: A Critical Study* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1990), 30 n.19.
13. Roger Kuin, "The Gaps and the Whites," in *Spenser Studies: A Renaissance Poetry Annual VIII*, ed. Patrick Cullen and Thomas P. Roche (Brooklyn: AMS Press: 1987), 251–85.
14. Lisa M. Klein, "Let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought: Protestant Marriage and the Revision of Petrarchan Loving in Spenser's Amoretti," *Spenser Studies* 10 (1989): 109–37, esp. 110. In addition, even where ambiguous characterization and the resulting tensions have been noted, they are not studied as important aspects of a reader's experience of the sequence as a whole. Neil Rudenstine, *Sidney's Poetic Development* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1967); David Kalstone, *Sidney's Poetry: Contexts and Interpretations* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965).
15. Lever, *Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, 173.
16. Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Playing Fields or Killing Fields: Shakespeare's Poems and Sonnets," *Shakespeare's Quarterly* 54, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 127–41.
17. Frank Bernhard, "Shakespeare's Sonnet 73," *Explicator* 62, no. 1 (Fall 2003): 3–4.
18. Jane Hedley, "Since first your eye I eyed: Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Poetics of Narcissism," *Style* 28, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1.
19. My thinking on character ambiguity has been influenced by Elizabeth Fowler's proposal that the early modern reader had the ability to "read" characters that contained several, often contrasting "social personae." Elizabeth Fowler, *Literary Character: The Human Figure in Early English Writing* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 2003). I am also

- indebted to the thought of David Buchbinder on the "models" of the sonnet sequence. David Buchbinder, "True-Speaking Flattery: Narrativity and Authenticity in the Sonnet Sequence," *Poetics* 17 (1988): 37–47. In viewing character ambiguity as essential for the creation of captivating characters, I build on William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1956).
20. In my articles "Never Was I the Golden Cloud: Ovidian Myth, Ambiguous Speaker, and the Narrative in the Sonnet Sequences by Petrarch, Sidney, and Spenser," *Renaissance Studies* 5, no. 21 (November 2007): 637–61, and "Carved in Living Laurel: The Sonnet Sequence and Transformations of Idolatry," *Renaissance Studies* 3, no. 21 (June 2007): 379–94.
  21. M. M. Bakhtin, "From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 41–84. And while one could no doubt argue that any lyric is dialogic, in that the voice of the speaker communicates with the reader, I am primarily interested in the inherent plurality of a contradictory first-person voice and the tension translated into involvement that such characterization generates.
  22. J. W. Lever denies the 1609 folio any credibility because of the "chances of coincidental dissarrangement." Lever, *Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, 170–71. W. H. Auden discredits both authorization and narrativity. W. H. Auden, *William Shakespeare, The Sonnets* (New York: Signet Classic Shakespeare, 1964), xxi and xxxvi. Roderick Eagle also rejects authorization. Roderick Eagle, *The Rival Poet and the Dark Lady: The Secrets of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Mitre Press, 1965).
  23. "What if we were to admit the possibility that one of the highly erotic poems after 126 refers to the Friend?" Heather Dubrow, "'Incertainties now crown themselves assur'd': The Politics of Plotting Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3, no. 47 (Fall 1996): 301. In her earlier writings Dubrow upholds the idea of sonnet sequence narrativity. *Captive Victors: Shakespeare's Narrative Poems and Sonnets* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1987), 171–90.
  24. Paul Ramsay, *The Fickle Glass: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New York: AMS Press, 1979), 18–19.
  25. At the other end of the spectrum, James Schiffer argues that it is precisely the incompleteness of the narrative that makes the *Sonnets* what it is, "a kind of Goldilocks's bed, neither too big nor too small, but just right: big enough to enable dramatic and lyric moments to develop, yet not so big as to disrupt or dilute lyric intensity." Schiffer, "Incomplete Narrative," 49.
  26. Helen Vendler: *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1998).
  27. Duncan-Jones, Arden *Sonnets*, 29–45. I have used this edition to quote from Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.
  28. For example, Hilton Landry, *Interpretations in Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), 4–5; Stephen Booth, ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1977), 430; Margreta de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim: The Reproduction of Authenticity and the 1790 Apparatus* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); William Empson, "They That Have the Power," postscript to William Shakespeare, *The Sonnets* (New York: Signet Classic Shakespeare, 1964), 201; and Richard A. Levin, "Shakespeare's Sonnets 153 and 154," *Explicator* 1, no. 53 (Fall 1994): 11. Some attempts to negotiate with the binary division include Lever's use of the word "sequence" to mean "group" (Lever, *Elizabethan Love Sonnet*, 170–171) and proposal of a fourpartite design (Katherine Duncan-Jones, "Was the 1609 Shakespeare's Sonnets Really Unauthorized?" *Review of English Studies* 34 (1983): 151–71, esp. 62. Later, in her edition of the *Sonnets*, she changes her mind, presenting a strong case in favor of binary division (Duncan-Jones, Arden *Sonnets*, 363). Like Katherine Duncan-Jones but a year earlier, Roy Neil Graves had also argued for authorization based on the "empty couplet" at the end of sonnet 126. Roy Neil Graves, "Shakespeare's Sonnet 126," *Explicator* 4, no. 54 (Summer 1996): 203.
  29. Such as the appearance of sonnets 138 and 145 in *The Passionate Pilgrim* (1598); the interpretation of "hate away" of 145.13; and "and" of 145.14 as referring to Anne Hathaway. Andrew Gurr, "Shakespeare's First Poem: Sonnet 145," *Essays in Criticism* 21 (1971): 221–26.
  30. For an excellent history of reordering (also in favor of authorization), see MacDonald P. Jackson, "Shakespeare's Sonnets: Rhyme and Reason in the Dark Lady Series," *Notes and Queries* 2, no. 46 (June 1999): 220–22.
  31. See Peter Stallybrass, "Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Modern Language Quarterly* 54 (1993): 91–103; Michael Keevak, "Shakespeare's Queer Sonnets and the Forgeries of William Henry Ireland," *Criticism* 2, no. 40 (Spring 1998): 167–89; and, above all, Margreta de Grazia, "The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *Shakespeare and Sexuality*, ed. Catherine M. S. Alexander and Stanley Wells

- (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001), 146–67.
32. De Grazia, “Scandal,” 149.
  33. James Schiffer has argued that the absence of narrative resolution enhances lyrical attentiveness. Schiffer, “Incomplete Narrative,” 52.
  34. Duncan-Jones, Arden *Sonnets*, 320.
  35. *Samuel Daniel's Poems and a Defence of Ryme*, ed. Arthur Colby Sprague (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 30.
  36. Shakespeare remodels the myth of Philomela also in *Lucrece* (ll.1465): moved by a tapestry that shows Hecuba's grief but gives it no “tongue,” Lucrece's (imagined) speech assumes the role of Philomela's weaving.
  37. Duncan-Jones, Arden *Sonnets*, 314.
  38. C. Knox Pooler, ed., *The Works of Shakespeare: Sonnets* (London: Arden Shakespeare, 1918), 211; Stephen Booth, ed. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1977), 330, and Gwynne Blakemore Evans, ed. *The Sonnets* (1996; Cambridge: New Cambridge Series, 2003), 211.
  39. Evans, *Sonnets*, 211.
  40. The reading is close to *OED* 8, “to tarnish.”
  41. Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2000), 27.
  42. Possibly a reference to Spenser's Adonis: “Yet is eterne in mutability, And by succession made perpetual, / Transformèd oft, and changèd diversely; / For him the father of all forms they call.” Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* III.vi.47, facsimile of the 1596 edition published by W. Posonbie, London, intro. by Graham Hough (London: Scolar Press, 1976).
  43. “[T]he flowers, leaves and rootes are used in medicine, but not in the kitchen . . . They are a great ornament to a garden or in a house, yet the smell of them is discomended and accounted ill for the plague.” Thomas Cogan, *The Haven of Health* (London: Printed by Henrie Middleton, for William Norton, 1584). See also Duncan-Jones, “Playing Fields,” 127–41, esp. 138.
  44. The word “pride,” which appears twice in sonnet 99, carries a phallic connotation in 103.2 and 144.8.
  45. The theory stipulates that upon receiving a gift, one thanks the giver, praises the gift, and seeks to reciprocate in kind. A. D. Cousins, *Shakespeare's Sonnets and Narrative Poems* (London: Longman, 2000), 167.
  46. For a cogent historic recapitulation of critical views voicing disgust with this sonnet and a useful guide of early modern medical attitudes toward sex transformation and bisexuality and interpretation of bisexual myths in the sixteenth century, see Raymond B. Waddington, “The Poetics of Eroticism: Shakespeare's Master Mistress,” in *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Traditions of Love in the Renaissance*, ed. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciovoletta (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1992), 177–92.
  47. Plato, *Symposium* 189 e and 190 d, translated into English by Michael Joyce, in *Plato: Collected Works*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns (1961; Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1989).
  48. William Keach, “The Epyllion and the Poetry of the 1590s: Alternatives to the Spenserian Synthesis,” in *Elizabethan Erotic Narratives* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1977), 231.
  49. Apollo's ambiguous gender is described positively by Elizabethan mythographers. “By Apollo is meant the Sunne, and being without a Beard, Lustines of youth,” writes Stephen Batman, *The Golden Booke of the Leaden Gods*, London 1577, folio 2 dorso (New York: Garland, 1976). “The auncients . . . shaped [Apollo] with a very youthfull countenance, beardless, and young-year . . . in the shape of a beauteous Nymph, with her apparel exquisitely well wouen, excelling in curious worke of foliature, hauing her [sic] temples bound about, and instrophiated with sweet'smelling garlands, resembling much the goddesse Flora,” writes Richard Lynche, *The Fovntaine of Ancient Fiction*, “Alciatus,” London 1599 (New York: Garland, 1976), without pagination. Magnificent gender-ambiguous Roman representations of Apollo as god of poetry (*Phoebus Kitharoidos* or Apollo Citaredo, Apollo with the Lyre), dating from the third century BC to the first century AD, are now kept in the Capitoline Museum, Palazzo Alle Terme, Galleria Villa Borghese, Palazzo Altamps, and the Vatican Museum in Rome, as well as the British Museum in London. All statues have a woman's head (sometimes also breasts) and male genitalia. Gender-ambiguous representations are reserved for Apollo as god of poetry; they are rarely used to represent Apollo in his guises as god of sun or, after the Laconian tradition, the God of hunting.
  50. *Venus biformis* is recalled by Keach (“Epyllion and the Poetry”), as well as Graham Atkin, “Both kinds in one / both male and female”: *Ate, Lust, and hermaphroditic Venus in Book IV of Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene* (Chester, UK: Chester College of Higher Education, 1996).
  51. Jupiter, Orpheus, Narcissus, Amor, Hermaphroditus, Thiresias, and Dionysius all play different roles in the Ovidian universe, but have ambiguous sexuality as their common denominator. How Petrarch uses this in the building of his speaker has been suggested in my article

- "Never Was I the Golden Cloud."
52. Waddington, "Poetics of Eroticism," 182 and 190.
  53. As Spenser hides the statue of Venus in *The Faerie Queene*: "Nor any blemish, which the worke mote blame; / But for, they say, she hath both kinds in one, / Both male and female, both under one name." Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, IV.x.41. See also Luc Brisson, *Sexual Ambivalence, Androgyny, and Hermaphroditism in Graeco-Roman Antiquity*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
  54. For a summary of Bernard de Silvestris's *De Universitate Mundi* (written between 1145 and 1153), a work that provides the account of Natura/Nous' creation of a perfect (male) Man, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 110–11.
  55. Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959). Also "Young parents, and those who are older too, tend to produce female offspring rather than parents which are in their prime; the reason being that in the young their heat is not yet perfected, in the older, it is failing. [Producing females] is due to a deficiency of natural heat." Aristotle, *The Generation of Animals* IV.ii.766a, trans. A. L. Peck (London: William Heinemann, 1943), 397.
  56. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. Kenneth Muir (London: Routledge, 1994), 44.
  57. Federico Luigini da Udine's *Libro della bella donna* (p. 236), cited by Naomi Yavneh in "The Ambiguity of Beauty: Tasso and Petrarch," in *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. James Grantham-Turner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), 136–38. It is not known whether the other beauty precepts summarized by the Luigini's *Libro*—the "curly, luxurious, long, golden" hair, and cheeks combining the "white of lilies with the vermillion of the rose or the purple of the hyacinth"—were directly known to Shakespeare and his contemporaries, but there is no doubt that they too find their echoes in Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, remodeled in ways that subtly mock Petrarchan excesses of the day. ("Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew; / Nor did I wonder at the lilies white / nor praise the deep vermillion of the rose" (98.9–10); also, "If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head / I've seen roses damask'd, red and white / But no such roses see I in her cheeks" (130.3–5). Clearly, Shakespeare uses the motif indiscriminately of gender. See also, "And in his blood, that on the ground lay spill'd / a purple flower sprung up, chequer'd with white / resembling his fair cheeks" (*Venus and Adonis*, 1167–70). Shakespeare's image of Adonis's flower combines elements taken from Ovid's descriptions of Hyacinthus and Adonis. (Hyacinthus: "A flower rose / Gorgeous as Tyrian dye, in form a lily, / Save that a lily wears a silver hue, / the richest purple." Adonis: "A blood-red flower arose, like the rich bloom / of pomegranates which in a stubborn rind / conceal their seeds." Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, X.209–13 and 735–36, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986).
  58. Some contemporary portraits show Mary, Queen of Scots, to have been of dark coloring, notably the portrait by a follower of Francis Clouet, kept in Victoria and Albert Museum, London. (Other portraits show a lighter coloring.) The beauty of Mary, Queen of Scots, was universally acclaimed. Pierre de Ronsard lauded it; a Venetian ambassador thought her "the most beautiful in Europe"; and even John Knox thought her features and deportment "pleasing." Alison Weir, *Mary, Queen of Scots and the Murder of Lord Darnley* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003), 30.
  59. I am referring to the main Petrarchan rhetorical goal of seeking to woo the beloved and overcoming the status quo of lovelessness, which provides a sonnet sequence with a narrative purpose. Shakespeare's sequence retains a few minor rhetorical goals (such as, for instance, immortalizing or persuading the addressee to procreate) yet dispenses with the fundamental one.
  60. Throughout this essay, the words "masculine," "feminine," "male," and "female," used in quotation marks, signify contemporary cultural constructs of gender, not biological determinants. (Male) troubadour and Petrarchan poets, of course, routinely appropriate "feminine" (submissive) speech, but not to relate to a lady already won and loathed.
  61. See discussions of the "perversity" of this sonnet by Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 354, and Duncan-Jones, *Arden Sonnets*, 330. Shakespeare also uses the figure in sonnet 90.
  62. See the commentary on *Roman de la Rose* by Georges Duby, *Love and Marriage in the Middle Ages*, trans. Jane Dunnett (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 91. Ovid uses rosebuds to signal Orpheus's conversion to homosexuality following Eurydice's death (*Metamorphoses* X.88–90).
  63. For a detailed discussion of theft as metaphor, see Heather Dubrow, "In Thievish Ways: Tropes and Robbers in Shakespeare's Sonnets and Early Modern England," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 4, no. 96 (Octo-

ber 2003): 514–44.

64. The word “hell” suggests endless suffering and culpability, here distributed equally between the lady and the young man (Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, 499–500). The word also draws on the common identification of hell with the vagina, first made in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, 3.10. Compare Shakespeare's sonnets 129.14 and 144.12 and *King Lear* IV.6.129. Duncan-Jones, *Arden Sonnets*, 373.

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