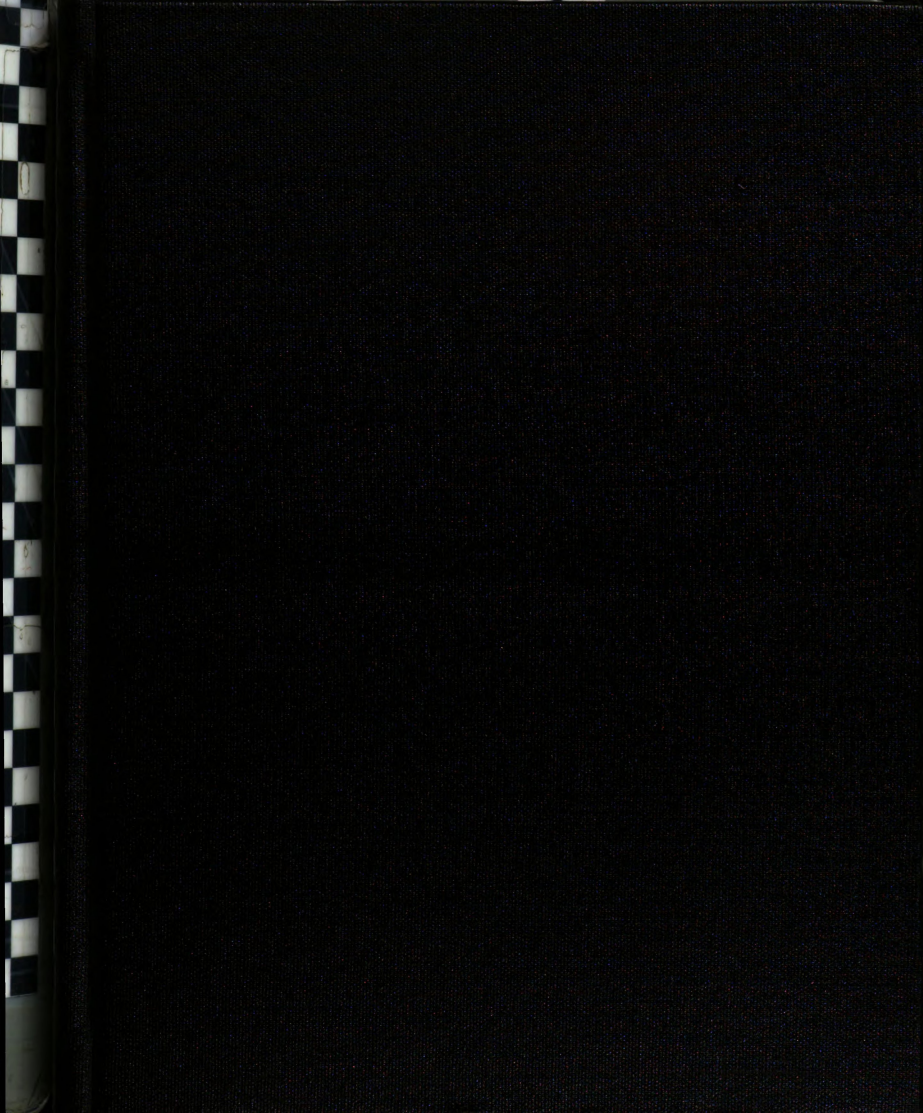




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A CICERONIAN GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

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SARA VIRGINIA FINK

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of the requirements for the

Doctoral

degree in

English

Philip C. McGuire

Major Professor's Signature

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A CICERONIAN GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE'S *SONNETS*

By

Sara Virginia Fink

A DISSERTATION

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

2007

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ABSTRACT

A CICERONIAN GUIDE TO SHAKESPEARE'S *SONNETS*

By

Sara Virginia Fink

This study provides textual evidence for Shakespeare's incorporation of Ciceronian topics of invention into three sub-sets of his *Sonnets* (1-17, 18-22, 127-131), and analyzes how these topics function rhetorically and analytically. Topics for parts of an oration from Cicero's *De inventione* are deployed in the procreation sonnets to introduce the sonnet speaker's *ethos*; the procreation argument, culturally important in Shakespeare's time, expresses a vital aspect of his ethical stance. The seventeen procreation sonnets also incorporate Cicero's seventeen topics of invention from his text *Topica*, one topic per sonnet. Five of these seventeen topics also appear in sonnets 18-22 and 127-131; together with sonnets 1-17, these three sub-sets serve to introduce and characterize four different kinds of desire: narcissistic, prudential, erotic, and sexual. Comparison among these three sub-sets offers an interpretive guide to the sonnets as a whole. That guide suggests that the four species of desire transform in the speaker's experience so that he is converted from prudential to self-interested and sometimes harmful desires; the outcome in the sonnets as a whole is rhetorical plenitude but reproductive and spiritual sterility. I check this interpretation against texts by John Davies of Hereford which treat similar kinds of desire. Davies may have responded to the Fair Youth sonnets in a 1605 poem to his "other selfe" Nicholas Deeble; that poem addresses "Good Will" before addressing "Nic." I close with commentary on prior criticism of the *Sonnets* that intersects with my own analysis.

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I am very grateful to my committee members, Drs. M. Teresa Tavormina, Douglas L. Peterson, and Sandra Logan, and especially my dissertation director, Dr. Philip C. McGuire, for their support, and for sticking with me when some life events slowed me down. I also wish to thank others who have been supportive along the way, including Drs. Randal Robinson, John Alford, Christopher Celenza, Jyotsna Singh, Ellen Pollak, and the late Donald Rosenberg. At Eastern Michigan University, Drs. Elizabeth Ingram and Martin Shichtman encouraged me to pursue my studies further. I also appreciate my sister Kim (Dr. Camilla Haase) for introducing me to Shakespeare through John Barton's televised Wars of the Roses many years ago, and my high school English and Humanities teacher, John Barrett, for introducing me to Shakespeare's sonnets. Most of all, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to my husband Bill Fink and my son Will Fink for their great patience while I pursued my love of Shakespeare without (or so I hope) losing sight of my ever present love for them.

I appreciate the permission granted by Abaris Books to reproduce Albrecht Dürer's drawing of "Prudentia" from Walter L. Strauss, *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer* (1974). I am also grateful to Houghton Library at Harvard University, and ProQuest, on behalf of Early English Books Online, for permission to reproduce Henry Peacham's emblem of "Philautia" from the Houghton copy of *Minerva Britannia* (1612). Inquiries regarding further reproduction of the latter figure may be made to ProQuest, 789 E. Eisenhower Parkway, Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 (telephone 734.761.4700, email info@il.proquest.com, web page [<http://www.il.proquest.com>](http://www.il.proquest.com)).

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Introduction: Conducting the Reader into the Text

Most English Renaissance sonnet sequences open with an introductory sonnet that offers an explanation of the literary genesis of the sequence. Shakespeare's 1609 *Sonnets*, in contrast, open with seventeen sonnets about a literal act of generation: they constitute an extended plea for a young man to give the world its due of his beauty by engendering children.¹ This study undertakes to demonstrate that these seventeen procreation sonnets incorporate certain Ciceronian methods of invention and organization, deployed by Shakespeare for specific purposes. The methods of invention include a set of Ciceronian rhetorical topics, which Shakespeare embedded into the procreation sonnets *in toto* so as to be recognizable to many of his early readers; he also embedded a subset of these topics into sonnets 18-22 and 127-131. Shakespeare's use of these techniques served several functions, but their primary purpose was to enable these twenty-seven sonnets to serve as guides to interpretation of the whole sequence. In using these methods Shakespeare did not break wholly new ground; other writers of English sonnet sequences, as well as authors in other genres, sometimes employed similar methods drawn from a variety of rhetorical treatises. But Shakespeare's sonnets stand alone in the systematic and comprehensive way they incorporate Ciceronian techniques for specific, recognizable purposes.

These claims may seem far-fetched to many of my (appropriately skeptical) readers. Indeed it has taken me quite a long time to arrive at this full-fledged version

¹ I take up the issue of the two traditional sub-series, to a man and to a woman, in Chapter 3. See fn 2 in Chapter 3 for a response to critics who question these sub-series.

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of my argument. These concepts had their origin in the intersection of two circumstances: an idle curiosity about the number of procreation sonnets, and the reading of William G. Crane's 1937 study *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance*. Concerning the first circumstance: Why seventeen? It is an odd number, a prime number, without symmetry or grace. Perhaps the age of a youth addressed was sufficient, yet such a reason seemed curiously inartistic, and it was also a little unsatisfying in being extrinsic to the sonnets themselves. The second circumstance arose from the fact that I had fairly recently reread Shakespeare's sonnets for the first time since high school. Not yet embarked upon the pre-professional study of literature, I was reading what might be chanced upon in a university library's Renaissance literature shelves. In a section of his book on the domain of classical rhetoric termed topics of invention, which focuses on methods for constructing arguments, Crane mentions Cicero's seventeen topics from his rhetorical textbook *Topica* (about which more below), and I read on, flipping past a table reproduced from a 1515 edition of the humanist Rudolph Agricola's book on invention, *De inventione dialectica libri tres*. This table included a comparison of Agricola's twenty-four topics of invention with Cicero's seventeen. That background question about the number seventeen finally connected with the number in the table, and I flipped back for a second look.

The coinciding numbers provided the stimulus for looking at Cicero's short book *Topica* to see whether the number of topics might connect in some way to the procreation sonnets. To my surprise, an initial survey suggested a possible one-to-one correlation, with one method of argument deployed per sonnet. Later work on this issue provided considerable support for the correspondence, and also for organization

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of the whole procreation set into the format of a deliberative oration, designed to urge a particular course of action. Since the overt purpose of these sonnets was to persuade a young man to produce heirs, organization according to precepts of deliberative rhetoric seemed necessary and, indeed, virtually inevitable, although the function of a relatively long peroration required investigation. But a fundamental question about the one-to-one correlation between Cicero's list of topics and Shakespeare's sonnets remained: Why? Why use these topics in this particular way, especially when Cicero himself says that one would scarcely ever use all seventeen in the service of a single argument?²

Cicero expected his topics to be used to argue cases in the Roman law courts. He is unlikely to have imagined their deployment in love poetry. Indeed, my readers may be scratching their heads as well. The key to unlocking this mystery turned out to be the one topic of Cicero's, etymology, for which Shakespeare substituted a figure of speech, *ethopoiea* or character delineation (in Latin, both etymology and *ethopoiea* are termed *notatio*). This figure of speech is also the topic of invention used for two other famous (and in some respects, infamous) sonnets, 20 (the Master-Mistress sonnet) and 129 (the lust-in-action sonnet). It emerged that a subset of the seventeen topics is repeated in sonnets 18-22 and 127-131, and that these subsets, centered on the two *notatio* sonnets, have a clear ethical cast. The shorter sets, in contrast to the procreation series, do not attempt to construct an argument; instead each offers a little portrait of the speaker and his concerns. Together the three sets invite the reader to compare them and see how the speaker presents himself in the context of different

² *Topica* xxi.79.

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³ George A. Kennedy
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In literary criticism of Renaissance texts, topics of invention–“topic” from the Greek *topoi* or place–have usually been treated as means for creation of texts and amplification of subject matter, rather than guides for reader interpretation. The emphasis, in other words, has been on the writer’s methods, not on the reader’s comprehension. In the tradition of classical rhetoric the term “invention” refers not to the modern sense of creating from scratch, but rather to a process of finding or coming upon (Latin *inventio*) a means of explanation or persuasion by looking through resources gathered by previous practitioners of the discursive arts. “Invention” was one of the five parts of classical oratory, the others being disposition (arranging the “found” material), style or elocution (finding the best wording), memory (ensuring one’s ability to recall an oration), and delivery (effective presentation).³ The fundamental role of topics of invention in creation of Renaissance, and especially Shakespearean, texts was treated in the middle twentieth century by William G. Crane in *Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (1937), by T.W. Baldwin in his demonstration of Shakespeare’s familiarity with the grammar school curriculum, *William Shakspeare’s Small Latine and Lesse Greeke* (1944), and by Miriam Joseph in *Shakespeare’s Use of the Arts of Language* (1966). In *Elizabethan and Metaphysical Imagery* (1947), Rosemond Tuve examined the ways topics of invention, among other Renaissance methods of rational thought processes, constituted sources of images. More recently, Joel Altman and Marion Trousdale have considered topics of invention, along with the

³ George A. Kennedy provides an excellent overview of the ancient tradition of rhetoric and its late classical descendants in *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (1994).

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practices of disputation and other aspects of Renaissance rhetorical culture, in their studies of the ways that drama, like other more obviously argumentative genres such as dialogues and debates, were structured to examine an issue from every side or *in utramque partem* (*The Tudor Play of Mind*, 1978, and *Shakespeare and the Rhetoricians*, 1982). In his comprehensively titled *Classical Rhetoric and English Poetry* (originally published 1970), Brian Vickers focused on figurative language, and his interest lay almost entirely in the “range of emotional and psychological effects” that figures can both represent and provoke (12). Vickers viewed the parts of Joseph’s and Tuve’s books on topics of invention as weak, and remained skeptical that topics of invention “could have much literary value” (64) (despite the fact that some overlap exists between the two categories, since concepts such as comparison, contraries, and similes were both figures and common inventional topics). But such exclusive focus on the figures, as G. K. Hunter comments, loses sight of the larger “modes and structures of argument and speaking” within which techniques of style (*elocutio*) were deployed (Hunter 105). The focus on figures of speech in Vickers, and Joseph’s treatment of topics and figures as interchangeable, may be what lies behind the misleading sub-title of Jill Levenson’s recent article about figures of speech in *Romeo and Juliet*, “Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*: The Topics of Invention.”⁴

Far from the pedantic esoterica they have usually been considered by critics, rhetorical and dialectical topics of invention were fundamental to most kinds of

⁴ The same focus on the role of invention in composition of texts, rather than their interpretation, occurs in studies of the influence of the verbal arts (the *trivium* of grammar, logic, and rhetoric) on medieval texts. An example is Eugene Vance’s *From Topic to Tale*, which considers the fiction of Chr tien de Troyes as explorations of topics of invention from Boethius’s *De differentiis topicis*.

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discourse in the early modern period. Topics such as cause and effect, genus and species, subject and adjunct, were used not only to construct texts and spoken discourse, but to understand the world in which one lived and the discourse that enabled one to negotiate that world. Analysis by means of such topics provided a means of understanding and mastering written texts, including the bible. The French dialectician Pierre de la Ramée (usually referred to by his Latinized name Ramus) went so far as to construe topical analysis, in combination with his “method” (proceeding from more general or better known matters to more specific or less well known ones), as a universal mode of reasoning.

Previous studies have examined other aspects of rhetorical methods and culture in order to investigate modes of literary composition in the English and Continental Renaissance. Kathy Eden’s *Poetic and Legal Fiction in the Aristotelian Tradition* (1986) examines the role of legal and classroom disputation. Arthur F. Kinney studies the role of the verbal arts and imitation in producing exuberant prose stylings in *Humanist Poetics* (1986). Focusing on poetry rather than prose, Thomas M. Greene examines the way imitation engendered innovation as well as continuity in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (1982). In *Muses of One Mind* (1983), as part of his effort to construct a complete theory of literary criticism drawing on the ancient arts of *mathematica*, *philosophia*, and *rhetorica*, Wesley Trimpi discusses the influence on literary texts of legal status theory, particularly the question of the qualitative characteristics of an act (answering the judicial question *quale sit*).

These studies concentrate on composition over interpretation. Only with more recent work by Peter Mack do we arrive at an extended exploration of the ways in

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which rhetorical methods penetrated not only the writing of texts, but their analysis.⁵ Mack (1985, 1993) examines the fifteenth century German scholar Rudolph Agricola's innovative method of "dialectical reading," which sought to reveal the logical structure embedded in a text. This foregrounding of expository or argumentative structure was the major component of a method that approached any text as a communication reflecting four major factors: an author's or speaker's intention, intended audience, major ideas, and historical or literary context.⁶ Agricola's interpretive strategy focused on three steps: identifying the major questions addressed by a text (which Agricola defined succinctly as whatever key issue is in doubt); locating logical propositions and syllogisms that develop those major issues; and identifying topics of invention underpinning specific claims, whether overt or implied, within the overall argument of the work (1993: 227-37). In contrast to the view of recent critics that figures of speech constitute the primary resources for moving an audience, Agricola held that appeals to the emotions are built primarily out of the same methods used to construct arguments, topics of invention, although he also discussed the effects of some figures of speech (1993: 204, 242). He argued that in order to arouse emotions one must also forcefully carry the intellect, often by employing dense arguments and repetition (1993: 203).

Mack observes that the many examples Agricola gives throughout his book *De inventione dialectica libri tres* provide clear models for the kind of interpretive reading

⁵ Kinney attends more to the role of reader interpretation in an earlier article (1976), which emphasizes the expectation that readers would apply syllogistic reasoning to paradoxical texts.

⁶ Students of rhetoric will recognize in these the three basic components of any communicative act, i.e. sender, receiver, and message, with historical or literary context serving to specify particular areas of attention given to the receiver/audience component.

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Agricola advocated. Agricola applied this method to texts as diverse as Virgil's *Aeneid* and orations of Cicero. Questions of ethical judgment and decision-making appear frequently in his sample procedures and analyses. For instance, like many others of his era, he interpreted the *Aeneid* as portraying the responses of a hero to "all the vicissitudes of life" (Mack 2002: 254).⁷ A number of Agricola's examples pertain to ethical questions concerning marriage and divorce: whether a philosopher should marry, whether Cato should marry, what sort of speech should be given at a wedding, whether Cato was right to divorce his wife Marcia and give her to his friend Hortensius in marriage (1993: 234, 184, 187, 188). This focus on the kinds of ethical questions met in daily life reflects the humanist preference for the *vita activa* over the *vita contemplativa* and marks a distinct shift from the ontological questions that had characterized late medieval scholastic thinking. In keeping with this focus on the kinds of choices encountered in active life, Agricola's list of topics, unlike other such synoptic lists, includes circumstances of person, place, and time. In other lists of topics, such specifics were folded into more general categories such as adjuncts (associated qualities). Agricola's foregrounding of particular circumstances pointed the reader toward uncovering not just logical explanations or arguments within a text, but rationales in the context of character and motivation.⁸

Before delving deeper into the role of topics of invention in reader

⁷ Kallendorf provides the back story on humanist interpretation of Aeneas, which he traces to Boccaccio's *Genealogiae deorum gentilium* (36-41). (Petrarch had praised Virgil and the *Aeneid* as a demonstration of an ideal poetic latinity; Petrarch's focus was thus on resurrecting classical style rather than Aeneas as ethical exemplar.)

⁸ Aristotle's *Rhetoric* also treats character and motivation, but from the perspective of how a speaker can elicit various emotions from his audience rather than how a reader can analyze literary or other texts.

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interpretation, I want to backtrack a moment and provide a brief overview of rhetoric and the place within it of topics of invention from the classical era to the Renaissance. In classical rhetorical practice, as briefly noted above, invention and its “places” or topics constituted the means for finding material with which to construct more formal types of discourse (what George A. Kennedy terms secondary rhetoric), largely comprising arguments for the forum or law courts. Methods and theories about rhetoric and the role of the topics varied widely through the Middle Ages, but by the later Middle Ages rhetoric had become subdivided into specialized areas serving secular and religious arenas, such as letter writing (*ars dictaminis*) and preaching (*ars praedicandi*). Each developed its own specialized topics of invention. More general aspects of composition were largely absorbed into the teaching of grammar, which drew heavily on Latin poetry; verse thus became a subdivision of grammar, and figurative language rather than methods of analysis or argument received primary attention.⁹ The Ciceronian rhetorical tradition, renewed for a time in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, yielded to the neo-Aristotelianism and scholasticism of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in which logic dominated over rhetoric and topical invention received little attention or use (Monfasani 1988: 174).¹⁰ A turn to a broader, more classically oriented view of rhetoric, accompanied by zeal for ideals of classical eloquence, was a defining feature of the Renaissance. Not only were Ciceronian-style

⁹ For an overview of medieval rhetoric, Murphy’s *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* is still valuable, as is McKeon’s wide-ranging article of the same title, originally printed in *Speculum* in 1942.

¹⁰ In Italy, in contrast to other areas of western Europe, Ciceronian rhetoric was kept alive in legal and notarial circles. Petrarch, the Renaissance’s most famous promoter of a return to classical literary ideals and the first on record to use the term *rinascenza* or rebirth, came from these circles; his father was a notary and he himself was a law student (Monfasani 176).

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rhetoric manuals once again frequent school texts, but Italian humanists made efforts to locate Cicero's long-neglected orations and epistles, along with his ethical writings such as *De officiis*, *Tusculanae Disputationes*, and *De amicitia*. All of these genres became important parts of revised school curricula, and featured prominently in expanded and altered grammar schools in England as well as on the Continent (Grendler).¹¹ A strong sense of classical Rome as a lost cultural high mark which ought to be emulated, together with disgust at corruption in places of power both religious and secular, gave early humanists a passion for reform and a strong interest in the effect of time's passage on history and on language. Time itself was often viewed as a corrupting influence, and enthusiasm for returning to pristine, uncorrupted texts motivated humanists to examine early biblical and philosophical texts in their original languages. This confluence of textual and historical interests enabled the development of keener philological tools and more accurate knowledge of the past. Some of the notable results included the demonstration (by Lorenzo Valla in the fifteenth century) that the Donation of Constantine, in which the fourth century emperor supposedly granted the pope political authority over Roman lands, was written centuries after Constantine's rule; and the narrowing of the biblical canon (in the sixteenth century) to exclude from Protestant bibles the books that came to be known as the Apocrypha.

Over the whole course of rhetoric's history, topics of invention were not simply an aspect of the arts of discourse, however. They were also a critical component of the acquisition of knowledge. Since at least the time of Plato, rational discourse had been

¹¹ Binns's chapter on "Ciceronianism in Sixteenth-Century England" summarizes how the emulation of a "clear, readable and elegant Latin prose style, largely modelled upon that of Cicero" had transformed Latin style in England by the latter half of the century (270).

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a primary means of discovery about the world. Tools of investigation included methods of logical inference, ways of making statements (about any subject), and methods of inducing belief in statements or claims. Aristotle's systematization of these tools, which was enormously influential, divided logical inference into syllogistic reasoning (*Prior Analytics*), scientific demonstration (*Posterior Analytics*), and probabilistic reasoning (*Topica*), along with an analysis of faulty reasoning (*De sophisticis elenchis*, meaning misleading or fallacious refutations). Topics of invention enter Aristotle's discussion of probabilistic reasoning in his text *Topica*. Such reasoning, which grounds an argument in broadly accepted beliefs rather than demonstrated truths, Aristotle deemed as especially suited to inquiries in which conflicting viewpoints and argument could lead to greater understanding; the term for this kind of logical argument or exploration was dialectic. Aristotle's discussion of this kind of logic drew in as "topics" many of the analytical terms from other sections of his logical corpus. For example, one of the ten categories for analyzing sentence predicates is "relation," which can include proportions of one thing to another (such as double or half), comparisons (such as lesser or greater, superior or inferior), terminological relation (between words having the same root, e.g. between "perceived" and "perceptible"), part to whole (wing to bird), contrasting and oppositional relations (of various kinds, such as contrasts between light and dark, or opposition between logical and illogical), and so on. Many of these same concepts appear in Aristotle's discussion of kinds of arguments in *Topica*, and continue to appear in later lists and analyses of topics of invention. The same can be said of Aristotle's discussion of definition, which employs the concepts of genus and species, among others. Defining

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something by examining its genus and species is discussed in the *Posterior Analytics*, and also in *Topica* and many later treatments of topics of invention by other authors.

Although Aristotle gives a thorough treatment of the bases of arguments and errors to guard against, he provides little by way of example in his treatise *Topica*. He does say that this type of reasoning is useful for analyzing ethical choices, logical problems, and also for questions about the physical world (105 b 19-26). In Aristotle's system of knowledge acquisition, this latter area is investigated primarily using the methods of the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*; but dialectical reasoning to ascertain probable answers is necessary for analyzing the "ultimate bases of each science" (i.e. each field of knowledge). The need to draw in probable reasoning arises because the general givens fundamental to each field, upon which further scientific demonstration in that field depends, are built through a process of consensus that develops "generally accepted opinions on each point" (101 a 37- 101 b 41). Hence, although Aristotle distinguishes two different kinds of logical analyses and these seem to apply to entirely separate domains, one for certain knowledge and another for probable truths, both kinds of processes underlie scientific demonstration, and the resulting bodies of knowledge are only as reliable as the "generally accepted opinions" on which they rest.

These two kinds of logic remained formally demarcated until the Renaissance, but philosophical (and theological) discussions of the ontological questions favored by late medieval scholastic philosophers inevitably intermingled the two because widely accepted axioms (which would not be accepted today) underpinned essential parts of their analyses. Humanist reformers who wanted to shift focus from what they viewed as overly esoteric investigations of mind and ontology to more practical, ethical

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questions sought to use ordinary language rather than the technical vocabulary developed by scholasticism. Lorenzo Valla was a pioneer in this effort, attempting to replace Aristotelian concepts and terminology with simpler concepts utilized in everyday reasoning. He treated the syllogism not as uniquely capable of demonstrating truth, but as one form of reasoning among many, all united by use of the topics to guide inquiry.¹² Valla and, later in the century, Agricola both attempted to unify the distinct domains of dialectic and rhetoric, treating dialectic as the part of rhetoric covering the construction of reasoned arguments. This altered emphasis has been called a dilution and misdirection of logic by some critics, most notably Walter Ong (1983), who strongly objected to Agricola's obliteration of the distinction between demonstration on the one hand and probable inference on the other. Viewed from the perspective of a widened range of inquiry across a whole spectrum of disciplines encouraged by this reorientation in the arts of discourse, however, rather than from the perspective of twentieth century developments in formal logic, the focus of humanists on a set of investigative tools available to knowledge seekers outside of the traditional academic strongholds had the effect of opening up the range of subject matter and legitimizing a greater diversity of opinions. Aristotelianism remained strong in universities, but its grip was loosened.¹³ These changes in the role of language arts were only part of the story, of course; overseas exploration, commercial expansion, technological innovations, increasing state power and sponsorship of various kinds of

¹² Mack 1993: 32. Valla's anti-Aristotelian philosophic work *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* is one of the major subjects of study in Mack's *Renaissance Argument*.

¹³ See, e.g., Copenhaver and Schmitt. Howell provides an overview of major cultural shifts associated with logic and rhetoric between 1500 and 1700.

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investigation, and proliferation of conflicting religious doctrines all contributed to new attitudes toward which areas needed investigation. Moreover, this reorientation of verbal discourse in knowledge acquisition eventually yielded in turn to a growing emphasis on mathematics for more reliable investigative tools, as shown by Timothy Reiss in *Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe* (1997).

Before returning to Agricola's textual interpretive techniques, I want to briefly mention two other types of topics. One type pertains to the speaker's self-presentation and his means of influencing audience reception. These kinds of topics were especially important for the introductory statement (exordium) and concluding section (peroration) of judicial speeches. Cicero discussed such topics, among others, in his early, diffuse text *De inventione*, which treats judicial oratory at length, and which I employ in Chapter 1. The other type is what were termed "commonplace" topics, notions and sayings which were repeated in literature from ancient times down through the Renaissance. E. R. Curtius's compendium *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* discusses a great number of these; and such traditional authoritative statements sometimes appeared as a regular type of topic (authoritative judgment and witnesses, for example, form part of Cicero's seventeenth topic in his own text *Topica*).

The renewed focus in the Renaissance on dialectical topics of invention, as part of the humanist orientation toward ethical action and toward revised methods of knowledge acquisition—and interpretation of texts in service of those goals—provides the historical context for Agricola's innovative methods of textual analysis. Although Agricola's particular list of topics was not widely adopted in other textbooks, his method of logical analysis was utilized and disseminated by a number of influential

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teachers of the sixteenth century, including the German scholar Melanchthon and the French controversialist Ramus (Mack 1993: 299).¹⁴ The influence of such methods in England is assessed by Mack in his study of English Renaissance rhetorical culture, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (2002). He finds that although Agricola's textbook was seldom, if ever, adopted in England below the university level, grammar school instruction nevertheless included interpretation of literary texts using dialectical reading methods traceable to Agricola.¹⁵ Schoolmasters, as well as commentators on school texts, emphasized examining "structure, narrative and character" within a text (2002: 47; see also 297, 300, 301). By focusing on analyses of relatively large pieces of text, these methods countered the tendency to fragment texts inherent in the process of culling commonplaces and moral exempla, aspects of Renaissance (as well as medieval) reading practices that have received a great deal of critical attention. The subject matter of interpretive analyses preserved in textbooks, other kinds of printed texts, and handwritten sources such as student notes, often included ethical issues as an important component. Such "analysis of texts proved to be one of the most enduring innovations of humanist dialectic," in England and elsewhere (Mack 2002: 74). The intertwining of dialectical reading practices with ethical questions receives further attention in Mack (2005).¹⁶ Although they were probably more a reflection of these

¹⁴ Meerhoff (1990, 2001) describes Melanchthon's support for Agricola's method of analyzing a whole text as a chain of arguments drawn from dialectical topics (33).

¹⁵ For university statutes listing Agricola's text see Mack (1993: 55).

¹⁶ Ethics, along with history, was one of the hallmarks of the new *studia humanitatis*, as discussed by Paul Kristeller. In his 2005 article Mack suggests that Shakespeare structured *King Lear* as a series of arguments for and against moral propositions, often expressed as *sententiae*, and that such structuring derives from his reading of Montaigne, together with pedagogical exercises from the *Progymnasmata*
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changes in curricula than agents of change themselves, English-language adaptations of Agricola, Melanchthon, and Ramus received moderate circulation in the sixteenth century.¹⁷

A separate path to the kind of textual analysis promoted by Agricola can be traced through Erasmus and Melanchthon. Whereas Agricola seemed most interested in interpreting classical texts, Erasmus and Melanchthon viewed analysis of the ancients as a necessary but clearly subordinate exercise whose ultimate purpose was acquiring tools to enable better understanding of biblical texts. In *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition* (1997), Kathy Eden traces methods of textual analysis deriving from Cicero that were applied by Renaissance humanists, including Erasmus and Melanchthon, to the bible; these educators speak admiringly of Agricola but reached similar kinds of analysis via a different path. The analytical techniques traced by Eden derive from methods of *interpretatio scripti* employed by Cicero in legal contexts, when the application of a general law, written to cover a wide range of circumstances, needed to be interpreted and perhaps qualified to fit the circumstances of a particular

¹⁶ (...continued)

such as fables and *chreia*, which ask the student to explain and support or critique a moral story or moral saying, and exercises using collections of proverbs such as Erasmus's *Adagia*. Mack does not cite the studies by Joel Altman or Marion Trousedale mentioned above on the more general role played by disputation and arguing all sides of a question (*in utramque partem*) in the structures of Tudor and Shakespearean drama.

¹⁷ One of Melanchthon's texts, *Institutiones rhetoricae*, was adapted into English fairly early in the sixteenth century by Leonard Cox (published 1532 and 1535). Agricola's list of topics received fairly broad English dissemination in *The Rule of Reason*, a mid-sixteenth century text by the Protestant pedagogue and diplomat Thomas Wilson (1551; reprinted about half a dozen times before 1585; Wilson xi). English adaptations of Ramus's treatise on dialectic (which was first published in French in 1555 and went through many editions and modifications; see Bruyère) were published in 1574 by Roland MacIlmaine (*The Logike of the Moste Excellent Philosopher P. Ramus, Martyr*) and 1584 by Dudley Fenner (*The Artes of Logike and Rhetorike*; the latter work included an adaptation of the Ramist treatise on rhetoric by Omer Talaesus).

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case. To achieve true justice or equity (*aequus*), it might be necessary to examine the intent of the law and what circumstances it was originally intended to cover, and to compare those expectations to the circumstances at hand and the ethical temperament of the accused. Eden shows that these methods were later modified by Quintilian, Plutarch, and Augustine. Quintilian applied these techniques to a variety of non-legal kinds of texts. Plutarch applied them to schoolroom interpretations of poetry. Eventually Augustine drew on them in his approach to biblical interpretation, which emphasized divine inspiration over human authorship and identified the intent or *voluntas* of every part of the bible as promoting *caritas*. In each reworking of these techniques, the circumstances of writing, the main thrust of the work, and its implied ethical intent, all remained important features. Erasmus and Melanchthon freshly applied these ancient interpretive techniques by identifying a biblical book's writer, its early audience, its primary subject matter, and its overall intent. They wanted to contextualize historically and linguistically each book in the bible, aims which set these humanists apart from their scholastic predecessors. Erasmus disdained the fourfold method of biblical interpretation prevalent in the later Middle Ages, which searched for literal, moral, allegorical, and eschatological senses of virtually every biblical passage. In his rhetorical textbooks, Melanchthon frequently used biblical texts along with ancient ones to illustrate analytical procedures. The Renaissance recovery of ancient *interpretatio scripti* techniques is of course what lies behind reformists' reworking of the biblical canon and the eventual Protestant rejection of books which they termed "Apocrypha," by which they meant inauthentic texts masquerading as canonical ones and accepted uncritically by earlier generations.

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Thus, interpretation in both sacred and secular texts focused on identifying key subject matter and major issues, identifying ethical qualities of the persons represented and their actions, while also keeping in mind the authorship, intent, and audience of the whole work. Identification of topics of invention was often an important part of the analysis. If such procedures were indeed widespread modes of interpretation, as well as techniques for constructing texts, we ought to find many instances of topical guides embedded in texts such as I seem to have stumbled upon in Shakespeare's sonnets. These should go beyond the analyses offered in textbooks, such as the logical analysis of Paul's epistle to Philemon by Dudley Fenner in his English language textbook *The Artes of Logike*, discussed by Miriam Joseph (348-53). I offer here a few examples which suggest that the instance in Shakespeare's sonnets is not unique.

My first example is an explicit scriptural guide. In 1594, Pastor Edward Vaughan of St. Mary Woolnoth in London, believing that the plague afflicting London over the previous year was a punishment for lingering sins remaining from Queen Mary's Catholic reign, had his book on comprehending the bible printed to aid Protestants, "Gods spirit assisting," in the exercise of their scriptural devotions (K iii^v). Like Jerry Falwell after the events of September 11, 2001, Pastor Vaughan saw the hand of divine judgment in the human suffering of his countrymen. Unlike some of his contemporaries, Pastor Vaughan did not decry "sodomitical sins" and other vices, and exhort his readers to change their ways.¹⁸ Although he did urge his audience to stop Catholic practices such as use of rosaries and candles, his chief ethical restorative

¹⁸ "Sodomitical sins" is a phrase from the soldier and pamphleteer William Reynolds quoted by Katherine Duncan-Jones (2001: 55); Thomas Nashe's *Pierce Penniless* enumerates a host of plague-inducing vices (Duncan-Jones 2001: 57).

for his fellow citizens was textual study. The subtitle of his work explains quite clearly his aim: to teach “how to read, and in reading, how to vnderstand; and in vnderstanding, how to beare in mind all the bookes, chapters, and verses, contained in the holie Bible.” Vaughan’s purpose here is quite comprehensive. The main title, however, suggests to a modern ear a more elementary approach; it is *Ten Introductions*: to place in their memories the whole of the bible—not through rote recitation, but through a range of analytical and mnemonic tools. He begins his guide by providing what we would term a list of contents, which he calls “A briefe recitall of the generall heads or places of invention contained in this booke.” For Vaughan, the “places of invention” include a wide range of concepts: the usual kinds of general topics (applicable to any explanation or argument) such as definition, etymology, causes, effects, adjunct qualities, and various kinds of comparisons and contrasts; rhetorically oriented topics that pay attention to persons, places, and times of events or actions; and also various topics special to biblical study, such as commandments, kinds of ceremonies, and sacraments. He begins simply with the topic *nomen*, instructing his readers in his first “Introduction” to learn the names of every book in the bible in order (backwards and forwards), and then (applying the Aristotelian category of quantity) to learn the number of chapters in each. He continues in the second Introduction with the “argument” of every book, which includes a number of the rhetorical topics of person, time, and place: who wrote the book, approximately when, and for what audience and effect it was intended. He combines these situational topics with expository topics: what the book’s chief subject matter is, especially in terms of narration, which he conceived as a continuous sequence of events covering the sweep of human history on

the sacred stage, divided for convenience into episodes (some of which cross the boundaries of biblical books). He instructs his readers to make special note of who are the good men in every story, and who are the wicked men.

Excepting the thoroughness of Vaughan's narrative description, much of this procedure was a part of common humanist approaches to any text.¹⁹ In his second Introduction, he often begins his summary of the "argument" of each book with an etymological analysis of the name (*notatio*, Cicero's third topic in *Topica*). These etymologies refer to both Hebrew and Latin names, and occasionally Greek. Conscious of the bible as a historical document, he mentions what period of time each book covers (for example, Moses, who was born 2430 years after the creation, wrote Genesis about 850 years after the flood, and the Book covers the period from the creation until Joseph's death). Infused with God's spirit, Moses "spake of sundrie things which were done 2414 yeares before he was borne, and also profoundly of manie other things that should befall the people of Israel, euen vnto the birth of Christ" (B i^v). At the end of this Introduction, he provides a table of the ten stories he has delimited, where they are located within the sequence of books, and how many years each segment occupies (he includes the estimate of "Elias" on how long the tenth episode will be, from the birth of Christ to the world's end: 2000 years). This second Introduction takes up a large portion of Vaughan's entire text. His third Introduction is very short, explaining why the books termed Apocrypha have that title, and why in either factual material or moral teachings they are faulty and should not be read in the

¹⁹ Humanist introductions expanded the medieval *accessus*, which commonly prefaced texts and included the author's name and some biographical matter and an outline of the subject matter, often identifying the work's position within the curriculum.

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congregation (although they may be read at home). Other Introductions present topics special to books which are “Lægall,” “Sapientall,” and “Propheticall.” One Introduction (the fifth) is not his own writing, but an introduction to the “tenth story,” the final episode described in the fourth Introduction, written by Sir William Herbert, who died shortly before publication.²⁰ Vaughan’s use of traditional analytical topics in concert with biblical ones is evident in his list at the beginning of the eighth Introduction, which instructs the reader to ascertain whether the scripture in hand is “set foorth by” commandment, promise, ceremony, type or figure, prophecy, similitude, example, phrase, contradiction, parable, miracle, allegory, sacrifice, or sacrament (he briefly explains each of these terms). His tenth Introduction consists of instructions for perfecting one’s knowledge according to the principles he has outlined by repeatedly “noting,” or retrieving from memory and writing down as if in a commonplace book, all the information the reader has absorbed, organized under a set of forty-four headings. These headings, based on the topics etymology and adjuncts, are arrayed in four tables that give a one-word English translation for the first ten “fathers” in the biblical story (beginning with Adam; these have already been explained in the fourth Introduction), the second ten fathers, twelve biblical patriarchs, and twelve sites where the Israelites camped on the journey from Egypt to Canaan. In the tables, each English word is explained in terms of associated things or qualities.

Pastor Vaughan does not explain how this extraordinary act of knowledge acquisition he prescribes for his readers constitutes an ethical action. Like many other

²⁰ This William Herbert was a cousin of the more famous man of the same name who became the Earl of Pembroke and a patron of the King’s Men.

Protestants, he seems to have assumed that acts of reading and recollection will have a transformative power over the individual reader. At the end of the fourth Introduction he states that once the information he describes is “perfectly learned,” it “shall euer be remembred, with the encrease of knowledge, and with an admirable change in your selfe, to your comfort, and to Gods glorie” (E i^v). At the end of the tenth Introduction, he assures his readers that they will be able to speak “artificially [i.e. with adroit mastery] and diuinely of all things necessarie to saluation” (K 5^r). Presumably by knowing who are the “good” and who the “wicked” in every story, and then absorbing all the instructions for commandments, ceremonies, and sacraments, one would be so stuffed with examples and instructions for moral behavior that one could hardly help but do the actions required to be ready for salvation. (Being motivated to do all the work Vaughan expects might help in this regard.)

Vaughan’s approach may be extreme, but it is not unusual in kind. A more limited analysis, of twenty psalms, was published by Sir William Temple in 1605 and dedicated to the heir apparent of King James, young Prince Henry. Temple, a follower of Ramus, had been secretary to Sir Philip Sidney and in the 1580s had written for him a logical analysis of Sidney’s *Defense of Poetry*.²¹ In this later work, he analyzes each psalm for what the main “question” (*quaestio*) or proposition is, and then examines the sequence of arguments supporting that proposition. In the course of his analyses he identifies such features as syllogisms, arguments from causes and effects, and which

²¹ Temple analyzed Sidney’s *Apology* from a strictly logical standpoint, finding a number of logical flaws; see John Webster’s introduction to his translation of Temple’s analysis (1984: 27-38). Also see Kinney (1972) for the rhetorical plays used by Sidney; Kinney argues that Sidney wrote his defense in response to Stephen Gosson’s attack on poetry in his 1579 *Schoole of Abuse*.

actions the Psalmist advocates and which he dispraises. His aim, like Vaughan's, is to identify good versus bad qualities, and actions to be emulated versus actions to be avoided. Clearly he believed that logical exposition of the texts would enable the reader both to better understand the text and to act on its moral prescriptions.

Temple's analysis is one example of several genres of biblical interpretation which depended heavily on dialectic. In his chapter on religious discourse in *Elizabethan Rhetoric*, Mack observes that "logical techniques are very common in commentaries, controversial works and sermons," and that "religious writing is more informed by dialectic and disputation than any other genre" (2002: 267).

When it comes to English poetic texts, we have little in the way of such explicit published guides to interpretation, although we have excerpts from Renaissance English poetry used as examples in an occasional English text. In some textbooks (as in Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*) poetic examples are used as illustrations.

Abraham Fraunce, for instance, illustrated his Ramist logical textbook for lawyers, *The Lawiers Logike* (1588), with examples from Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar*; many of his examples illustrate common topics of invention (Fraunce calls them "canons"). But repeated examples do not add up to interpretation of an entire work. We do have some annotated poetic texts, such as Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar*, which was published anonymously in 1579 with notes by the unidentified "E.K." The annotations give some limited narrative context, identify allusions, and occasionally provide moral commentary. In a somewhat similar vein, Thomas Watson provided his own notes for each poem in his sonnet sequence *Hekatompathia* (published 1582); these notes provide brief summaries and information on sources and allusions for individual poems. In the

French vernacular, however, we have an example of a French sonnet sequence published with commentary, Muret's annotated edition of Ronsard's *Amours*, published in 1553.²² This text provides a hint of the kind of interpretive reading I am proposing. Much of Muret's commentary explains Ronsard's conceits and references ancient sources, particularly Ronsard's use of Greek literature. Similar in vein to E.K.'s annotations on *The Shepheardes Calender*, Muret's notes do not attempt to provide a connected interpretation for the entire work, only occasionally cross-referencing across various poems. But Muret does begin his annotation of Sonnet 1 by explaining the rhetorical goal of the opening lines, together with how that goal is achieved. The goal is to make readers attentive; and the means of doing so is one of the principal topics of invention, effect. The sonnet Muret annotates offers its readers a vivid portrait, using the figure *enargia*, of love's effect on the speaker. The speaker is depicted as surmounted, assaulted, and vanquished by the Love god (*comme un Dieu me surmonte, / Comme il m'assaut, comme il se fait vainqueur*; in his commentary Muret identifies this god as *Amour*, or *Cupidon*). The readers are thus enticed to witness a voyeuristic spectacle in which Cupid gains honor as a result of the speaker's shame (*il reçoit un honneur de ma honte*) and his heart's enslavement (*nôtre coeur son esclave demeure*), while the speaker is only too happy to live with a poisoned dart embedded in his flank (*je sui' trop heureux / D'avoir au flanc l'eguillon amoureux / Plein du venin*) (Ronsard & Muret 15). The vividness of this description is not lessened by the fact that these tropes are thoroughly traditional. The seriousness of the effect of love on the

²² Quotations are from Ronsard & Muret, 1999. Marc-Antoine de Muret was Ronsard's former teacher, and was a man "à la mode" in 1552-1553 (Ronsard & Muret, p. XI).

speaker is amplified in Muret's commentary, which explains that poets often use terms of the body (such as flank, heart, and so on) to signify the more essential part, the soul or spirit (*l'ame ou l'esprit*; Ronsard & Muret 16). Muret's comment lends support to the views of De Grazia (1980) and Roche that post-Petrarchan sonnet sequences continued to focus on moral confusion and errors of the will.

Although we have no English sonnet sequence accompanied by a commentary, I suggest that there are English sonnet sequences in addition to Shakespeare's which show the stamp of inventional topics deployed as guides for the reader. Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella*, Daniel's *Delia*, and Spenser's *Amoretti*, among others, begin with sonnets which set out the ostensible cause for their speakers' sonnet writing; the reason given is usually to please the mistress, and sometimes to gain her pity. The first several sonnets of each of these sonnet sequences can be analyzed using the first several of Ramus's topics, including cause, effect, subject, and adjunct (associated quality). In placing "cause" first, Sidney, Daniel, and Spenser follow Ramus's emphasis on understanding reasons for things. Sidney's first sonnet in fact provides a little chain of causes, which turn out to be the rhetorical goals of teaching, pleasing, and moving: Loving his mistress, he wants to show his love in verse so that the "the deare She might take some pleasure of my paine,/ Pleasure might cause her reade, reading might make her know,/ Knowledge might pitie winne, and pitie grace obtaine."²³ This sequence is a *hoped-for* series of causes, rather than a factual one; the final cause, in Aristotelian terms the ultimate reason why something is done or undertaken, is

²³ This causal chain employs the figure *gradatio*. Quotations from Sidney are from *Poems*, ed. William A. Ringler, Jr.; those from Spenser are from *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser*. Daniel's sonnets are from *Poems and a Defence of Ryme*, ed. Arthur Colby Sprague.

obtaining the mistress's favor. Spenser's opening sonnet in *Amoretti* also provides a rhetorical goal, but instead of pleading for favor the sonnet stops short at the goal of pleasure. The speaker expresses the hope that his verse (broken down into the pages, inky marks, and rhyming form which constitute that verse) will please his mistress, instructing his "Leaves, lines, and rymes" to "seeke to please her alone." Daniel's opening sonnet employs a metaphor which likens the cause of his writing to a force of nature, one of Ramus's kinds of efficient cause: "Vnto the boundles Ocean of thy beautie/ Runs this poore riuer, charg'd with streames of zeale:/ Returning thee the tribute of my dutie,/ Which heere my loue, my youth, my playnts reueale." Daniel's speaker thus initially seems to write out of necessity rather than choice, but this sense of inevitability is modified by the next metaphor, which calls this and ensuing sonnets the "booke of my charg'd soule." In part this is a "booke" of verse, but it is also an account book in which he enrolls the "deere expences" of his youth and asks the mistress to reckon justly with those expenses by crossing (i.e. crossing out, or cancelling) his "cares ere greater summes arise."

This brief analysis of the opening sonnet's connection to the topic "cause" in these three sequences leaves out a great deal that could be said about these sonnets, but the different ways in which the cause for writing is characterized in each sequence does begin to provide a simple guide for interpretation. In Sidney's sequence, the speaker is focused on rhetorical effectiveness and the "grace" or favor he hopes to gain as a result; readers can expect the speaker to press for this outcome. Spenser's speaker is more restrained, seeking not a response from the lady (at least as yet), but only her pleasure. This is true despite the fact that the terms he uses for his poetry ("harts close

bleeding book”) and for the lady (“my soules long lacked foode, my heavens blis”) indicate the ardent quality of his desire. The terms used by Daniel’s speaker, with his accounting book metaphor and his mention of “dutie” (in the sense of natural function as well as moral obligation) prior to his love and “playnts,” suggests that his bid for a response can be answered with something other than the intense personal intimacy which seems to be desired by Sidney’s and Spenser’s speakers. And indeed it may be that this sonnet sequence with its restrained style, dedicated in 1592 to Sidney’s sister, the Countess of Pembroke, was one factor in obtaining her patronage (he was for a time employed by her as a tutor to her son William Herbert, future Earl of Pembroke).²⁴

Sidney and Spenser’s ensuing three sonnets can be analyzed using Ramus’s next three major topics: effect, subject, and adjunct. Sidney follows his sonnet on cause (to obtain “grace”) with one depicting the effect of love on him in gradual stages, as he first liked, then loved, then was forced to follow love’s decrees. Like Ronsard’s speaker, he is enslaved but speaks of his condition in terms of “praise” (“I call it praise to suffer Tyrannie”); and he writes in part to make himself “believe that all is well” even though he is in a kind of “hell.” Spenser similarly follows his sonnet on cause with one that depicts in dark terms the effect of love on the speaker and a more pressing reason for writing. Love produces in the speaker “Unquiet thought,” which is going to “breake forth” from the “wombe” where it lurks like “vipers brood.” This

²⁴ Some of Daniel’s *Delia* was printed in the unauthorized 1591 edition of *Astrophil and Stella*. In his study of the circulation of Sidney’s manuscripts, Woudhuysen (376-82) suggests that Daniel himself appears to have had access, means, and motive to convey Sidney’s sonnets to the printer, along with his own, although the case for Daniel’s involvement remain circumstantial. Klein (138-41) also considers his involvement likely (previous examinations of the issue can be found in Klein’s notes 6-9, p. 264).

hungry offspring is likened to a viper's young because the live births of vipers were thought to kill the mother; the metaphor implies that the speaker's thought, bred in his heart, breaks open his heart (its "wombe") as it forces its way out. The metaphor also hints at a vicious or perhaps poisonous quality of the speaker's desire. The speaker bids this restless thought to entreat for "pardon" and "grace" from the mistress, and cherish her if it succeeds in gaining succor—or, alternatively, die if unsuccessful. As pointed out by Alexander Dunlop in the *Yale Edition*, the speaker's metaphor implies that he believes he will die from this viper-like desire. Both of these sonnets set up a conflict which calls for resolution, Sidney's between his speaker's subjugated state and his refusal to acknowledge it, and Spenser's between his speaker's initial focus on his mistress's pleasure and prerogatives (presented in Sonnet 1), and his subsequent focus (in Sonnet 2) on his own potentially vicious, and self-destructive, thought.

Both Sidney and Spenser follow their sonnets depicting love's effect with one that names or describes the subject of their praise, the mistress. Ramus's topic "subject" is a (grammatically oriented) substitute for the Aristotelian category "substance" and therefore implies an inherent and defining characteristic.²⁵ Sidney's speaker claims that his praise of "Stella" differs from other poets' extravagant phrases and comparisons, since he need only read "what Love and Beautie be" from Stella's face, and copy that down. The implication is that Stella embodies the essences of those qualities (in Neoplatonic terms, their Ideas). Spenser's speaker provides descriptive terms of the mistress, though like "love" and "beauty" they are still general: the

²⁵ The use of "subject" as a topic in Ramus is derived from Agricola, who in turn may have adapted it from Valla's reduction of Aristotle's ten categories to three in *Repastinatio dialecticae et philosophiae* (Mack 1993: 148, 146).

“soverayne beauty” of his lady has “huge brightnesse” and a “celestiall hew” which so astonishes him that his tongue cannot speak nor his pen write her “titles true.”

An irony in Sidney’s usage is that “love” at this point is an attribute of the speaker, not the lady. It is he who loves, not she. A similar irony occurs in Sidney’s fourth sonnet. Ramus’s fourth topic is “adjunct,” qualities not inherent in the subject. In the fourth sonnet, the speaker discusses the adjunct “virtue” but not as an adjunct of Stella. Instead he addresses virtue as an adjunct of himself, but one which he would just as soon dismiss: “Vertue alas, now let me take some rest.” He wishes to expel any remaining virtue because it awakens his reason and reminds him that his love for Stella is “vaine” (in the sense of foolish, as well as futile). Spenser’s fourth sonnet treats love as an adjunct of the “new yeare” “looking out of Janus gate.” Spring has long been identified as the season for love, but a reader alert to this association would note that the speaker is pressing his suit too early, since it is only January and yet he wants to call forth “fresh love” “out of sad Winters night.” One can infer that it is not in fact the new year which “wils [love] awake,” but the overanxious lover.

The opening few sonnets of Daniel’s *Delia* sound some of the same themes as Sidney’s earlier and Spenser’s later series, but do not immediately follow the opening sonnet on the cause of writing with sonnets describing the effects of love on the speaker and qualities of the mistress. Those subjects appear in sonnets 5 and 6. The intervening sonnets 2 through 4 treat the speaker’s verse from several angles: as “wailing” “Infants” who are to knock at her “hard hart”; as fit only for those similarly afflicted, who can sympathize (and because they are similarly blinded will not see the speaker’s “errours”); and as truthful messengers of passion seeking to intercede with

the mistress on his behalf, but also outpourings necessary to “unburthen” his heart. These three sonnets can be analyzed using some of Ramus’s various subcategories of “cause,” in particular some of the kinds of efficient cause (procreative: the infants are offspring of a father only, lacking a mother; efficient cause by accident or chance: the verses may incidentally move other sympathetic readers; efficient by necessity: the speaker *had* to unburden his heart). It appears that Daniel was in fact something of a stickler for detail; parts of the first sonnet can be understood as material, formal, and final causation in the Aristotelian tradition (concepts which Ramus employed as well): his verses as tributary streams paid to the “Ocean” of his lady are metaphoric versions of material causation; his verses as the book of his “soule” constitute formal causation (Ramus uses the soul of man as an example of a formal cause; Ramée 65); and of course gaining some kind of recompense is the final cause of the speaker’s verses. Sonnet 5 treats the “effect” of love on the speaker using a myth-like narration which compares his catching sight of his mistress to Actaeon accidentally glimpsing Diana; the effect on the speaker is that his “thoughts like houndes, pursue me to my death.” Sonnet 6, employing the topic “subject,” describes the mistress using a series of contraries (brows shade frowns, eyes are sunny; disdains are gall and her favors honey; beauty and chastity, once foes, “liue reconciled friends within her brow”). This conjunction of disparate qualities fits Ramus’s method for further analyzing any of his main topics by subdividing it and distinguishing aspects of various parts (Ramée 89).

These brief sample analyses of the systematic use of topics in the opening sonnets of Sidney, Daniel, and Spenser may not, perhaps, provide any profound or revelatory insights into these sonnet sequences. We already know that Sidney’s speaker

is highly rhetorical and that the sonnet sequence is shot through with irony. Daniel's self-presentation as literary heir to Sidney in his 1592 edition of *Delia* (and perhaps also in the unauthorized 1591 edition of *Astrophil and Stella*; see above fn 22) may have been a means of gaining the Countess of Pembroke's patronage (Klein 139-40). The rather startling image of the speaker's love as viper-like in Spenser's second sonnet highlights a harmful aspect of the speaker's desires needing reformation; later in the series, the lover's reproach of someone else's "venemous tounge" indicates that the "vile adders sting" no longer has any association with the speaker, who now defends his lady against someone else's "poysoned words" and "false forged lies" (sonnet 86). This need for the speaker's reformation, and its subsequent occurrence, have been recognized previously by Neely, Fox, and Klein.²⁶

The preceding brief sample analyses do give some idea, however, of the kinds of methods that late sixteenth century readers used for interpretation of texts. In the remainder of this study, I conduct an in-depth analysis of the guides in Shakespeare's *Sonnets* provided by use of Ciceronian rhetorical techniques, especially but not exclusively Cicero's seventeen topics of invention from his short text *Topica*. I begin in Chapter 1, "Rhetoric as Poetic," with a more familiar rhetorical structure, the organization of the procreation sonnets into a deliberative oration in verse. By the mid-twentieth century, rhetoric and poetry had come to be viewed as opposite ends of a spectrum which ranged from sincere personal outpouring (poetry) to insincere and

²⁶ The classic paper treating the rhetorical stance in *Astrophil and Stella* is by Lanham (1972). Sidney's use of irony is considered by Sinfield (1974, 1978, 1980), Levao, and Wood, among others. Neely (373-74) treats the speaker's reformation in Spenser's *Amoretti* briefly, and Fox (75-83), and especially Klein (188-215) do so more extensively.

manipulative, often institutional, verbal construct (rhetoric). Stated in rough terms, poetry was purely esthetic in value, while rhetoric was purely utilitarian. In Shakespeare's era, however, these two categories of discourse were nearly identical in both aims and methods, poetry simply drawing more extensively than other forms of composition on rhythm (and in the case of vernaculars, on rhyme). The twentieth century view no doubt accounts for some of the modern critical distaste for the procreation sonnets, which have often been regarded as insincere, indecorous, and largely irrelevant to the rest of the sequence. I counter this common critical assessment by two moves: situating Shakespeare's sonnets within the tradition of the theme's frequent appearance in educational textbooks, and discussing the cultural importance of procreation (and marriage). The sonnet speaker's stance on this important social issue also provides insight into his ethical character. Much of the chapter is devoted to demonstrating that the procreation sonnets contain all five traditional parts of an oration: exordium, narration, division, proof (including both confirmation and refutation), and concluding peroration. Further guidance to the speaker's *ethos* is provided by the extended peroration, which takes up a total of seven sonnets out of the seventeen.

In Chapter 2, "Shakespeare, Cicero, and Rhetorical Authority," I describe the one-to-one correlation between Cicero's seventeen topics and Shakespeare's seventeen procreation sonnets. Because Cicero's topics are relatively little known, and also because this kind of analysis is unfamiliar to modern literary critics, I have devoted a good deal of space to explaining the topics and showing in what ways they appear in each of the procreation sonnets. The overall effect of this deployment of classical

Ciceronian techniques, including both the oratorical structure discussed in Chapter 1 and the use of topics examined in Chapter 2, is one of a remarkable rhetorical virtuosity on the part of the sonnets' speaker (and on the part of the poet who created that speaker as well, of course).

While the procreation series introduces the speaker's *ethos*, two shorter sequences introduce the two sub-series traditionally recognized as the Fair Youth and Dark Lady sonnets. These shorter groups of five sonnets each employ five of Cicero's seventeen topics: the three topics of definition, comparison, and judgment (also termed testimony). These two shorter exordia in concert with the longer exordium of the procreation series provide introductions to the speaker's experience of four different kinds of human desire. Relying especially on the third sonnet of each sub-series (the *notatio* or *ethopoiea* sonnet, mentioned above), these four kinds of desire can be identified as a disinterested *caritas*, narcissistic self-love, a passionate *eros*, and a largely unmitigated sexual drive unrestrained by virtuous ideals concerning the merit of its object. In Chapter 3, "Shakespeare's Three Exordia and the Metamorphosis of Desire," I describe the two shorter exordia and discuss what the three exordia together suggest about the qualities of the speaker's desires, and what they together imply about the speaker. While these four types of desire are theoretically distinct, within the experience of the speaker they become entangled and their distinctions blur. Yet they never coincide in such a way as to fulfill the hope for reproductive fruitfulness expressed by the procreation sonnets. I check the accuracy of this assessment through sampling of later sonnets in each of the two major sub-series.

Another way to assess the validity of this interpretation would be to compare it

with judgments about Shakespeare's sonnets from his contemporaries. These are well known to be rare, and too general to be helpful in answering the kinds of questions modern critics have raised. However, I believe I have discovered emulation of some of Shakespeare's themes by John Davies of Hereford. In Chapter 4, "Reader Response to Shakespeare's Sonnets," I describe a poem written by Davies to his "other self" Nicholas Deeble, although it begins by addressing someone named "good Will" before switching to address "Nic." In this poem Davies appears to pay homage to Shakespeare's sonnets addressed to a man; he includes eroticism like that in Shakespeare's Fair Youth sonnets, eroticism identified by recent critics as signifying homosexual desire. Since homosexual love is clearly not what Davies is writing about, despite his bawdy punning, Davies provides a limited but suggestive indication that Shakespeare's sonnets to the Fair Youth were interpreted, at least by some readers, as referring to a love that was categorized as passionate friendship rather than sodomitical desire. This poem and other verse by Davies, including his philosophical poem *Microcosmos*, provide evidence for the same categorization of desire that I trace in Shakespeare's sonnets using the three exordia as guides to interpretation.

Finally, armed with the preceding analyses employing the kinds of guides utilized by Shakespeare's contemporaries, in Chapter 5, "Reflections: Modern Critical Responses to *Shake-speare's Sonnets*," I examine some of the large claims about the meaning and import of Shakespeare's sonnets made by recent critics.²⁷ These claims include that the sonnets were the first expression of: modern subjectivity; of

²⁷ I include the hyphen as originally printed because Shakespeare's name appears frequently in this hyphenated form on title-pages bearing Shakespeare's name between 1598 and 1616.

consummated homosexual desire; and of a Reformation-inspired rejection of Christian allegory. Critics have seen the *Sonnets* as attempts to: manage a crisis in patriarchal fears about female subjectivity; manage a crisis of the aristocratic, feudal economy; and displace notions of sodomitical desire from homosexual acts onto heterosexual acts. All such hypotheses seem to rest on a desire to connect the *Sonnets* to major cultural shifts (or in the last case, a failed attempt at a cultural shift), perhaps as a way of accounting for the fact that Shakespeare's sonnets, like his plays, seem in some way to stand apart from those of his contemporaries. While all of these analyses provide insight into the sonnets, I believe that they also make overly ambitious claims about the cultural stakes the *Sonnets* engaged. I critique of some of these critical claims, and conclude with my own view that while the Shakespeare's sonnets make distinctions among categories of desire, those categories are not those of modern gender or sexuality, and the boundaries among the categories are permeable and are repeatedly breached in the experience of the speaker/lover/poet of the sonnets. In spite of this overlap, however, the various categories of human desire experienced by the speaker never coincide to result in reproductive fruitfulness. Instead, the disjunction of kinds of desire leads to a tragic sterility.

These interpretations arise from what I believe are interpretive techniques similar to the kinds of analysis that might have been done by Shakespeare's contemporaries. Although I apply them to poetry, they are techniques which could have been, and were, applied to virtually any kind of text. This analysis is thus not focused on what the *Sonnets* mean *qua* poetry, nor does it seek to pin down any quality accounting for the appeal of this set of poems, which I feel as strongly as the next

Sonnets fan (for I am a fan, as well as a critic). In fact I haven't been able to account for their appeal to me, which remains mysterious. Yet by examining the issues raised through studying these rhetorical techniques, I hope to facilitate an enhanced appreciation of how these sonnets, as a group, express and comment upon some of the complexities and nuances in the experience of human desire.

My exploration of these analytical techniques should not be taken to imply that I subscribe to the claim that present-day interpretations must be circumscribed by what the author had in mind (whether consciously or not). Readers are free to interpret, even to creatively misunderstand, a literary text. But inventing a modern meaning is not what the critics I discuss in Chapter 5 were attempting. Most, at least, were attempting to discover something about what Shakespeare had in mind, and in some cases, specifically what he had in mind for some readers of the sonnets.²⁸ This is what I am attempting to discover as well. And what I propose is that in his speaker, Shakespeare (consciously) portrays a mind and heart—in the phrases of his day, intellect and affect—which do not follow the well-trod paths of a familiar moral universe, the kind of universe that (for instance) John Davies of Hereford inhabits. Despite the intertextual links between these two writers which I examine in Chapter 4, Shakespeare presents the different kinds of desire described by Davies (themselves more complex than the Aristotelian categories of *eros* versus *philia* identified by modern critics) as inevitably interwoven rather than clearly separable. Moreover, Shakespeare completely omits one of Davies' primary categories, love of God, so that

²⁸ For example, according to Bruce Smith in *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (1991), Shakespeare had in mind an explicit homosexual discourse for in-group readers.

the exploration of human desire in the *Sonnets* takes place within the compass of human relationships, with no recourse to some alternatives available within Shakespeare's contemporary readers' horizons of expectation. (The one sonnet sometimes taken as an exception to this rule, 146, treats not God but death; and its argument for escaping death relies on a sophistical quibble and therefore lacks force. I consider this sonnet in Chapter 4.) Colin McGinn, in *Shakespeare's Philosophy*, identifies the author of the plays as "a beady-eyed naturalist of raging human interiority and social collision" (16), and his comment is just as apt for the sonnets as for the plays.

In sum, the claims I make concerning Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are both smaller and larger than those of previous critics. They are smaller in that I do not think that the sonnets engaged major cultural stakes, or made large claims about something new under the sun or about the value of either homosexuality or heterosexuality (I anachronistically use our terms as a rough equivalent to comparable, though not identical, concepts available in Shakespeare's day). My proposals are larger, in that they advance the claim that the *Sonnets* cohere both structurally and as an integrated exploration of the experience of human desire—and the frustration of desire—in manifold varieties (though not the whole universe of human possibilities). They are, after all, love poetry.²⁹ And with that I turn to the treatment in Shakespeare's sonnets of a type of desire basic to life, yet in the context of the procreation argument looked at askance by many critics: the desire for offspring.

²⁹ While acknowledging the argument advanced by Marotti (1982) that often love poetry was a cover for other issues and that the quest for patronage is relevant to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, I still regard varieties of love as their primary concern.

Chapter 1. Rhetoric as Poetic in the Procreation Sonnets

Most Renaissance sonnet sequences open with one or a few sonnets that offer some kind of explanation for the sonnets the reader has in hand. The *locus classicus* of sonnet sequences, for instance, Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, addresses the reader/listener as "you who hear in scattered rhymes the sound of those sighs with which I nourished my heart" (*Voi ch' ascoltate in rime sparse il suono/ di quei sospire ond' io nudriva 'l core*); the *suono* of the *rime* is the poet's sighs transmuted into the sound of poetry.¹ Some of the best known English Renaissance sequences open with a reference to writing—either to the process of poetic creation itself or to its end result: Daniel's speaker unclasps "the booke of my charg'd soule"; Spenser's persona addresses the "leaves, lines, and rhymes" of his verse that will happily, and presumably in contrast to the poet himself, be held and viewed by his mistress; and of course Sidney's poet-persona is the most explicit about the process and professed aims of his poetic invention. He attempts to construct verse that will achieve the three rhetorical goals of informing his mistress (about his woe), delighting her with his verse, and—most importantly, persuading her to love him.²

Sidney's speaker is thus wonderfully exact about his supposed aims, although he is more confused about the process of rhetorical invention than Sidney himself could ever have been. Like a schoolboy learning through imitation, the speaker has applied

¹ Sturm, and references cited therein, discusses the focus of the *Canzoniere* on the process of poetic activity. Both the English translation and the Italian original of Petrarch are from Durling's edition of *Petrarch's Lyric Poems*.

² See the Introduction for more on the opening sonnets of Sidney, Daniel, and Spenser.

himself to studying others “inventions fine”; yet his own “words came halting forth, wanting invention’s stay;/ Invention, nature’s child, fled step-dame study’s blows.” He claims to be stymied, “great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes.” Combining chastising nurse with midwife, his Muse calls him “Fool” and admonishes him to “look in thy heart and write.” In a brilliant rhetorical move, this Muse, a classic piece of poetic artifice, appears to license not improved rhetorical artistry but heartfelt sincerity, and hence to induce the birth of the rest of the sonnet sequence.

I bring attention to this sonnet for two reasons, one general and one pertaining to Shakespeare’s modification of Sidney’s material. The general point, which cannot be stressed too much, is the identity in this sonnet between the aims of rhetoric and of poetry. Sidney’s speaker may claim that his verse presents what is in his heart, but what he reports is a series of speech acts directed toward specific persuasive goals. Similar persuasive aims receive attention at the opening of other English sonnet sequences, including those of Daniel and Spenser, as discussed in the Introduction.³ This assimilation of the goals of rhetoric into the domain of poetry was part of the greater emphasis put on social aspects of language during the Renaissance. The

³ Other examples include Bartholomew Griffin in his sequence *Fidessa*, who says he writes to “purchase some relief” from his mistress; Giles Fletcher in *Licia* claims he writes to build a “temple to your name”; William Percy’s *Coelia* opens with a retrospective sonnet in which he asks both his mistress and other readers to view his sorrows and judge how undeservedly he, a “spotlesse lover,” was sentenced for no reason. Other opening sonnets offer a variety of rationales for the sequence that follows. In a sonnet addressed “To the Reader,” Michael Drayton prefaces his sequence *Idea* with a sonnet written in counterpoint to Petrarch: the reader should not expect a series devoted to passion for a mistress, and will find “No farre-fetch’d sigh” or “ah-mees”; instead the poems mirror his roving mind, ranging sportively over all humors. Thomas Watson’s early sequence *Hekatompathia* (1581) opens with a comparison between the speaker’s states before and after he began to love. Fulke Greville’s *Caelica*, not published during his lifetime, opens with no preliminaries at all, simply two poems with contrasting depictions of a woman: one employs elevated terms in keeping with the Neoplatonic concept of love as uplifting, and the second uses sharply debased terms (e.g. “Fair dog”).

humanist Agricola, for example, placed language's communication function front and center: the purpose of language was that "one person makes another the sharer of his mind" (McNally 407). This emphasis contrasts with the medieval tendency to focus on language as a medium to ascertain and describe truth. Poetry in particular was often viewed as the medium for portraying moral and philosophical truths through narrative, appealingly set forth in the beauty of figurative language and allegory.⁴ With the elevation in status of vernacular poetry initiated by Dante, and an elevation in the stature of love poetry by Dante, Petrarch, and Machaut, came manuals in vernacular languages (especially French and Italian) which included information on rhythm and rhyme as well as figurative language (in France, the domain of vernacular poetic techniques came to be known as "Second Rhetoric" to distinguish it from the traditional modes of prose writing).⁵ The shift over the course of the sixteenth century from an emphasis on elaborately patterned poetic structures and ornamentation to a closer integration between classical rhetoric and poetic methods is evident in discussions by French literary theorists, who emphasized that the methods of composition treated by classical rhetoricians such as Cicero and Quintilian, from invention through arrangement (or disposition) and style (elocution), applied equally to poetry and prose.⁶

⁴ In his *Vita di Dante*, Boccaccio defends poetry by explaining that "the poets reveal in their inventions the causes of things, the effects of virtue and vice, and what we ought to avoid and to pursue" (as paraphrased by Trimpi 360).

⁵ See e.g. Gordon 15; Kelly 1.

⁶ Gordon 39-40. Gordon discusses writings by Sebillet, Du Bellay, Peletier, and Ronsard. He suggests that readers may have searched for topics of invention while reading poetry (as well as prose), citing the recommendation for such a method in the rhetoric manual of Cyprian Soarez (41). Mack mentions that Soarez's manual *De arte rhetorica libri tres* (which became the official rhetoric manual of the Jesuits) reflected Agricola's teachings in some areas (Mack 1993: 300).

Secondly, Sidney's sonnet sequence is important because it provided the benchmark for subsequent English sonnet writers to imitate or overgo, or to cope with in some fashion. Most writers opened with either a persuasive goal akin to Sidney's, or with a claim that they were revealing their mind for some other purpose. Barnabe Barnes in *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, for instance, says he writes to enable his mistress to compare her "matchless beauty" with his "endless grief," while the speaker of the anonymous *Zepheria* writes to untomb his griefs. Shakespeare opted for none of these kinds of openings. Instead he reversed the literal and the non-literal domains of Sidney's opening sonnet. Sidney enumerated desirable rhetorical skills while figuring poetic creation as a reproductive process. Shakespeare, on the other hand, silently deployed those rhetorical skills in an oration in verse which urges a reproductive act that is no longer a metaphor for poetic creation, but literal biological propagation. Figurative (poetic) creation appears only belatedly in the opening set of the procreation series, in sonnets 15-17.

Sidney used a traditional trope in linking poetic production to biological reproduction, and Shakespeare's linking of the two is unsurprising. What critics have wondered at is the length of time the link takes to appear (not until the fifteenth sonnet), and the use of the procreation theme in this literal way. Especially because the reproductive theme never reappears in the rest of the Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, its extended appearance in a position of prominence at the opening of the series has often been regarded as odd for a set of love sonnets—if indeed it is an opening, for the question of the authority of the 1609 published order has constituted a perennial caveat. Critics have viewed the procreation sonnets as disingenuous and smacking of work-for-

hire. C. S. Lewis, for instance, views the procreation theme as odd, Barber calls it "curious" (9), and Crosman suggests the speaker's "choice of topic" is one of "impertinent familiarity" and that the first seventeen sonnets are larded with "insincerity" (475, 487). Marotti, in his study of the circulation of Shakespeare's sonnets, views the suggestion that the procreation series was commissioned as plausible (1990: 150), a suggestion mentioned by Fineman (251) and promoted earlier by Rowse (xlv). Critics who regard the sonnets to the youth as overtly homosexual, including Seymour-Smith, Pequigney, and Bruce Smith, necessarily view the procreation series as anomalous in some way, since, as Seymour-Smith puts it, *entia non sunt multiplicanda* (25); for Pequigney and Smith, the "problem" of the procreation sonnets continuing "for so long a stretch" (Pequigney 7) is solved by allowing them to portray the speaker falling in love with the beautiful youth before the explicit declaration of homosexual desire in sonnet 20, which "changes everything" (Smith 1991: 256).

In short, many critics have regarded the procreation set as oddly disconnected with the rest of the sonnets.⁷ Commentary has registered a note of discomfort with the procreation message, which seems at once unduly mundane yet also, in the context of lyric poetry, indecorous. Perhaps New Critical attitudes which sought to isolate poetry in an aesthetic sphere apart from the utilitarian world of prose, a world contaminated by economic and political interests, still casts a long shadow over critical attitudes. As utterances which at least on their face seem to exist less to evoke an aesthetic response

⁷ The two critics who regard the *Sonnets* as dissecting an interior duality rather than addressing any male or female lover, Roche and Winny, either provide no account of the procreation sonnets at all (Roche) or mention them in passing as a "witty display" of variation on a theme, which demonstrates that Shakespeare "is clearly not concerned to tell a story" anywhere in the *Sonnets* (Winny 28).

than a life-changing decision, the procreation sonnets strongly violate the modernist credo exemplified in MacLeish's *Ars Poetica*, "a poem should not mean/ But be." Even though critical trends over the last thirty years have acknowledged and explored many ways in which literary texts, like all discourse, bear cultural freight, the procreation sonnets may nevertheless approach too near that modernist bugaboo against which all mid-twentieth century schoolchildren needed fortification, propaganda.

Whether or not such factors form a part of critical attitudes toward the procreation sonnets, the recent critical focus on subject formation has been more conducive to studying the remaining Fair Youth and Dark Mistress sonnets than the procreation series. The frequent introspection of these latter love lyrics is amenable to analyses of subjectivity, of gender concepts and early modern attitudes toward sexuality; the procreation sonnets seem largely irrelevant to those concerns. Studies of interiority have a great deal to work with in the bulk of Shakespeare's sonnets, which (in contrast to Sidney's sonnet sequence, for instance) seldom incorporate dialogue or reported dialogue, or otherwise seem to speak language one might hear in the ordinary world of social transactions—the procreation series excepted. This is so even though direct address occurs more frequently in Shakespeare's sonnets than in any other of the familiar English sonnet sequences, and the Fair Youth sonnets attend to the decorum of negotiating praise and blame with an addressee of higher social class.⁸ Perhaps this perception that the sonnets engage in interior speech is one reason a majority of critics seems to agree that a series of sonnets urging a man to have children simply cannot be

⁸ The degree of vehemence expressed in parts of the Dark Mistress series seem to purposefully violate standards of decorum, and one effect is to reduce their plausibility as social transactions.

accounted for without recourse to some consideration external to the literary domain. Recent critical approaches which integrate cultural information into textual analyses, such as New Historicism and cultural materialism, encourage such avenues of thought. In his summary of Shakespeare in *Will in the World*, for example, Stephen Greenblatt states that the procreation sonnets read *as if* they were commissioned, and he suggests a specific recipient (237).⁹

Those critics who seek a literary justification for the procreation series point to its introduction of themes such as beauty and mortality, or regard it as a somewhat awkward narrative device.¹⁰ While I agree that the procreation sonnets work both thematically and narratively, over the course of this study I shall examine deeper connections between the procreation sonnets and the rest of Shakespeare's sonnets. In this chapter, I first discuss the familiarity of the procreation issue during the Renaissance and its importance as a social marker of male maturity and economic class. I then analyze the way this set works as a deliberative oration carefully constructed according to recognized organizational principles aimed at specific effects on the audience. Especially important to integrating the procreation sonnets into the rest of the sequence is Shakespeare's extensive use of topics appropriate to the concluding peroration, which takes up seven out of the seventeen sonnets. These topics work together to introduce the speaker's *ethos*, and his implied ethical disposition provides

⁹ In common with many others, Greenblatt suggests the Earl of Southampton as a possible recipient since he was under tremendous pressure to marry before his 21st birthday and had other poetry addressed to him on this theme. Such speculation derives in part from the fact that the Earl was the dedicatee of Shakespeare's two narrative poems in 1593 and 1594, though it must discount the printer Thorpe's dedication to a "Mr. W.H."

¹⁰ Crosman provides the most recent and thorough example of this latter line of reasoning.

an entrance to what the speaker values and his ways of addressing issues, such as his ability to praise without seeming to flatter, and his facility for interweaving admonition with praise.

Organization of these sonnets into a structured persuasive oration, although perhaps unsurprising, thus offers a view into the speaker's poetic and rhetorical capabilities. He is rhetorically highly skillful. Just how expert he is will become apparent in the topical structure I analyze in the next chapter. His facility with concepts and expression is marked by several features. He is prone to hyperbole, as the reader can see when he claims in sonnet 9 that the whole world will behave as the youth's widow and weep if the young man chances to die without children (to carry his likeness into the future). The speaker can combine gravity with a somber beauty and vividness, as in his descriptions of the "wastes of time" upon the once green and growing things of the world in sonnet 12. He can offer humor with a hint of humility, as in sonnet 14 when he treats with a light touch his inability to predict the future from astronomical signs while nevertheless being able to "prognosticate" from the "constant stars" of the youth's eyes. And extending that vein further, he can combine self-deprecation with a histrionic note edging into the comic when he suggests in sonnet 17 that his praise of the youth will one day be viewed as the product of an overblown poetic effusion, the "stretchèd meter of an antique [and antic] rhyme." This last sonnet of the procreation series raises a problem, already treated by Sidney as well as later English sonneteers, that would have been familiar to Shakespeare's original readers: how to express sincerity with eloquence, but in a way that does not savor of dissimulation and exaggeration. Many of the remaining Fair Youth sonnets touch on

the precariousness of walking this fine line between eloquence of expression and outright falsehood. Poets were exiled from Plato's ideal Republic because they were, inevitably Plato argued, liars; and the possibility of the speaker being similarly exiled from the company of his beloved is the source of repeated anxiety in the Fair Youth series until the feared separation finally comes to pass, or so it seems, when he is "impeached" for offering poetic "oblations" in exchange for public favors in sonnet 125.¹¹

Of course along with functioning to introduce the speaker to the reader of the sonnets, the procreation series also functions to link procreation and poetic creation, a trope used by Sidney as well as many other Renaissance writers. This connection has been discussed by so many critics of Shakespeare's sonnets that it does not seem necessary to discuss it here in any detail. As observed by Fineman, the fit of procreation to poetic creation is so apt that even though such a deployment of procreation was "unprecedented in the sonnet tradition as a whole, it nevertheless turns out to lend itself" with ease to "the elaboration and exemplification of familiar sonneteering conceits and motifs" (255). Indeed, attention to the link between biological reproduction in the procreation series and poetic reproduction of the youth in the remainder of the Fair Youth series has largely eclipsed attention to what the procreation argument counts for in and of itself. Much of my project in this study is an attempt to shine light on the significance of the procreation series, which does of course

¹¹ Another way to consider this dilemma is through the medium of the ancient Greek rhetorician Hermogenes' treatment (in his treatise *On Style*) of the expressive ideals of Beauty (*καλλος*) and Truth (*ἀλήθεια*). Patterson (134-41) discusses evidence for Shakespeare's familiarity with these two ideas (whether directly or indirectly) and his deployment of them in the *Sonnets*.

provide an introduction to the rest of the sonnets as many critics have observed, but also anchors the manifold treatment of desire later in the sonnets. And I begin here with an even more basic examination of familiarity and value of the procreation argument itself.

The Procreation Theme

The desire for one man to encourage a younger man to “uphold his house” jostles against present-day expectations that a sonnet sequence treats private passion.¹² This reproduction theme would have been both familiar and important, however, to Shakespeare’s early readers. The procreation question was part of a commonplace issue from ethical philosophy concerning whether a man should marry. One source of its familiarity was its frequent occurrence in the rhetoric and composition texts (classical as well as early modern), usually in a prominent place.¹³ Among the ancients, Quintilian’s first century *Institutio oratoria* (II.iv.25) and Aphthonius’s fourth century *Progymnasmata* (206^v) both give “whether a man should marry” as an example of a deliberative question; Aphthonius lists this as the first example of a civic question, concerning actions important to all citizens (in contrast to a “contemplative” or philosophical question). This view of the question’s wide currency prevailed in the Renaissance due also to renewed emphasis on the *vita activa* over the withdrawn

¹² I include in this category sonnets such as John Donne’s Holy Sonnets, which treat personal religious passion.

¹³ Peterson 72-73.

religious or scholarly *vita contemplativa*.¹⁴ One of Aphthonius's sample compositions is an argument promoting marriage (207^r - 209^v). Cicero's short text on argumentation, *Topica*, which I discuss extensively in the next chapter, includes a brief summary of the different types of issues, and his sample question concerning social duties is not the more general one of whether one should marry but the more narrow one treated in Shakespeare's procreation sonnets, whether a man should have children (xxii.86). All of these texts remained well known in the Renaissance, and a version of Aphthonius's text with mid-sixteenth century scholia was widely used in grammar school during much of the sixteenth century and beyond.

The continued importance of the marriage question is evident in the varied treatment it received in Renaissance rhetorical textbooks, some of which were used in universities and grammar schools. The reformist rhetorician Agricola, whose approach was widely influential although his particular text was seldom taught (Mack 1993), treats the question of whether a philosopher should marry (*De inventione dialectica libri tres*, II.2, fol. 368-72); we have Quintilian's testimony that this question was often debated in deliberative speeches (III.v.13). Erasmus's composition text for grammar school, *De conscribendis epistolis* (in which all compositions are in the form of letters), includes a sample argument promoting marriage (fol. XXX^r-XLIII^r). Erasmus's sample letter, written in 1498, is a fully developed argument printed independently several times in Europe and England in the early sixteenth century as *Encomium matrimonii*. Erasmus says he wrote this argument as an example of persuasion for

¹⁴ *Ciuiles sunt, quae actionem habent ciuitati accomodatam* (206^v). The term "consultative" (*consultatio*) is used in Aphthonius instead of deliberative.

William Blount, Lord Mountjoy, whom Erasmus was instructing in rhetoric (Erasmus 1998: 117; Devereux 17), but Erasmus has clearly drawn on an already familiar topic. His version updates Aphthonius's sample composition to the kinds of Christian and patrilineal concerns current in his own period, and employs considerably more advanced compositional techniques. In *De conscribendis epistolis* Erasmus, like Aphthonius, also includes a summary of how to develop the opposite view, against marriage (fol. XLIII^r-XLV^r). Such educational training in arguing on both sides of a question, *in utramque partem*, has been shown to be a key ingredient in humanist letters and its impact ranged well beyond the academic and literary spheres.¹⁵

The cultural stakes engaged by this question may be illustrated by the fact that Josse Clichtove, the Catholic polemicist who spent much of his lifetime combating Luther's doctrines, wrote and published a sharp critique of Erasmus's *Encomium*, treating it as an attack on the disciplines of religious orders and priestly celibacy.¹⁶ Clichtove's attack followed hard on the arrest of the French translator of Luther's and Erasmus's texts, Louis de Berquin, who had translated (but not printed) the *Encomium* as *Declamacion des louanges des mariage*. Erasmus followed his brief defense in 1526 (appended to another work) with a much more extensive one published in 1531, as part of his response to being condemned for heresy by the French authorities at the Sorbonne (for both texts see Erasmus 1998). Much of Erasmus's defense relies on dissociating himself from his speaker in the *Encomium* and claiming the whole text was simply aimed at teaching boys good Latin. The argument, he says, was not a general

¹⁵ Altman and Trousdale discuss this tradition in relation to drama.

¹⁶ The attack was part of Clichtove's text *Propugnaculum Ecclesiae*, printed in Paris, 1526.

claim about marriage being preferable in all circumstances (and hence, he acknowledges, should not have been published as an “encomium” since it was a persuasive rather than an encomiastic text); instead it was aimed to persuade a particular (fictional) youth, last of his lineage, to change his mind about his decision not to marry. Erasmus does admit, however, that he shares some reservations about celibacy requirements with his fictional speaker. The exchange between Erasmus and Clichtove illustrates how a fictional argument could be employed for political ends, whether or not its author had intended it to be so used. This fictional aspect gave the writer grounds for denying his intent was serious and expressed his own views. Erasmus’s sample epistle was put to polemical use again in England, when Richard Taverner translated it into English and had it printed in 1536. Dedicating the book to Thomas Cromwell, he used the work to attack clerical celibacy (Devereux 117).

The exchange between Erasmus and Clichtove probably lies behind another English version of the marriage argument in a rhetorical text. In his English language textbook on logic *The Rule of Reason* (first printed 1552), Thomas Wilson takes up the question Erasmus denied having engaged directly: marriage of priests. Using a technique of Agricola’s, which compared two terms in a proposition by systematically examining each via a set of topics, Wilson undertakes to prove the proposition that priests should marry (139-50).¹⁷ In his slightly later textbook *The Art of Rhetoric* (first printed 1553), Wilson again uses the marriage question, this time to present the

¹⁷ Agricola invented this method and used it to examine the question mentioned above, whether a philosopher should marry.

distinction between deliberative questions in dialectic versus rhetoric.¹⁸ On the first page of his main text (after the lengthy front matter), he explains that the general question "whether it be best to marry or to live single?" lies in the domain of dialectic; a question lies in the domain of rhetoric when it includes particulars of time, place, or persons, such as "Whether now it be best here in England for a priest to marry or to live single?" (45). A second example including particulars relates to the young King Edward VI, in connection with a political issue that would emerge again in Elizabeth's reign as a source of anxiety: "Whether it were meet for the King's Majesty, that now is, to marry with a stranger [foreigner] or to marry with one of his own subjects" (45). It is apparent that for Wilson, a Protestant who left England during the reign of Queen Mary and was incarcerated in Rome for heretical views in his books on logic and rhetoric, the marriage question carried significance well beyond that of textbook example.¹⁹ Like Aphthonius, Wilson includes a sample argument on the marriage question in his textbook *The Art of Rhetoric* (79-100), and the implicit polemical status of Erasmus's argument may have attracted Wilson to it, for that is the example he includes, translated (independently of Taverner's version) into English. *The Art of Rhetoric* was a popular text, published seven more times between 1560 and 1585 (*The Rule of Reason* was republished just twice).

Both Erasmus's letter-writing manual and an updated version of Aphthonius's text were widely used in English grammar schools of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Aphthonius's Greek text was translated into Latin by Agricola, and that

¹⁸ This same distinction is sometimes termed "thesis" and "hypothesis," from Greek terminology.

¹⁹ Wilson, *Art of Rhetoric* 6.

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translation was published in several forms: in London by Richard Pynson in about 1520, in several sixteenth century editions of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica* published on the Continent (such as that published in 1539 in Cologne and now available in facsimile), and in a version with extensive scholia by the Lutheran pastor Reinhard Lorichius, first printed on the Continent in 1542.²⁰ This latter version was reprinted in England and Europe many times during the next century and a half.²¹ Lorichius, like Erasmus in his compositional textbook *De conscribendis epistolis*, gives an argument on the other side of the question, dispraising marriage (1572 ed., 213^v - 215^v).²²

The Puritan-leaning Richard Rainolde's English adaptation of Aphthonius's text (*The Foundacion of Rhetorike*, 1563) also included a sample argument concerning marriage. Rainolde did not follow Thomas Wilson in using Erasmus's example; perhaps Erasmus's refusal to leave the Roman church, despite his reformist views, deterred Rainolde from this version. Or perhaps he simply wanted to steer clear of an already available version, translated by someone else. In any case, Rainolde used Aphthonius's example but inflected through a strongly Christian lens (fols. liiii^r, liiii^v - lix^r). The tenor of the argument suggests he was committed to promotion of marriage, and he did not provide an example of the contrary view. In the seventeenth century, the Puritan John Brinsley's advice text for grammar school masters, *Ludus Literarius*,

²⁰ Weaver.

²¹ Weaver. *The English Short Title Catalogue* (online edition) currently lists seventeen printings between 1572 and 1685, usually 3-5 years apart; other editions of this heavily used text may not have survived. Before the 1570s, most English schoolbooks were imported, and many may have continued to be after that time (Mack 2002: 16 and fn 12; see also 14, fn 6).

²² Aphthonius was known by Shakespeare, as shown by Baldwin (1944 II, Ch. 34).

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cites the treatment in the mid-sixteenth century annotated version of Aphthonius on both sides of the marriage question as a laudable example to introduce schoolboys to declamations, which (he explains) are nothing more than theme topics that can be argued both for and against (184).²³

For Erasmus, his English translators, and Rainolde, the marriage question raised urgent religious and social issues, all of which had a strong ethical cast: matrimony as a sacred state with biblical sanction; procreation as a necessity of nature to preserve each kind of creature, including man; the relation of virginity to a religious vocation; the moral imperative to shun a vicious life of extramarital lust and dependency on prostitutes; preservation of family name and property; marriage and children as a vital part of full manhood and citizenship. Among these only the reproductive and lineal issues appear explicitly in the procreation sonnets.²⁴ The similarities between Erasmus's epistle as englished by Thomas Wilson and Shakespeare's procreation sonnets have been noted by various critics; and Shakespeare may have adopted a little of Wilson's language as well as some of the ideas.²⁵ Whether or not Wilson's English version was a source for Shakespeare, Aphthonius's version, Erasmus's *Encomium*, and the procreation sonnets all show the familiar concern with lineage and succession that would have appealed to a wide range of the reading public (the vast majority of whom, it need hardly be said, were male and thus might well have shared this patrilineal

²³ Brinsley's text was published in 1612 and in 1627.

²⁴ The issue of lust for a loose woman is certainly relevant to the Dark Mistress sonnets, however.

²⁵ The similarities are noted by T. W. Baldwin (1944 II: 279 and 1950: 183-85), who observes that E. I. Fripp seems to have been the first to note the parallels in print, in his 1938 *Shakespeare, Man and Artist*, I 267. The similarities are discussed in some detail by Katherine Wilson.

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concern). Both classical and early modern social structures were highly stratified and the different social classes were expected to remain largely static (however much this expectation failed to be met in reality). Early modern Europeans of landholding classes were especially aware of family lineage; the aim of the property system of primogeniture, widely practiced (in England as well as elsewhere), was to preserve lineages and family property over long periods. The fact of social mobility in both directions, when “exceptionally large numbers of new families were forcing their way to the top, [and] exceptionally large numbers of old families were falling on evil days and sinking into obscurity” (Stone 23), fed anxieties about the maintenance of family lineage. In addition, widespread belief in a world only a few thousand years old, which would end in perhaps another few thousand, must have contributed to the hope that one’s lineage and property could be preserved for, essentially, all time. Funeral monuments, to be witnessed by future members of the community in the Christian fellowship of church, also bear witness to this desire for preservation of family. These broad cultural concerns with marriage, procreation, and the preservation of family were accentuated during Elizabeth’s long reign, first because of her extended, and very public, delay in deciding whether, and whom, she might marry, a question accompanied by public debate; and when she did not marry or produce an heir, because of the question of who would inherit the English throne.²⁶

Outside the domain of rhetorical texts, the marriage/procreation question was treated also in Cicero’s widely read philosophic work *De officiis*, “Concerning Duties.”

²⁶ Kernan (29) discusses the issue of changeover in the aristocracy and the crisis over succession in the context of the issue of patronage in the *Sonnets*.

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Marriage and children were regarded in both Cicero's time and Shakespeare's as the primary glue holding civic society together: "The first bond of union is that between husband and wife; the next, that between parents and children; then . . . one home, with everything in common."²⁷ The theme is taken up in Sidney's *Arcadia*, when Cecropia (for her own selfish ends) urges her niece Philoclea to marry. Baldwin notes that Shakespeare's sonnets 3, 5, and 8 all show indebtedness to Cecropia's language.²⁸

Besides their perceived value to the social fabric and to religious ideologies, marrying and becoming head of a household, which included the strong expectation of begetting children, were key markers of adult masculinity (A. Fletcher 419, 431). This important value also appears in Erasmus's version, when his speaker (after citing the laws of men from ancient times that favored matrimony) describes nature's law as imprinting in the mind the desire for marriage and children, and he who does not obey this natural law "is not worthy to be called a man, much less shall he be counted a citizen" (Wilson's English version, 1994: 86). Hence urging a young man to marry constituted counsel in service of a youth's achievement of manhood and taking on the adult role of citizenship. Marriage, moreover, was not simply a private and personal concern, especially for the middle and upper classes. Carrying with it social and economic implications not only for the individuals marrying but for the families of each prospective spouse, marriage was considered a decision in which parents, relatives, and

²⁷ *Prima societas in ipso coniugio est, proxima in liberis, deinde una domus, communia omnia* (*De officiis* I.xvii.54). This issue has hardly gone away, as a moment's reflection on the political catchphrase "family values" demonstrates.

²⁸ Baldwin 1950: 194-202. Baldwin cites Gerald Massey, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Longman's, 1866 (in which the poet and Egyptologist claims to show which sonnets were written for Southampton and which for William Herbert) for the connection between Cecropia and some of Shakespeare's procreation sonnets.

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When one applies these considerations to Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, it becomes apparent that an older man urging a younger man to marry situates the older man as an ethical counselor within the youth's circle of family and friends (although perhaps at the periphery, since the speaker seems a recent acquaintance and, as it emerges later, of lower social class). The older man speaks of children with an air of experience, as if he is a man who has achieved the position of householder and is encouraging his young friend to take this step vital to achieving fully adult masculinity.

In his study of subjectivity *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye*, Joel Fineman observes of the procreation argument that Shakespeare "could easily have found the same argument in many other sources" (322), but I hope it is clear by now that Shakespeare—or any other Renaissance writer—would hardly have needed to go looking for this theme. It would already have been familiar, requiring only the appropriate literary context to employ it. Such a context is offered by the encomiastic orientation of Shakespeare's sonnets.

The Procreation Sonnets as an Oration in Verse

Shakespeare's sonnets accomplish the difficult challenge of developing the familiar procreation argument in verse format. The skillful handling of this argument in verse would have garnered admiration among at least some of the *Sonnets'* early readers. Once highly esteemed, expert handling of even well-trod ground has fallen out of favor since the Romantics. In Shakespeare's day, however, readers still valued, in Alexander Pope's words, "what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed." In

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accordance with the close alliance between poetry and rhetoric discussed above, Shakespeare's expression of the procreation argument in verse draws on classical techniques of persuasive discourse, such as an opening *captatio benevolentiae* for quickly capturing the goodwill of the audience, and portraying the speaker's moral disposition (his *ethos*) in the concluding section as a means of gaining audience sympathy. Aristotle observed that the latter strategy is one of the most effective tools among the orator's many resources (*Rhetoric* 75), and Cicero's rhetorical textbook *De inventione* provides topics for developing this self-portrayal. The crescendo of personal voice between Shakespeare's sonnets 12 and 17, often noted by critics, is achieved through extensive use of such topics. In this section of the chapter, I compare some of Cicero's topics from *De inventione* to their appearance in some sonnets, particularly topics for the exordium and the concluding peroration. Some of these same topics appear in the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, but *De inventione* has a more extensive treatment. The topics for engaging audience sympathy need not have come directly from *De inventione*, but in any case Shakespeare's probable familiarity with *De inventione* and *Ad Herennium*, standard school textbooks, may easily be assumed. Further information about these texts is provided in Appendix A.

The oration into which the first seventeen are organized falls into the category of deliberative rhetoric. This branch of rhetoric includes discourse designed to persuade an audience to undertake a particular course of action—in this case, of course, persuading a young man to perpetuate his beauty by engendering heirs. All six traditional parts of an oration are present: exordium, narration, partition,

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confirmation, refutation of potential objections, and peroration.²⁹ In part because they are organized into a deliberative oration rather than a judicial one, these parts do not take up the usual proportions. The first three parts—exordium, narration, and partition—are compressed into the first sonnet, but the peroration, the closing section, extends over a full seven sonnets, a little short of half the total. Six of these constitute the *conquestio*, the final section of the peroration, designed to soften the emotions of the audience. Table 1 identifies which sonnets comprise each part of the oration.

Table 1. Sonnets Identified as Parts of the Procreation Oration

Part of Oration	Sonnet
Exordium	1
Narration	1
Partition	1
Proof: Confirmation	2-8
Proof: Refutation	9-10
Peroration: Summary	11
Peroration: <i>Indignatio</i>	11
Peroration: <i>Conquestio</i>	12-17

In a judicial oration, the initial parts would usually include not only the exordium, designed to gain the goodwill of the audience and explain the issue to be determined, but also narration of the events connected with the crime or dispute, and a partition explaining in what order the speaker will discuss the aspects of the case. In a

²⁹ As discussed by Baldwin (1944 II chapter 41), the construction of an argument in verse was one of the standard exercises of grammarian education. Although slight variation occurs in the accounts of parts of an oration (e.g. the refutation is sometimes accounted part of the proof), these six are enumerated in *Ad Herennium* (I.ii.4) and *De inventione* (I.xiv.19).

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deliberative oration, however, the primary need is to set forth the question being argued. The narration and partition can be brief, as indeed they are in this case. Exordium, narration, and partition are all packed into the “little room” of sonnet 1.

Exordium. Sonnet 1.

The function of the beginning of the exordium is to capture the attention and good will of the audience (the *captatio benevolentiae*). A favored method is to tell a humorous anecdote, such as that at the opening of Sidney’s *Defense of Poetry*, where he reports that a famous Italian horseman’s praise of the horse’s nobility made him almost wish himself a horse. Other methods for making the audience attentive and receptive include beginning with matters that “appertain . . . to the hearers” (*Ad Herennium* I.iv.7) or, even more broadly, matters of so wide interest that they “concern all humanity” (*De inventione* I.xvi.23). In the very first line of sonnet 1, the audience—whether comprising overhearing readers or only the individual addressee—is drawn in grammatically by the inclusive pronoun *we*; and the first quatrain presents a general proposition in which anyone attracted by beauty of any kind (theoretically, everyone) should have an interest: we desire the beauty of living things to “never die,” but go on living in their offspring. The opening lines “From fairest creatures we desire increase,/ That thereby beauty’s rose might never die,” draw the audience into assent with this uncontroversial proposition, and the whole sonnet fits Cicero’s dictum in *De inventione* that “the *exordium* ought to be sententious to a marked degree and of a high seriousness” (I.xviii.25).³⁰ Lines 3 and 4, by focusing on memory of beautiful

³⁰ Quotations from Shakespeare’s sonnets are from Booth (1977) with occasional minor alterations.

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creatures, encourages each reader to remember beauty he has witnessed and give assent to the opening proposition:

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His tender heir might bear his memory: (1.3-4)

A related function of the exordium is to smooth the way for acceptance of the speaker's argument. The mode by which sonnet 1 achieves this fits the first part of the "induction" method of argument described in *De inventione*: "Induction is a form of argument which leads the person with whom one is arguing to give assent to certain undisputed facts; through this assent it wins his approval of a doubtful proposition because this resembles the facts to which he has assented" (I.xxxi.51). The proposition that the person addressed in the sonnet should (marry and) beget children would fall under the category "doubtful" because the opposite case could also be argued; moreover it is certainly not true that all men marry and produce heirs.³¹ By praising the youth as "the world's bright ornament" and "only herald to the gaudy spring," the speaker classes the youth with those "fairest creatures" that should reproduce their beauty for the world's benefit; this praise also makes use of the figure *comprobatio* (complimenting one's hearers) to induce good will in the youth-as-audience. The widely aimed *captatio benevolentiae* in this first sonnet is followed up in succeeding sonnets with occasional references to the same expectations about the whole world's stake in the outcome, as in sonnets 3 ("beguile the world"), 9 ("the world will be thy widow"), and 14 ("thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date," as if the youth is

³¹ As noted above, the opposite case is argued in the scholia to the common sixteenth century edition of Aphthonius (translated by Agricola and Catanaeo, scholia by Lorichius).

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all the world's beauty).

This *captatio benevolentiae* of sonnet 1 scarcely functions as such for modern readers. Part of the difficulty with reader reception of this maneuver today, and indeed of the whole procreation series, is that increase of fairest creatures, though hardly controversial, is considered of limited interest, especially when applied to the human sphere (ecological issues make perpetuation of other species a more general concern these days). Many people today are less lineage-conscious than the more socially stratified societies of the early modern period; and with our very much expanded horizons concerning history, cultures, and biology, plus of course the hugely expanded human population, the importance of one's lineage in the scheme of things loses a good deal of the significance it once had.³² The platonic-imbued rationale of the opening quatrain—its emphasis on *fairest* creatures—also reflects a stratified society marked by an aristocratic aesthetic, and is equally alien to modern systems of aesthetics.

Yet just because this *captatio benevolentiae* has had limited appeal for modern readers does not mean it had little for the *Sonnets'* earliest audience. As I have discussed above, the procreation argument was a familiar rather than a strange topic; and the neoplatonic aesthetic was widespread. Both of these issues make an appearance in Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii*. Addressed to a young man who has "purposed to live a single life," Erasmus' epistle cites as a preeminent reason for questioning the young man's choice the concern of his friends and relatives for the "maintenance of

³² We know lineage mattered to Shakespeare because of the unusual care he took in his will to ensure that his accumulated property would be passed on to any male heirs of his two daughters, eldest first (Honan 395-96).

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your stock," or family lineage (80).³³ The epistle urges the youth to perpetuate "the name of" his ancestors (90), and presents the joy of his "most fair wife" making the youth a father and "bringing forth a fair child" for him (94). In summing up his argument, Erasmus calls attention to the "great lands and revenues" the young man received from his ancestors; and observing that "the house whereof you came being both right honorable and right ancient," he argues that the youth "could not suffer it to perish without great harm to the commonweal" (99). The language of the procreation sonnets summon this same familial concern through terms such as heir, succession, tillage, husband and husbandry, legacy and executor, posterity, "sire and child and happy mother," and "beauteous roof."³⁴ And although it is true, as some critics have observed, that the primary focus of these sonnets is not marriage but children, the presumptions of marriage and legitimate offspring appear in the above terms and are made explicit in sonnet 9 ("Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye/ That thou consum'st thyself in single life?").³⁵

The neoplatonic aesthetic implied by "fairest creatures" that infuses both the procreation series and the rest of the sonnets (the inversion of this aesthetic in the Dark Mistress series depends upon the standard version for its meaning) would have been as familiar as the procreation theme to Shakespeare's audience and would likely have

³³ Quotations are from Thomas Wilson's translation of Erasmus's epistle.

³⁴ These words are from sonnets 1 and 6 (heir), 2 (succession), 3 (tillage, husbandry), 4 (legacy and executor), 6 (posterity), 8 (husband and "sire and child and happy mother"), 10 ("beauteous roof").

³⁵ This argument, which Vendler (85) terms preposterous, does not occur in Wilson's version of Erasmus's *Encomium*, but appears in Aphthonius.

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drawn similar assent from early readers of these sonnets.³⁶ In fact the two are linked in Marsilio Ficino's *De amore*, a free-ranging commentary on the rediscovered Plato's *Symposium*, which Ficino had translated. Ficino's personal contacts with other scholars, his translations of Plato, and his commentary were all important sources for the spread of the neoplatonic aesthetic in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Like Shakespeare's procreation sonnets, *De amore* combines cultivation of beauty with an interest in procreation, both of the body and of the soul. The concept of offspring of the mind or soul (*anima*), expressed in sonnet 17 as poetic creation, facilitates the segue from the procreation series to the rest of the sonnets. In *De amore* procreation is termed a "divine function": "In all men . . . the body is pregnant or fertile, and the soul is pregnant" (132).³⁷ Pregnancy and birth are terms that apply to both sexes in Ficino as well as Plato. In *De amore* procreation is said to preserve

whatever things are mutable in the soul or the body, not because they remain forever completely the same . . . but because whatever wastes away and departs leaves behind something new and like itself. Certainly by this remedy mortal things are rendered like immortal ones. (131)

This same claim appears as the expectation in sonnet 1 that when mutable things such as "beauty's rose" die, its "tender heir" will carry on its likeness. Ficino goes on to express the generality that the young addressee of the procreation sonnets apparently fails to appreciate:

Therefore in both parts of the soul . . . there is an innate love of procreation for preserving life eternally. (131)

This is the rule that the youth resists and the older poet urges. If the youth's

³⁶ For a summary of earlier criticism on neoplatonism in the *Sonnets*, see Rollins (I 6-7).

³⁷ I quote from the English translation by Sears Jayne, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*.

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immaturity is the reason for his resistance, the speaker's maturity is signaled by his own desire to perpetuate the youth through his poetry:

. . . Once the soul is mature, the love of procreation inspires it with a burning desire to teach and to write . . . And in this way, thanks to love, both the body and the soul of any man seem to be able to survive in human affairs forever after death. (131)

These are the two moves that the poet urges in sonnet 17, when he says that if the youth has a child, he will "live twice, in it and in my rhyme" (17.14).

The beauty of the youth also invites love, according to Ficino's formulation of neoplatonism. Combining his sources in Proclus, Plotinus, and Plato, Ficino defines love as a turning towards both truth and beauty, both of which the young man, repeatedly within the set of the first 126 sonnets, is said to embody, as if he himself is their platonic Idea.³⁸ The combination first appears in the one of the procreation sonnets:

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. (14.11-14)

The procreation sonnets thus transmute into poetry the neoplatonic theme of propagation of beauty, teaching the procreation of the body while exemplifying the procreation of the mind via sonnet writing. The turn to propagation through mental creativity, as superior to propagation of the body and as an effort "to spread knowledge like its own by writing in an elegant and beautiful style" (*De amore* 132), supplies a

³⁸ Neoplatonism is referenced in Booth's edition of the sonnets in his head-note to sonnet 53 (224). Fineman refers to neoplatonic elements at various points, including in connection with the procreation sonnets (250-51) and in connection with epideictic poetry (e.g. 57, and 324-35, fn 12-15); he discusses the identification "between poetry and progeny" (255) in the context of his analysis of the sonnets' presentation of sameness and difference (Chapter 5).

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theoretical context for the shift in Shakespeare's sonnets from procreation to propagation in verse, and from focus on the beloved youth to focus on the thoughts of the lover as poet and speaker. However difficult it might be for modern readers to take seriously such neoplatonic theorizing as a real motivation for writing poetry, the deployment of such themes would have been unremarkable in Shakespeare's day.³⁹ The cases in which beauty instantly begets desire in early modern texts—dramatic and otherwise—are too numerous to mention. In sum, both the procreation theme and the neoplatonic aesthetic in the procreation series were well known and valued, and early readers of the *Sonnets* would probably have assented to, approved, and appreciated the proposition that we desire “increase” of fairest creatures.

Narration. Sonnet 1.

Following the exordium in the first quatrain of sonnet 1 comes a brief narration, which is the second part of a six-part oration. This narration fits the kind “concerned with persons,” which demonstrates “not only events but also the conversation and mental attitude of the characters” (*De inventione* I.xix.27). The second and third quatrains of sonnet 1, although including no conversation, depict the youth by characteristic acts as well as descriptive epithets: “thou . . . / Feed'st thy light's flame,” “Thou . . . / . . . / Within thine own bud buriest thy content,/ And tender churl,

³⁹ Ficino's neoplatonic ideas reached England primarily indirectly, through works such as Castiglione's *The Courtier*, translated into English by Sir Thomas Hoby and published in 1561, and La Primaudaye's *The French Academie*, two parts of which were translated by Thomas Bowes and published in 1586 and 1594, and the third part of which was translated by Richard Dolman and published in 1601. Altogether there were nine publications of the various parts by 1618, according to the ESTC. Between 1485 and 1578, neither Ficino nor Plato were published in England or translated into English, although there were more than a hundred different editions of works of Plato published in France between 1485 and 1578. French translations of *De amore* were published in 1542 and 1578, and there were Italian and other continental publications of Plato and Ficino as well (Ficino 21). And of course many continental publications were available in England.

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mak'st waste in niggarding" (1.5-6, 9-12). This *narratio* contains what Cicero terms a slight "digression . . . for the purpose . . . of making a comparison, or of amusing the audience in a way not incongruous with the business in hand, or for amplification" (I.xix.27). The digression provides a sample of the kind of praise the speaker will utter repeatedly over the course of the first 126 sonnets. The youth is characterized as "the world's fresh ornament,/ And only herald to the gaudy spring" (1.9-10), phrasing that identifies the youth with the platonic Idea of youthful beauty.⁴⁰

The couplet in sonnet 1 draws a conclusion, which may suit several places in an oration, including after the narration (*Ad Herennium* I.xiv.24). And the "Appeal to Pity" constitutes one of three possible parts of a conclusion (*Ad Herennium* II.xxx.47). The first words of the couplet are "Pity thyself," and the rest of the couplet strengthens this appeal by describing the dire consequences of failure to show compassion as a mortal sin: "or else this glutton be,/ To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee." The phrase "world's due" refers back to the all-encompassing "we" of the first line and again intimates the identification of the youth with the pinnacle or Idea of beauty.

Thus the sonnet as a whole, while appearing to argue for action in one individual only, is structured to obtain the assent of any audience, even the whole of humanity, to the proposition that one of the world's "fairest creatures" should transmit that beauty to future generations for the world's benefit.

Partition. Sonnet 1.

This first sonnet also includes the partition, the third part of a six-part oration.

⁴⁰ See the discussion of definition under the topic *totum* in Chapter 2, p. 83.

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One option for the partition is to divide the points to be argued into those on which there is agreement, versus those in dispute (*Ad Herennium* I.x.17, *De inventione* I.xxii.31). Such a division appears in sonnet 1. The first quatrain, which sets forth what “we desire,” presents the uncontested part, while the second and third quatrains, characterizing the youth's commitment to single life, present the point in dispute.

Confirmation. Sonnets 2–8.

The main body of the oration, sometimes called the “proof,” has two sections: the confirmation, which presents supporting arguments, and the refutation, which attempts to anticipate and refute arguments the opponent might bring forward.

Examination shows that sonnets 2 through 8 constitute the confirmation. These describe variously the benefits to the youth himself, what he owes the world, and what nature calls for. Sonnets 2, 3, and 4 urge respectively the renewal of his blood, of his image, and of the inheritance he has received from nature. These same arguments appear in Aphthonius's sample theme, Erasmus's epistle, and their English offspring. Sonnets 5 and 6 urge the youth to preserve his “beauty's treasure,” echoing metaphorically the early modern focus on preservation of one's patrimony. Sonnet 7 urges him to maintain the regard of the world which he now possesses. Sonnets 2, 3, and 7 create images respectively of the youth's future as an aged, childless, and solitary man, and urge him to avoid that barren eventuality. Sonnet 8 urges the youth to marry and have children through a clever musical analogy that also draws upon the traditional view that reproduction obeys the law of nature.

Refutation. Sonnets 9 and 10.

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hence constitute the refutation portion of the proof. Sonnet 9 anticipates that the youth might object to the speaker's case by pointing to the sorrow and grief his death might cause his widow: "Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye/ That thou consum'st thyself in single life?" (9.1-2).⁴¹ The sonnet refutes that argument by claiming that if he remains single, the whole *world* will be placed in the position of a bereaved widow: "Ah, if thou issueless shalt hap to die,/ The world will wail thee like a makeless wife" (9.3-4). This is further explained in quatrain 2:

The world will be thy widow and still weep,
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,
When every private widow well may keep,
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind. (9.5-8)

The conclusion in the couplet also refutes the youth's potential argument—implied in his claim of concern for a bereaved widow—that the youth is charitably thinking of others: "No love toward others in that bosom sits/ That on himself such murd'rous shame commits" (9.13-14).

Sonnet 10 likewise takes the form of a refutation of an opponent's claim. With its adversarial tone (see further discussion in Chapter 2 under the topic *adiuncta*), the sonnet seems to answer the youth's response to the speaker's accusation in the couplet of sonnet 9. Charged with having no charitable feelings toward others, the young man seems to have responded by denying that claim. The sonnet thus opens with a reproach:

For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any,
Who for thyself art so unprovident. (10.1-2)

⁴¹ Vendler recognizes the refutation structure of this sonnet; she terms it a "reply sonnet" (85).

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Furthermore, sonnet 10 refutes the youth's presumed claim that he "bear'st love" toward others with the counterclaim "that thou none lov'st is most evident" (10.1, 4).

This counterclaim is, again, amplified in the second quatrain:

For thou art so possessed with murd'rous hate,
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
Which to repair should be thy chief desire. (10.5-8)

Peroration. Sonnets 11–17.

The remaining sonnets, 11 through 17, all form part of the conclusion or peroration, which is complex both structurally and in the emotional weight it is designed to carry. The peroration includes three parts: a summing up, an *indignatio* to stir the emotions of the audience, and a *conquestio* to arouse the audience's pity.⁴² Sonnet 11 combines the summing up with the *indignatio*. In *De inventione* Cicero describes several ways to structure a summing-up, fifteen commonplaces for stirring the emotions of the audience, and sixteen more for arousing pity. The peroration will be more artful and persuasive, he explains, if one does not simply reiterate in sequence the arguments used in the confirmation but refers back to parts of the case that needed proving, or combines arguments made in proof and refutation. Commonplaces of the *indignatio* include recalling who is affected by the acts, asking what would ensue if everyone should act in the same way, and showing that the act was committed by one

⁴² The latter two parts are termed *amplificatio* and *commiseratio* in *Ad Herennium*. Although the terms for the three parts differ in *Ad Herennium* and *De inventione*, the discussion in the two are nearly identical except that *De inventione* is fuller. Because parts of this fuller treatment have counterparts in the sonnets, I will refer primarily to the latter work. Since both discussions consider primarily judicial rather than deliberative argument, a number of textual details apply to criminal behavior. But a footnote by the Loeb editor in *Ad Herennium* (b, 146) notes that "the theory of Amplification was first formed for epideictic" speech.

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Sonnet 11 summarizes the procreation argument not by simple reiteration but by complementing the aging of the youth with its remedy, and by referring to both the interests of the youth and those of the world. Lines 1-5 summarize the benefits of reproduction, which are contrasted with the evils of childlessness inventoried in line 6:

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st
In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st
Thou mayst call thine when thou from youth convertest.
Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase,
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay. (11.1-6)

Lines 7-8 utilize the commonplace of the *indignatio* “in which we inquire what would happen if everybody else should act in the same way” and “prove what evil will result from this” (I.iii.101):

If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore year would make the world away. (11.7-8)⁴³

The commonplace for the *indignatio* in which “we show that the act was committed by one who least of all should have done it” (I.liv.104) appears in lines 9-14:

Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:
Look, whom she best endowed she gave the more,
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish.
She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

Following the *indignatio* comes the *conquestio*, which is drawn out into five

⁴³ The same point appears in Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii*. In Wilson's translation it reads, “Let it be forbidden that man and woman shall not come together, and within few years all mankind must needs decay forever” (97). Rainolde's version of Aphthonius, which seems to have drawn in a few passages on Erasmus's version, states “How sone would the whole worlde be dissolued, and in perpetuall ruine, if that God . . . had not, by godlie procreacion, blessed this infinite issue of mankinde” (fol. lv).

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sonnets; as noted above, this rhetorical structure is the primary tool enabling the personal voice of the speaker and his *ethos* to emerge. Cicero describes the *conquestio* as follows. One first prepares the audience to be moved using appropriate topics, and then arouses pity by using commonplaces that refer to such things as prosperity versus suffering, aspects of misfortune partitioned according to time or effect, distress that is contrary to all expectation, and events that ought not to have happened. One topic of the *conquestio* asks the audience to think of someone dear to them as being in a similar position, and in several of the final topics the speaker's own character is brought into play: as a victim of unkindness, as entreating mercy, as concerned not for his own sake but for those dear to him, or as having a soul that is "full of mercy towards others, but still is noble, lofty, and patient of misfortune and will be so whatever may befall" (I.lvi.109). Sonnets 12 through 17 draw on many of these topics.

Sonnet 12 fits the advice Cicero gives at the opening of his discussion of the *conquestio*: that the first necessity is to make the auditor's spirit gentle and merciful so that he may be more easily moved by the *conquestio*. This should be done by the use of commonplaces which set forth the power of fortune over all men and the weakness of the human race. "When such a passage is delivered gravely and sententiously, the spirit of man is greatly abased and prepared for pity, for in viewing the misfortune of another he will contemplate his own weakness" (I.liv.106). Sonnet 12, "When I do count the clock that tells the time,/ And see the brave day sunk in hideous night," is one of the few sonnets of the procreation series to be anthologized, and it is anthologized for these very qualities. The "weakness of the human race" is its inevitable subjection to the trauma of time; in literal terms only the single line "sable

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curls all silver'd o'er with white" applies specifically to humans. The other signs of natural mortality—"lofty trees . . . barren of leaves," "summer's green all girded up in sheaves/ Born on the bier with white and bristly beard"—contextualize human mortality as only one part of the natural world subject to the cycles of death and decay. But metaphorically, of course, all the enumerated wastes of sonnet 12 pertain to human life. The lines, "Then of thy beauty do I question make/ That thou among the wastes of time must go" (12.9-10) invite the youth (and us along with him) to "contemplate his own weakness" and what the future inevitably holds.

Sonnet 13 continues the appeal to pity, and one can observe several of Cicero's commonplaces, such as the division of troubles according to those present now and those that will occur in the future:

O that you were your self! but, love, you are
No longer yours than you yourself here live;
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give. (13.1-4)

The second and third quatrains pair off misfortunes "presented to view one by one" with the remedies that would relieve such distresses as are "contrary to all expectation" (I.lv.108). The misfortune of "that beauty which you hold in lease," which lease must inevitably be relinquished, will find "no determination" (i.e. will not end) if the youth breeds another "self" in his child. The youth would then be "Your self again after your self's decease,/ When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear" (13.5, 6, 7-8). The reference to the decaying "house" that the youth is likely to suffer if he does not reproduce evokes an effect "unworthy of [his] age, race, former fortune, position," another topic of the *conquestio* (I.lv.107). And the couplet, echoing yet another

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commonplace, invokes those dear to the audience—in this case the youth-as-auditor:

“dear my love, you know,/ You had a father; let your son say so.”

The fourteenth sonnet, about the “astronomy” of the speaker, uses the *conquestio* commonplace of changeable fortune, and evokes in the couplet the commonplace about “what evils are destined to be” (I.lv.107). If the youth does not “convert” himself “to store,” the speaker prophesies that “Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date” (14.12, 14). Sonnet 14 also focuses more distinctly than preceding sonnets on the thoughts of the speaker; the pronoun “I” appears in a remarkable seven lines, beginning with the first two:

Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck,
And yet methinks I have astronomy, (14.1-2)

The speaker’s prognosticating abilities do not concern the usual kinds of future outcomes one might wish to know; he does not tell of “good or evil luck,” or “of plagues, of dearths, or season’s quality” (14.3, 4). He tells not the “fortune” of “brief minutes,” or of “princes,” but instead reads the “constant stars” of the youth’s eyes to “prognosticate” (14.5, 10, 13). By its frequent use of “I” (I pluck, I tell, I find, I derive, I read, I prognosticate), the sonnet conveys the intensity of the speaker’s involvement with the youth he addresses.

In sonnets 15 through 17, the “I” of the speaker remains prominent, as is appropriate for the closing of the *conquestio* according to *De inventione*. Each of these sonnets refers specifically to the speaker's point of view; they fit Cicero's prescription that the speaker portray his “mercy for others” and his patience in the final part of the *conquestio* (I.lvi.109). In sonnet 15 the thoughts and cares of the speaker are

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foregrounded by the phrases “When I consider,” “When I perceive,” and “before my sight” (15.1, 5, 10). The first of these begins the sonnet:

When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment, (15.1-2)

The entire sonnet portrays the speaker's “mercy for” the youth and his patient devotion in the face of “this inconstant stay” upon the earth (15.9). The speaker's compassion is conveyed especially in the personal action he undertakes on behalf of the youth. For the first time he engages in a different kind of effort than moral suasion—an errand of mercy to combat the decaying effects of “wasteful Time” (15.11):

And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I ingraft you new. (15.13-14)

This begins the speaker's re-creation of the youth through his poetic making, a project that takes over at the end of the procreation series and continues through the course of the Fair Youth sonnets.

Another of Cicero's topics is “devoted entirely to entreaty” with “humble and submissive language” (I.lvi.109). In a sense, of course, all the procreation sonnets are devoted to entreaty, but only when the personal voice of the speaker becomes prominent in the latter sonnets does the kind of pleading reflecting these topics appear. Sonnet 16 especially exemplifies this kind of entreaty, with its emotive epithet “bloody tyrant Time” and its urging on the youth a more combative stance:

But wherefore do you not a mightier way
Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time?
And fortify yourself in your decay
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme? (16.1-4)

The humble language of Cicero's topic appears in the speaker's description of his own

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art as “barren rhyme.” Artistic portrayal, including the engrafting effort of the speaker’s “pupil pen” and the “painted counterfeit” of the youth by “this time’s pencil,” are both discounted relative to the youth’s own power of begetting his likeness in “living flowers” on a “maiden” garden (16.10, 8, 7, 6).⁴⁴

Sonnet 17 focuses more than any of the other peroration sonnets on the speaker, conjuring up the “time to come” when both the youth and the poet have succumbed to the tyrant Time (17.1). Like sonnet 16 it uses humble language, discounting the speaker’s poems, which he expects to be “scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue” (17.11); it simultaneously points to the poet’s “war with Time for love of you” (15.13) which will beget the ensuing sonnets and engender the poet’s plan to “ingraft” the youth into the poet’s “rime” (17.14).

The crescendo of emotional intensity of the later procreation sonnets, then, is appropriate to the closing of an oration. This does not mean, of course, that the modulations in tone of sonnets 12 through 17 relate only to their function in the peroration. The portrayal of the increasing engagement of the poet-speaker with the youth functions, as noted previously, in the “story” of unfolding love in the procreation sonnets, and connects those sonnets to the remainder of the series.⁴⁵ The introduction of the subject of art in sonnets 15 and 16 allows deployment of the humility *topos*. The “poet’s rage” and the imagined scornful audience of sonnet 17, with its allusion to the mad poet of the end of Horace’s *Ars Poetica*, continues the humility *topos* while

⁴⁴ A “pencil” was a limning brush; “this time’s pencil” suggests a preeminent limner. For much of Shakespeare’s lifetime, that would have been Nicholas Hilliard.

⁴⁵ The “narrative” of unfolding love in the procreation series was most recently explored by Crosman (fn 14, above).

simultaneously valorizing the poet and his project and serving as a transition to the rest of the sonnets. The oration offers a sample of the speaker's attitudes, his idealizations, and his speech of both praise, and blame. It also presents a modulated and thorough portrait of the comparatively selfless and dispassionate desire of the speaker for the young man's well-being. The characterization of that desire is important here because of the way it is challenged and compromised later in the series.

These seventeen sonnets thus work as a highly structured argument, not only individually and serially but together as a whole, from exordium through proof and peroration. The usual critical procedure of focusing on individual sonnets has obscured to some extent the way these sonnets work as an oratorical unit. Perhaps in part because rhetoric and poetic have been regarded in New Critically-based literary commentary as mutually exclusive domains, little note has been taken of such a structure in the procreation series. The Renaissance made no such distinction, of course. In the context of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, the publicly oriented oratorical mode of the procreation series, which urges the youth to live in concord with nature's ways and with civic expectations by maintaining his lineage through marriage and children, identifies the speaker as a responsible member of the community. It also sets a benchmark of public-spirited affection or *caritas*, a legitimate and highly esteemed species of desire. Against that benchmark, the intensely personal kinds of desire depicted in the remaining sonnets appear more profound, but also more troubling in their contamination by selfishness and deceit. In my view, an appreciation of all these qualities is fundamental to an appreciation of both the wit and the pathos of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

The particularized voice of the speaker and his ethical qualities are only two features that emerge from the persuasive rhetoric of the procreation sonnets. Another feature is their display of technical virtuosity through seriatim deployment of the seventeen topics from another of Cicero's rhetorical texts, *Topica*, to which I now turn.

Chapter 2. Shakespeare, Cicero, and Rhetorical Authority

Along with looking askance at the procreation theme and the length of the procreation sonnet series, critics have asked why there are seventeen sonnets in particular. A tentative response to this question has related the number seventeen to the realm of biography, by proposing that seventeen was the age of the youth to whom Shakespeare wrote, perhaps by commission from his parents, in order to promote the idea of marriage and children.¹ In this chapter I propose that a sufficient explanation, though not necessarily the only one, lies with the rhetorical display of the procreation series.²

Overlapping the six-part oratorical structure discussed in the previous chapter is a remarkable, systematic deployment of the entire set of topics from Cicero's short work *Topica*. This text provides a succinct list and explanation of seventeen kinds of topics for constructing an argument, and these are employed seriatim, one topic per sonnet, in the seventeen sonnets of the procreation series. This systematic use of a well known set of topics might be termed encyclopedic, were Cicero's *Topica* not such a brief text. Together, these two interwoven structures of oration and seriatim topic deployment provide a remarkable display of rhetorical virtuosity, whose sources in widely known texts from the premier classical rhetorician, Cicero, would probably

¹ Marotti (1990: 150) is one example among many that could be cited.

² Fowler (185) and Roche (421-22) discuss seventeen as the base of a triangular number series which totals 153, the number of the miraculous catch of fishes in John xxi.11 and the subject of biblical exegesis about the numbers of the Elect (Fowler 185) and the fullness of creation (Roche 421). Armisén discusses use of the number 153 by the Spanish writer Juan Boscán.

have been recognized by a significant portion of early readers of the *Sonnets*. The rhetorical bravura of the procreation series, when coupled with the treatment of a familiar and valued question in the domain of civic ethics—a question that must have, even then, challenged what readers expected from an amorous sonnet sequence and perhaps at least opened the sequence on an ethically more serious note than the usual works of love sonneteering—may have functioned to provide some added credibility or respectability for the sonnets that follow.

I want to emphasize that in analyzing the seriatim use of Cicero's seventeen topics, I did not assume *a priori* that the 1609 published order had any authority. But because the rhetorical structures I identify indicate that sonnets 1-17 (and also sonnets 18-22 and 127-131, as I discuss in Chapter 3) follow a particular sequential order, this study provides a basis for inferring that at least for the sets of poems studied in detail here, the published order can be regarded as authorial.

In this chapter, I refer frequently to Cicero's short treatise on topical invention, *Topica*. T. W. Baldwin shows Shakespeare's familiarity with *Topica* as well as *Ad Herennium*, *De inventione*, and Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* using evidence drawn almost exclusively from the plays. *Ad Herennium* and *De inventione* were part of a standard grammar school curriculum, and *Topica* was part of the grammar school curriculum recommended by such scholars as Juan Luis Vives, Johann Sturm, and Thomas Elyot (Baldwin II 27, I 289, I 101). Vives and Elyot aimed to shape future princes and other members of the ruling class. Vives' advice on educating Henry VIII's daughter Mary does not mention specific rhetorical textbooks, although his slightly later and more thorough advice for educating a boy does include Cicero's

Topica (with commentary either by Boethius or, preferably, Agricola). Elyot's *Boke Named the Governour* similarly recommends either Cicero's *Topica* or Agricola's book on dialectical invention, *De inventione dialectica libri tres*.³ Baldwin finds that Edward VI seems to have followed this curriculum; his copy of Cicero's rhetorical texts with *Topica* in it, printed at Lyons in 1551, "appears to have been read pretty much throughout" (I 225). Whether Shakespeare obtained his familiarity with Cicero's *Topica* in his grammar school years at Stratford or later through some other means, his use of these standard rhetorical textbooks is far from ordinary. Baldwin observes in Shakespeare's plays an unequaled familiarity with rhetorical texts and precepts.⁴ Park Honan's conjecture in *Shakespeare: A Life* that Shakespeare may have gone to Lancashire as an unlicensed tutor in a Catholic household might help to explain this expertise.⁵ I include a description of *Topica* and further information about its availability in England during the sixteenth century in Appendix A.

This chapter is organized, like the sonnets themselves, as a seriatim treatment of topics. I do this partly because it seems the most manageable way to discuss the sonnets' relation to the topics, and partly to set out the evidentiary reasoning for thinking that this structure indeed exists. Shakespeare's procreation sonnets

³ Baldwin thought that all three were standard school texts, but Peter Mack questions this conclusion in the case of *Topica* (2002: 46). See my discussion in Appendix A.

⁴ Based on Baldwin's own extensive familiarity with English plays written between the beginning of Tudor times and 1642, he observes that "so full a reflection of the English grammar school as we have found in Shakspeare" cannot be found in any other playwright of the period: "Among all these dramatists I do not know one who in this respect could equal Shakspeare; certainly not Shirley, who was a known schoolmaster" (II 671).

⁵ Honan's conjecture is consistent with John Aubrey's report in *Brief Lives* that Shakespeare was a schoolmaster in the country.

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indubitably, or so it seems to me, draw on these topics in a highly systematic way.

The resulting fullness of treatment would have been much more evident to the *Sonnets*' readers in an era when most fully literate readers were schooled in systems of such topics and Cicero's *Topica* was widely known.

My treatment of individual sonnets varies considerably in length. Some topics are more complex and need more extensive discussion than others; topics 11, 12, and 13 (*antecedentia*, *consequentia*, and *repugnantia*), for instance, refer to interrelated logical structures in Cicero's treatment of them. The first topic, *totum*, includes considerably more than some of the others; this is perhaps not surprising when the topic means "all" or "whole."

Cicero categorizes his topics into two classes: intrinsic, inherent in the proposition, and extrinsic, the latter consisting largely of authoritative testimony. The extrinsic topics required little discussion; it is the intrinsic topics from which the lawyer (or other orator) constructs most of his arguments. The intrinsic category also includes two kinds of topics: those that entail statement and definition of the question being examined, and those drawn from connected issues. The first three kinds of argument that Cicero examines, *totum*, *partes*, and *notatio*, concern statement and definition of the problem at hand. Table 2 provides a summary of topic-sonnet matches.

Table 2. Ciceronian Topics Matched With Procreation Sonnet Number

	Ciceronian Topic	Procreation Sonnet
Definition Topics:	<i>Totum</i>	1
	<i>Partes</i>	2
	<i>Notatio</i>	3
Intrinsic Topics:	<i>Coniugata</i>	4
	<i>Genus</i>	5
	<i>Species</i>	6
	<i>Similitudo</i>	7
	<i>Differentia</i>	8
	<i>Contraria</i>	9
	<i>Adiuncta</i>	10
	<i>Antecedentia</i>	11
	<i>Consequentia</i>	12
	<i>Repugnantia</i>	13
	<i>Causa</i>	14
	<i>Effectum</i>	15
	<i>Comparatio</i>	16
Extrinsic Topics:	<i>Iudicium</i>	17

***Totum.* Sonnet 1.** Topic 1, *totum*, refers to a summary statement of the proposition. Such a summary should include not only a general statement of the problem, but definitions of any terms plus important qualities of any people or things that appear in the statement. Under definition, Cicero discusses sequential delineation of important qualities, from those held in common with others of similar kind, down to qualities shared with more and more restricted sets, until one arrives at features unique

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to the particular person or event under discussion. The result is a unique description of the particular entity being defined.

In sonnet 1, “From fairest creatures we desire increase,” several aspects of the *totum* topic make an appearance, including statement of the general proposition or argument of the procreation sonnets, characterization of the youth addressed, and a sequential narrowing down of his attributes. The basic proposition is that beautiful things should be regenerated; the issue in contention is that the youth addressed is failing to follow that rule. (In this respect the *totum* topic coincides with the narration and partition sections of an oration, discussed in Chapter 1.) The first quatrain articulates the proposition in such a way as to bring the audience—readers and youth alike—into agreement with the general dictum that the world, including the reader, wants perpetuation of beauty:⁶

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the ripper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory: (1.1-4)

The second quatrain sets forth how the youth is failing to live up to those expectations by keeping to himself instead of uniting with a woman to produce children:

But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel. (1.5-8)

The third quatrain contrasts the youth's beauty with his miserly ways:

Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,

⁶ See the discussion of the *captatio benevolentiae* in Chapter 1, p. 59.

Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding. (1.9-12)

The latter two lines amplify what the youth, identified metaphorically with “beauty’s rose” of line 1, is guilty of—burying his seed within his own unopened bud. The sonnet concludes with a brief version of the speaker’s exhortation to the youth to reproduce, counsel that constitutes the basis of the entire procreation argument and is repeated with variations throughout the first seventeen sonnets:

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee. (1.13-14)

An epitome of the argument set forth in this *totum* sonnet might go as follows: We desire the most beautiful living things to be renewed through reproduction, so that we can continue to enjoy them. You, however, are full of self-love and are therefore consuming yourself by failing to regenerate your beauty. Take pity on yourself, think of what the world will lose by your selfish behavior, or you will greedily entomb “the world's due,” your unborn children, in your grave along with you.

The first sonnet thus sets forth in brief the case the speaker will pursue over the next sixteen sonnets. It also characterizes the youth and his actions (or failure to act) in a succinct statement that “grasps the characteristic qualities of a thing.” Such definition sets forth “the full meaning and character of a thing so lucidly and briefly that to express it in more words seems superfluous, and to express it in fewer is considered impossible” (from *definitio* as a figure of speech in *Ad Herennium* IV.xxv.35). The qualities of self-love and self-restriction or self-enclosure (“contracted to thine own bright eyes”; “Within thine own bud buriest thy content”), self-consumption (“Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel”), and

consequent self-destruction (“eat the world's due, by the grave and thee”) are figured succinctly in the language of lines 5-8 and 11-14. This characterization of the youth intriguingly subverts the third example of *definitio* given in *Ad Herennium*, which also concerns thrift versus greed: “That is not economy [“*diligentia*”] on your part but greed [“*avaritia*”], because economy is careful conservation of one's own goods, and greed is wrongful covetousness [“*appetito*”] of the goods of others” (IV.xxv.35). Part of the speaker's argument against the youth hinges on issues of economy and greed, but the sonnet turns the example from *Ad Herennium* on its head, arguing that the economy or “niggarding” of the youth is actually waste, and that he is a “glutton” not because he covets the property of others but because he is full of self-desire and so buries his seed, the “content” of his youthful “bud,” within himself. The sonnet thus succinctly characterizes him with the antithetical epithet “tender churl”: he is a soft young thing who wastes resources by hoarding them as if he were a miserly, hardened old man.⁷

Other phrases also characterize the young man through metaphor. The description of the youth as “contracted to thine own bright eye” points to narcissistic self-love; this line also contains a floral allusion since several narcissus flowers, such as the common Pheasant Eye Narcissus, have a small, brightly colored “eye” or central cup. Youthfulness is indicated not only in the “tender” of “tender churl,” but by the metaphor “bud” and by linking the youth with early springtime via the phrase “only herald to the gaudy spring.” The term “beauty's rose” in the second line, like “fairest creatures” in the first, indicates superlative beauty, since according to commonplace

⁷ While the parallels between this example in *Ad Herennium* and sonnet 1 may be coincidental, the term *appetito* is more suggestive of the couplet phrases “glutton” and “eat the world's due” than is the term “covetousness” used by the modern translator of *Ad Herennium*.

notions of hierarchy the rose was the pinnacle or prince of flowers.⁸ Identification of the youth with a flower also intimates the transience of the youth's beauty.

The two laudatory identifications in lines 9 and 10, "the world's bright ornament" and "only herald to the gaudy spring," designate the youth allusively as beauty and true love. Calling him "the world's bright ornament" clearly describes the youth as attractive, but these particular terms also identify him as the essence of beauty, an identification suggested in some later sonnets as well (e.g. 53, 67, 68, 106).

Neoplatonic definitions of "world" include beauty as an inherent quality. In *The Second Part of the French Academie*, for instance, La Primaudaye, says that "worlde [Κόσμος, *mundus*] signifieth as much as a *goodly and well decked ornament*" (quoted in Baldwin, II 651 from 1594 English translation, with bracketed insert added).⁹ La Primaudaye's discussion is probably derived from Ficino's *De amore*, which is even more specific in its identification of "world" with the platonic Idea of beauty:

The combination of all the Forms and Ideas we call in Latin a *mundus*, in Greek a *cosmos*, that is, an ornament. The grace of this *world* or *ornament* is Beauty, to which . . . Love, as soon as it was born, attracted the [celestial] Mind. (39)

Thus the line "Thou that art now the world's bright ornament" suggests the reading "thou that art now beauty itself" or even "thou that art now the world's beauty," so that the youth of the sonnets is characterized as personifying for the present time (the

⁸ See, for example, Peacham's *Complete Gentleman* (11).

⁹ The Neoplatonic belief that beauty inevitably induces love, which underlies the Fair Youth sonnets, is apparent in the beginning of the passage Baldwin quotes from La Primaudaye: "They that are most ignorant know that Love is a desire of beauty, and that Beauty draweth Love. Yea some of the learned Heathens have taught, that it was Love which mooved God not onely to create the world, but also to create it beautifull, and of so goodly a forme in every part of it" (Baldwin II 651). Baldwin refers in a footnote to a sixteenth century dictionary, by Stephanus, for an instance of where such a definition for *mundus* occurs rather than to La Primaudaye's primary source, Ficino's *De amore*.

“now” of the sonnet) the concept or platonic ideal of beauty.

The second phrase, “only herald to the gaudy spring,” identifies the youth with an early spring flower, the primrose, a symbol of true love.¹⁰ In his late sixteenth century *Herball*, Gerard explains the Latin name with reference to its earliness in the season: primroses are “commonly called *Primula veris* [firstling of spring], because they are the first among those plants that doe flower in the spring, or because they flower with the first” (Gerard 637).¹¹ Other references to the primrose, in Shakespearean texts and elsewhere, indicate the same association.¹² Primroses were termed “true-loves” if four-petaled (the usual number is five).¹³ Thus the phrase “only herald to the gaudy spring” suggests not only youthfulness and primacy but also the quality of true love, perhaps the chief organizing concept of Shakespeare’s sonnets. According to tradition, true love was considered eternal and bestowed a kind of immortality to pairs of lovers. In *The Faerie Queene*, for instance, in the Proem to the Book of Friendship, Spenser praises love and especially true love:

¹⁰ Another symbol of true love was Herb Paris, *Paris quadrifolia*, which usually has a terminal arrangement of four leaves. It has small green flowers with four sepals, but it flowers in summer and fall (June-October) and therefore is not the herald to spring of sonnet 1. Herb Paris is referenced in *Romeo and Juliet* (Fein).

¹¹ Brackets in original. Today *Primula veris* is applied only to the Cowslip and the Primrose is named *Primula vulgaris* (Linnaeus), but Gerard called several forms of primroses and cowslips by this name, with additional Latin epithets to describe their form and color.

¹² “Prim-rose first borne child of Ver,/ Merry Spring-time’s harbinger,” and “The Primrose placing first, because that in the Spring/ It is the first appears” (TNK I.i.7-8, Drayton’s *Polyolbion* xv.150).

¹³ The herald Gerard Legh explains this association in *The Accedens of Armory*, in a description of a coat of arms bearing “Caterfoyls”: “This though it be termed a foyle, yet it is a flower by the name of the primrose. This of all other flowers bringeth good tidings unto man, that the Spring of the yere, is at hand. The flower likewise especially when the leaves thereof bee but to the number of fower, beinge founde, is the rather with a certaintie taken from the grounde, and the more esteemed, because as it is commonly called a trewe love, so it importeth a manner good lucke unto the first finder thereof” (1576 edition; qu. Hotson 1964: 127).

For it of honor and all vertue is
The roote, and brings forth glorious flowres of fame,
That crowne true louers with immortall blis,
The meed of them that loue, and do not liue amisse. (IV *Proem* 2.6-9)¹⁴

Spenser depicts two kinds of true lovers. Those in Adonis's Garden were living couples, men paired with women (IV.x.24.7). In a more privileged position near the Temple of Venus, however, set apart from these living lovers, were legendary pairs of male friends. These, tied

In bands of friendship, there did liue for euer,
Whose liues although decay'd, yet loues decayed neuer. (IV.x.27.8-9)

Spenser includes pairs such as Jonathan and David, Theseus and Pirithous, and Damon and Pythias. These famous friends

. . . on chast vertue grounded their desire,
Farre from all fraud, or fayned blandishment;
Which in their spirits kindling zealous fire,
Braue thoughts and noble deedes did euermore aspire. (IV.x.26.6-9)

In this mold also are Spenser's descriptions of the friendship between Prince Arthur and the Redcrosse knight, who exchange gifts "fast friendship for to bynd,/ And love establish each to other trew" (I.9.18.6-7). Although the traditional pairs were all male, in his narrative Spenser applies the same concept to the female pair of Britomart and Amoret (whose name was a synonym for true-love). Britomart leaves Sir Artegall to help search for Amoret because of the love she bears Amoret—as strong as what she feels for Sir Artegall, though

. . . in another kind;
For vertues onely sake, which doth beget
True love and faithfull friendship, she by her [Amoret] did set. (IV.6.46.7-9)

¹⁴ Quotations are from *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A. C. Hamilton.

It is this tradition of everlasting true love to which the youth of the *Sonnets* is coupled in this opening poem, although in subsequent sonnets—and most notoriously, in sonnet 20, the Master Mistress sonnet—Shakespeare unsettles the distinctions between sexual love and friendship that Spenser draws so carefully.

Sonnet 1 thus accords with the topic *totum* in setting out the proposition to be argued, and in characterizing the young man and his actions—his preeminent beauty, of a sort to draw love; his youth; his improvident and narcissistic behavior.

The final aspect of the *totum* topic that I want to explore is defining through sequential narrowing of characteristics. Of this procedure Cicero writes, “The ancients . . . lay down the rules as follows: when you have taken all the qualities which the thing you wish to define has in common with other things, you should pursue the analysis until you produce its own distinctive quality which can be transferred to no other thing” (*Topica* vi.29).¹⁵ The youth is one of the general class “fairest creatures” of line 1, and described metaphorically as a flower, “beauty’s rose,” in line 2.¹⁶ From this point sonnet 1 further narrows the definition of the youth through its allusions to flowers with *rose* in their common name. Many flowers had “rose” in their name, including some which are not members of the rose family. The first line of the second quatrain, “But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,” suggests one such flower, a narcissus called the Primrose Peerless, which like several other narcissuses has a small bright center cup. Gerard in his 1597 *Herball* describes the Primrose Peerless as a flower “of a yellowish white colour, with a yellow crowne or circle in the middle”

¹⁵ Quotations are from the Loeb edition published by Harvard University Press.

¹⁶ “Youth as the flower of a man’s age” is a poetic definition mentioned by Cicero (*Topica* vii.32).

(108, 109).¹⁷ The yellow “crown” of the central cup suggests a princely or superlative quality, and the name Peerless fits with the station ascribed to the youth—the summit of beauty. An allusion to this familiar English flower not only enriches the self-love imagery, but suggests a narrowing from “beauty’s rose,” the most beautiful rose, to that which is also crowned, the Primrose Peerless. Finally, the “only herald” to spring, as noted above, alludes to *Primula veris*, the “Truelove” primrose, another flower with *rose* in its common name. Thus the addressee is first described as among the most beautiful roses, then as among the princely of those, and then further to a specific beautiful princely rose, the truelove primrose. Through this sequence of floral allusions, we arrive at a unique differentiation.

This sequence of floral allusions also pertains to a metaphoric and/or cryptic designation of some kind, a trope termed *pronominatio*, “naming instead,” in *Ad Herennium*. *Pronominatio* designates “by a kind of adventitious epithet a thing that cannot be called by its proper name” (IV.xxxi.42).¹⁸ Leslie Hotson argued in *Mr. W. H.* that the identification of the youth in *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* with the primrose and

¹⁷ The Primrose Peerless, though larger than a primrose or cowslip, is similar in overall shape and the flower has pale petals similar in color to the wild English primrose and is topped by a bright yellow cup or “crowne,” features that account for its common name. Gerard describes the Primrose Peerless as “that sort of *Narcissus* or Primrose peerelesse that is most common in our country gardens, generally knowne everie where” (108). The similar Pheasant’s Eye *Narcissus*, which has purple tinging its cup, is naturalized in gardens and woodlands of the eastern United States. The Primrose Peerless is listed and illustrated in Keble Martin’s *The Concise British Flora in Colour* (Plate 83) and is given also in an on-line list of Warwickshire wildflowers maintained by the Botanical Society of the British Isles.

¹⁸ Freinkel wants to read the italicized and capitalized “*Rose*” in the 1609 Quarto as “somebody’s name” that has lost its referent (2002: 195-96), parallel to “*Will*” in sonnets 135 and 136—despite the fact that a half dozen or so other words with this typographical treatment cannot be so interpreted. I agree that it is tempting to regard “*Rose*” as carrying special significance, and that it might call attention to the use of flower symbolism I discuss here, but I do not think that the typographical features of the Quarto have any necessary significance since there is no evidence of authorial intervention in the printing process. (This contrasts with my treatment of typographical features in the publications of John Davies of Hereford; see Chapter 4.)

with language suggesting princely qualities pointed toward a particular identification, one William Hatcliffe, who was crowned as the Prince of True Love during Christmas revels at Gray's Inn in 1588; his coat of arms bore three white true-loves on an azure field (the colors of beauty and truth). I have nothing to say about this particular identification, but I do concur that the sonnets to the youth—including perhaps this specific definition of the youth through allusions to kinds of “roses”—identify their addressee as *a* prince or lord of true love. Whether or not some or all of these sonnets were once dedicated to some particular individual or individuals, they hold our interest today because of the ways Shakespeare has molded his speaker to express how this lord of true love draws the speaker toward him, and also at times repels him.

Thus the identification of the youth in this opening sonnet as narcissistic yet a herald to true love furnishes a concise description for the argument of the procreation sonnets but also points the way toward the emotional spectrum that the *Sonnets* explore and the eventual failure of all relationships depicted.

Partes. Sonnet 2. The topic *partes* provides a second way to define the proposition being argued: Divide the subject into component parts that can then be defined and analyzed more fully. Cicero's examples partition out aspects such as legal definitions of a criminal act, and particular acts alleged of individuals. Shakespeare's sonnet 2 similarly particularizes the need for perpetuation of beauty not in general terms of the “world's due,” described in sonnet 1, but in specific terms of time's consequences for the youth himself: the withering of his beauty, his brow marked by “deep trenches” (2.2), his eyes no longer bright but “deep sunken” (2.7). Such a division suits this topic especially well because the youth is a *part* of the human species, not a quality of

it—an individual, not an attribute. In thus narrowing the procreation problem from its effect on the world to its effect on the youth, Shakespeare shows that he understands the distinction Cicero makes between partition into parts on the one hand, and division of general kinds into specific ones (*genus* into *species*) on the other. The sonnet does not narrow the problem down to some subset of “fairest creatures” such as beautiful youths from aristocratic households, or kinds of roses, but to one particular individual.

This distinction was not always drawn in Renaissance texts; in his “Apology,” Sidney says of poetry, “Now in his parts, kinds, or species, as you list to term them” (*Sir Philip Sidney* 255). The distinction is a venerable one in philosophy, however, going back to Aristotle’s metaphysics. Cicero emphasizes that “if anyone thinks that species are the same as parts, he brings confusion into the subject, and misled by a casual resemblance fails to distinguish sharply enough between things which must be separated” (*Topica* vii.31-32). Something can be delineated by enumerating all its parts, “as for example a body has head, shoulders, hands, sides, legs, feet and so forth” (vi.30). A definition of something through division into kinds analyzes attributes and lists “all the *species* that come under the *genus* which is being defined,” *genus* and *species* being groups of things that share certain characteristics or behave in a certain way rather than individual objects or particular acts of an individual (vi.28). Baldwin points to evidence in the plays that Shakespeare understood and used this distinction (II 110-115). The distinction is clear also in the sonnets, as I discuss further below under the arguments from *genus* and *forma* (sonnets 5 and 6).

In keeping with Cicero’s distinction between division into parts and analysis into kinds, the sonnet also wittily points to the *partes* argument by referring throughout

to distinguishable parts of the youth. Sonnet 2 opens with reference to one aging body part, the brow, and then describes metaphorically age's effect on the youth's body, the "field" of which his brow forms one part:¹⁹

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tottered weed of small worth held. (1-4).

Note that even the youth's beauty, properly an attribute rather than a part, is referred to metonymically as a piece of the youth's person, his clothing or "proud livery" which can wear off or wear out.

The sonnet asks how the youth will answer for those consequences, not on behalf of the "world's due" but for the sake of his own particular bodily "treasure":

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. (2.5-8)

The sonnet also partitions the consequences of the youth's actions, or inactions, into their effects on individual body parts or features, both his own ("deep-sunken eyes" etc.) and those of a potential child (warm blood):

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. (2.9-14)

If he has a child, his own body will be marvelously "new made" when it is old,

¹⁹ The word "field" suggests both the background of a coat of arms, and a landscape where his "rose"—beauty's rose—is situated.

through the succession of generations. In the couplet, the benefits of having a child are phrased in terms of the youthfulness and liveliness of that part of the body, blood, that stood metonymically for lineage; his own blood, in this sense, will flow warm in the veins of his child, where he can “see” it, even though that same lineal “blood” will feel cold within his own aging body.

Notatio. Sonnet 3. The third topic, *notatio*, is the last way Cicero gives to define the proposition to be argued. In Cicero’s usage, and elsewhere in the context of definitions, *notatio* meant etymology. Sidney drew on this topic in his “Apology for Poetry” when he argued that knowledge of the Latin term *vates* meaning “seer” or “prophet,” and the Greek *poietaes* meaning “maker” or “creator,” enriches the meaning and dignity of the English word “poet” (238-240). A comparable analysis in a sonnet would be not only clumsy but downright silly. The word *notatio*, however, had several other meanings, and also referred to various kinds of distinctive images, marks, or qualities, especially ones associated with the face. Notable images could be simply unusual and therefore memorable; *notatio* refers to the diligent marking of a sequence of images in memory in a section of *Ad Herennium* devoted to recall of matter for oral argument (III.xx.34). In Book IV of *Ad Herennium*, entirely devoted to figurative language, *notatio* is a term for a figure of thought: a describing or characterizing of something (usually a person) by distinctive and recognizable qualities (“definite signs which, like distinctive marks, are attributes of that character”; IV.1.63). The latter figure also appears in Aphthonius’s *Progymnasmata* under its Greek name, *ethopoiea*, where it is clear that the distinctive qualities usually have an ethical cast to them. While *notatio* was often coupled with other figures of thought which combined ethical

with physical portraiture, *notatio* alone depicted only ethical and behavioral characteristics (“*Ethopoiea . . . mores solum effingit*”; Aphthonius 176^v).²⁰

The scholia by Loricinus in the English schooltext version of *Progymnasmata* elaborate on this figure of thought in ways that illuminate the use of time in Sonnet 3. These scholia suggest ways to develop Aphthonius’s simple temporal classification of ethical representations into present, past, and future. Ethical portraiture can express attitudes to present challenges, such as changes in fortune or a series of needs or hardships. Attitudes toward past occurrences, such as bearing misfortunes with great patience, can be described. One can also represent attitudes toward future evil outcomes, perhaps with counsel as to how so much ill may with reason be relieved.²¹ These three temporal components appear in Shakespeare’s sonnet.

Shakespeare’s other writings demonstrate his familiarity with a wide range of meanings associated with the English cognates of *notatio* and the verb *notare* (to note), all of which came into English from Latin via Old French. Because some of these meanings inform the sense of this particular *notatio* sonnet, I include a few instances of such usages. “Note” appears in the context of defining the ethical cast of an object (rather than a person) in *King John*: the young Prince Arthur defines “fierce fire and

²⁰ For example, *notatio* was sometimes paired with *effictio*, description of distinctive physical characteristics, in order to construct a portrait in both physical and ethical dimensions. Paul Smith (143) discusses Rabelais’s use of such description and notes that this pairing has also been discussed by Mireille Huchon in her study of Marguerite of Navarre’s *Héptameron*. Used in this way *notatio* is part of a tradition which extends from the ancient Greek author Theophrastus’s *Characters* through nineteenth century theories of physiognomy and phrenology.

²¹ The full scholia on *Tribus temporibus* reads as follows: *In praesenti, instantis fortunae permutatio, & aerumnae recensentur. In praeterito potissimum eae conferuntur cum infortuniis parentum vel maiorum. In futuro rerum eventus, malorum fines adducuntur, vel consilia, quorum ratione tantis malis succurri possit* (182).

iron,” the tools with which the king’s man Hubert plans to put out his eyes, as “Creatures of note for mercy-lacking uses” (IV.i.119-20). The king later blames the whole idea of murdering the young Arthur on Hubert’s “abhorr’d aspect,” as if the simple act of taking “note” of Hubert’s face had implanted the idea of murder in the king’s mind (IV.ii.224) (although he later admits his own imagination, his “foul imaginary eyes of blood,” made Hubert appear “more hideous than” he actually was; IV.ii.265, 266). Noting as a special kind of observation, of distinctive attributes or social position worthy of remembrance, appears in countless examples; two from *Much Ado About Nothing* will suffice. Early in the play, Benedick’s reply to Claudio’s query about whether Benedick “noted” Hero serves as a gloss on the difference between casual observation and the particular attention that constitutes *noting*.²² Claudio asks, “Benedick, didst thou note the daughter of Signior Leonato?” Suggesting that Hero was not worth much attention, Benedick replies, “I noted her not, but I look’d on her” (I.i.163-64). Later in the play, close observation in order to ascertain Hero’s ethical character is undertaken by the Friar at the wedding scene after Hero is publicly accused by Claudio and the Prince of fornication. Claudio, misled by Don John’s accusations, looks for signs of Hero’s ethical qualities in her face, and interprets her blushes as false “semblance” of her honor: “Her blush is guiltiness, not modesty” (IV.i.33, 42). But the Friar’s undertakes a more careful “noting of the lady” (IV.i.158):

. . . I have mark’d
A thousand blushing apparitions

²² A more sinister version of the same action appears in *The Rape of Lucrece*, when Tarquin enters Lucrece’s bedchamber and inventories her beauty: “What could he see but mightily he noted?/ What did he note but strongly he desired?” (414-15). Quotations from the plays and *Lucrece* are from *The Riverside Shakespeare*.

To start into her face, a thousand innocent shames
In angel whiteness beat away those blushes,
And in her eye there hath appear'd a fire
To burn the errors that these princes hold
Against her maiden truth. (IV.i.159-164)

The signs in Hero's countenance lead the Friar to reach a conclusion diametrically opposed to Claudio's interpretation: that Hero is "guiltless" and the victim of "some biting error" (IV.i.169, 170).

Careful observation with similar though more subdued ethical overtones constitutes the argument constructed in Sonnet 3. The sonnet defines the procreation problem as the alternative between making a wise choice, by someone aware of not only his physical qualities but his societal and family responsibilities, and a foolish choice dictated by narcissistic focus on himself alone. The sonnet evokes a series of visual images that index the youth's beauty, his present youth as a reflection of his mother's past "prime," and a future in which an evil outcome (death with no children) can be averted by heeding the speaker's counsel. True to Aphthonius's description of the *notatio* figure's focus solely on ethical character, the sonnet refers to visual images of faces without ever providing specific physical characteristics such as hair color.

The sonnet opens with a present-time image, by asking the youth to perform the kind of careful observation (though in a mirror) that Benedick did not bother to attempt in the case of Hero. Presumably the youth's face (unlike Hubert's in *King John*, which allegedly instigates murderous thoughts) would inspire love and a desire for life:

Look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest
Now is the time that face should form another,
Whose fresh repair if thou not now renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother. (3.1-4)

The words "fresh repair" (line 3) describe the distinctively youthful quality of the addressee's beauty, and the word "re-pair" itself, in one sense, denotes the doubling that the speaker advises, in the form of a living child rather than a sterile mirror image. But the action the first line advises also figures the choice the sonnet goes on to describe by evoking two well known pictorial emblems represented by a person gazing into a mirror: Prudentia (wisdom) and Philautia (narcissistic self-love). Prudentia looks into a mirror in order to see more accurately. Although like most allegorical figures she is a woman, she was sometimes depicted with a second male face. In Albrecht Dürer's drawing of *Prudentia* (Fig. 1), the woman's hair doubles as the face of a bearded old man; this double aspect suggests that Prudentia can look with wisdom into the future in part because with the wisdom of age, she can also look backward and draw on knowledge of the past.

The first quatrain of this sonnet stays within the first division of Aphthonius's tripartite temporal scheme, the present, arguing that "now" is the time for the youth to renew and re-pair himself (lines 1 and 2). Rather than portraying the ethical character of the youth by representing his response to a pressing need (reproduction)—because as yet his response is uncertain—the quatrain presents the choice facing the youth in ethically laden terms. The results of *not* reproducing are briefly introduced as things to avoid (lines 3 and 4): he should not deceive the "world" of people who expect him to take up his rightful place as householder, husband, and father. The contrasting foolish choice by which he would "beguile the world" and "unbless some mother" (by depriving her of the happiness of motherhood) is emblemized by Philautia, as in



Figure 1. "Prudentia," by Albrecht Dürer. Reproduced from Walter L. Strauss, *The Complete Drawings of Albrecht Dürer*, Vol. 1, p. 252, with permission from Abaris Books. Reproduction in any medium other than print copies of this dissertation is prohibited.

Henry Peacham's illustration of *Philautia* in *Minerva Britanna* (Fig. 2). *Philautia* or self-love, as we have already seen in Sonnet 1, is the youth's primary flaw. Thus simply by evoking the image of a youth looking into a glass, the first quatrain characterizes the speaker's own sage advice as prudential while suggesting that



Figure 2. Emblem of “Philautia” by Henry Peacham (*Minerva Britanna*, 1612). Reproduced from Early English Books Online with permission of Harvard University and ProQuest. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

self-love represents a quality of the youth to which he must not yield. The poet further characterizes such self-love and warns against it in the second two lines of quatrain 2,

after first speaking encouraging words about the prospects of a lovely mate:

For where is she so fair whose unlearned womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond will be the tomb
Of his self-love, to stop posterity? (5-8)

A mirror into the past is invoked in the third quatrain, where the youth himself constitutes a metaphorical mirror that images his mother's youth.

Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime; (3.9-10)

This metaphorical mirror is then analogized to a window into the future by the speaker, who imagines the youth, having aged, looking at his own grown child, perhaps as if through the rippled glass of an old window, or from his own furrowed visage:

So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time. (3.11-12)

This backward glance toward the youth's parental generation does not include a portrayal, along the lines suggested in the schoolbook *Progymnasmata*, of trials undergone with patience. Instead the nostalgia-imbued image of mother looking at son is employed to project a similar glowing future for the youth, when, as a mature family man, he witnesses his own "golden time" in the face of his child. The sonnet does implement the recommendation in *Progymnasmata*, however, on ethical portrayal with regard to the future. The sonnet's primary focus is how a future evil outcome can be averted if the youth heeds the speaker's counsel. The consequences for the young man if he fails to follow the speaker's advice are described repeatedly as heedless of both others' desires and the youth's own future interest. The ultimate consequence is summarized in the concluding couplet as the death of his remaining, solitary image,

obliterated because he has not followed a prudential course and fathered a child:

But if thou live rememb' red not to be,
Die single, and thine image dies with thee. (3.13-14)

Sonnet 3 thus defines the youth's need to procreate as an ethically imbued choice: fail to re-create himself, and he is foolishly “fond”; follow the speaker’s advice, and he will take his proper place in the perennial waning and waxing of the generational procession. The sonnet also references the general and particular definitions of the procreation problem made in sonnets 1 and 2. The world’s expectations appear in the reproof “Thou dost beguile the world” (if he fails to father children), and the personal consequences of his choice are depicted in the metaphoric wrinkled window through which he may one day view his child, on one hand, versus the death of his likeness if he fails to act wisely. Also, if one recalls that “member” can mean parts of the body, it seems possible that “remembered” in line 13 may suggest “re-membered,” remade or put back together with all the parts of a new, young body (and perhaps in particular a male body).²³

This *notatio* sonnet thus characterizes both the speaker’s prudential love for the youth and the youth’s narcissism through its visual images; and like Dürer’s emblem, it looks both forward into the future and back into the past with the wisdom of the *senex*. Love whose aim is prudence is the noblest kind of love, according to Davies of Hereford in his 1603 philosophical poem *Microcosmos* (170). I discuss this prudential

²³ Sonnet 3 also includes in its reasoning another particular individual, “some mother,” who will be “unblessed” if the youth fails to act. The reason for the appearance of two mothers in this sonnet has to do, I believe, with the number 3 being sometimes considered a feminine number, but that issue lies outside the scope of this study.

love further in the next chapter, comparing it to the highly non-prudential kinds of love **imaged** in sonnets 20 and 129.

The next thirteen topics—all but the final one, *testimonium*—are classified by **Cicero** as intrinsic arguments that use reasoning derived from concepts closely allied to the **original** proposition. Such reasoning includes one argument from the meaning of **words** used in the original proposition (the fourth topic, *coniugata*), plus a variety of **arguments** based on various logical relations to words or concepts in the original **proposition**—three based on kinds of similarities, three based on kinds of differences, plus **corollaries**, logical antecedents and consequences, causes and effects, and **comparisons**. The final type of argument is classed by Cicero as “ἄτεχνοι” (atechnoi), **meaning** no logical reasoning by the lawyer or orator is necessary; included in this **topic** are testimony of authoritative people or texts (iv.24).

Coniugata. Sonnet 4. The fourth class of argument, *coniugata*, was used by Cicero in *Topica* to refer to arguments using words with the same root and, usually, a meaning **similar** to some key word or words in the original proposition. His examples deal with **property** rights and usage of common land and rain water; for instance, “if a field is ‘**common**’ [*compascuus*], it is legal to use it as a common pasture [*compascere*]” (iii. 12). As in the case of etymology, an overt argument based on common roots of **words** is an impossibility for a sonnet. But the argument of sonnet 4 that the youth is **abusing** his legacy from nature by spending it only on himself does rely on important **terms** of characterization that appear in the definition-sonnets 1 and 2: “niggarding”

(1.12) and “thriftless” (2.8).²⁴ In addition, the sonnet has many conjugates of words **that occur** in the first three sonnets: beauty’s (beauteous, beauty), use (abuse, usurer, **used**), lovely (loveliness), tomb (tombed), sum (sums), live (lives). The opening **accusation** includes a conjugate form of “thriftless” to characterize the youth’s self-**involvement**:

Unthrifty loveliness, why dost thou spend
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy? (4.1-2)

The youth’s unthriftiness towards his “legacy” is contrasted with a personified Nature’s **generous** bequest—not as an outright gift, but as a loan:

Nature’s bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
And being frank she lends to those are free: (4.3-4)²⁵

The next quatrain characterizes the youth with a variant of “niggarding” and continues by **calling** him “usurer” (a variant of “use” from 2.9):

Then beauteous niggard, why dost thou abuse
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer, why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live? (4.5-8)

The sonnet continues its theme of the youth’s poor choices by describing his failure to **wisely** manage his inheritance:

For having traffic with thyself alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive;
Then how when Nature calls thee to be gone,
What acceptable audit canst thou leave? (4.9-12)

And the sonnet concludes with a succinct contrast between the niggarding of which he

²⁴ Betty Ingram pointed out the repetition of “niggard” and “niggarding” to me. The only instance of **any** form of “niggard” occurring anywhere else in any of the sonnets is in the phrase “niggard truth” (72.8).

²⁵ “Frank” and “free” do not have the same root but can be synonymous.

has been guilty, versus the wiser course of his “beauty’s use” (2.9):

Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
Which usèd, lives th’executor to be. (4.12-14)

By the end of the sonnet’s concatenation of “beauty’s,” “beauteous,” “abuse,” “**usurer**,” and “use” from previous lines, the terms “unused,” “beauty,” and “used” in **the** couplet have become so intertwined through repetition of their component sounds **that they** almost seem to constitute variants of the same stem word, as if the speaker has **slipped** in another example of *verba coniugata*.

The entire argument of sonnet 4 thus takes as its point of departure the **accusation** in sonnet 1 that the youth “mak’st waste in niggarding” his legacy (1.12). **Terms** associated with the financial sphere referenced by “niggarding” include “**spend**,” “lend,” “profitless,” “usurer,” “sums,” “traffic,” and “audit,” while the **context** of inherited wealth is referenced in “legacy,” “bequest,” and “executor.” The **language** of the sonnet seems to hint at the *coniugata* topic by making especially heavy **use of** the figure *polyptoton*, which like the topic *coniugata* employs words with the **same** root but different endings or forms. Beyond the multiple instances already noted **having** to do with “beauty” and “use,” there are “sum” and “sums” (both in one line); and “**gives**,” “given,” and “give” (again, the second two variants appear in one line, as **is true** also of “usurer” and “use”). Repetition with slight variation occurs also in “beauteous” and “bounteous” (the figure *homoioptoton*, since this time the variation is in **root** rather than ending); like “unused” and “used” in the couplet, “bounteous” and “beauteous” are in a parallel position in an adjacent pair of lines. Moreover, the **central** concept promoted by the sonnet is “use”: Will the youth’s beauty be “unused,”

“used,” or “abused” through trafficking with himself alone (masturbation)? Finally, **the frequent** repetition of “use” constitutes yet another possible verbal play on the name **for this** argument. “Use” in this context means copulation, in Latin *coniugium* or *coniunctio*, which are conjugates of *coniugata*.

Other sonnets use repetitive wordplay. Some sonnets use *diacope*, repetition of **the same** word (“ten” appears five times in sonnet 6, for instance; “yourself” four **times** in sonnet 13; and several words appear twice in the first few lines of sonnet 8). Occasionally *plocce* appears, the repetition of the same word in a different sense (e.g. “treasure” used as a verb and then a noun in sonnet 6). Scattered instances of *polyptoton* appear, such as “unfair” and “fairly” in sonnet 5 (a slight variant of *polyptoton* since the change is between prefix and ending), “beauty’s” and “beauty” in sonnet 5 (although these are not paired within or between lines), “use” and “usury” in sonnet 6, “unused” and “user” in sonnet 9, and in sonnet 17 “numbers” and “number” as **well** as “touches” and “touched.” No other sonnet, however, makes such extensive and **pointed** use of these figures as sonnet 4.

Genus. Sonnet 5. The fifth kind of argument is that based on *genus*. Traditionally, and **still** in many contexts today, the term *genus* refers to a general class defined by **certain** attributes that all members share, such as all molecules with the chemical **composition** H₂O or all plastic pink flamingos. An argument based on this topic would **build** its case on particular attributes shared by the item under investigation with other **members** of its class. Cicero’s legal example argues that if all silver was bequeathed to a **wife**, the coin must be included in the legacy, since “a species is never separated from its genus, as long as it keeps its proper name; coin keeps the name of silver;

therefore it seems to have been included" (iii.13).

The class or *genus* to which the youth belongs is defined in sonnet 1. He is one of nature's "fairest creatures." Figuratively, this *genus* is identified in sonnet 1 with a flower, "beauty's rose," and some attributes of the *genus* are specified through floral allusions in the second and third quatrains of sonnet 1. Sonnet 5 develops its argument for the preservation of nature's beauty by describing the effect of passing time on the whole class of summer-flowering plants. The sonnet begins by stating clearly that the youth who is now so fair will not be so one day—that is, he will cease to be a member of the *genus* "fairest creatures":

Those hours, that with gentle work did frame
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
Will play the tyrants to the very same
And that unfair which fairly doth excel: (5.1-4)

The rest of the sonnet describes the ravages of time, and a remedy, solely in terms of attributes of the whole *genus* of blooming things. The second quatrain figures time's ravages as winter's effect on sap, leaves, and beauty:

For never-resting time leads summer on
To hideous winter and confounds him there,
Sap checked with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
Beauty o'ersnowed and bareness everywhere: (5.5-8)

And the rest of the sonnet describes the remedy for the general class of summer blooms. Even though visible beauty is gone, the distilled substance can remain. The bottled extract, "beauty's effect," can bring to mind former beauty:

Then were not summer's distillation left
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.

But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show; their substance still lives sweet. (5.9-14)

This sonnet does not return to the specific case of the youth but concludes with its focus **firmly** on his *genus*, summery blooms.

Like the *partes* sonnet, this *genus* sonnet seems to play on other meanings of the **Latin** term for the name of the topic. The word *genus* in Latin can mean “descendant, offspring, child,” and is related to the verb *generere*, to “beget, procreate, engender” (Lewis and Short). Thus while the *partes* sonnet mentions a number of body parts, this *genus* sonnet suggests an image of an infant *in utero*. In the context of flowers, the **phrase** “liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass” refers to perfume in a vial; but Gratziani **notes** that the phrase is also “a delicate foetal allusion” (80). Sonnet 5, then, both **constructs** its argument from the topic *genus*, and through figurative allusion suggests an **image** of the child the procreation sonnets urge the youth to beget.

Species or forma. Sonnet 6. As many critics have noted, sonnets 5 and 6 form a **linked** pair. While sonnet 5 opens with time’s destruction of the youth’s beauty, the **rest of** the sonnet speaks only of the general class of summertime flowers. Sonnet 6 **takes** that general lesson and applies it to the youth in particular, as a *species* of the *genus*. A *genus* included a number of particular kinds, or particular individuals, and **these** subsets or individuals were termed *species* or forms (Latin *forma*). *Species*, in **Latin** and in English, often was used to denote a group of individuals who all shared the **same** essence or were all formed from the same mold or pattern. *Species* and *forma* (and the English “form”) could all mean “beauty or comeliness,” and of course the **essence** of the youth is his beauty, as implied by “the world’s fresh ornament” in

sonnet 1 and repeatedly in the first 126 sonnets.²⁶

Sonnet 6 draws on all of these senses of *species* and *forma*. The sonnet begins by moving from the argument in sonnet 5 about time's destructive power, remediable through distillation, to the youth himself as a particular *species* of the *genus*:

Then let not winter's ragged hand deface
In thee thy summer, ere thou be distilled:
Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place
With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed. (6.1-4)

The force of the fetal allusion in the preceding sonnet comes to rest here, in this companion sonnet's plea that the youth instill a treasure in a vial-like place (a womb).²⁷ The sonnet also holds to Cicero's emphasis on *genus* (and its subsidiary species) as defined by shared attributes, since these lines implicitly ally the youth with other members of his *genus* (flowers) through their emphasis on his "summer" time of life.

The next two quatrains play with additional meanings of *species* and *forma*, yet another example of the way these sonnets allude to the Ciceronian topic being deployed. The English words "specie" and "species" referred in various senses to money as coin.²⁸ In the second quatrain this sense is suggested by the monetary terms

²⁶ OED 2nd ed., definition 1e for *form*, now obsolete. For why "world's fresh ornament" can signify beauty, see the discussion under sonnet 1, above.

²⁷ Hammond (2002: 36 fn 107), citing Williams, identifies "treasure" in sonnets 6 and 20 as semen or genitals, but semen can only be construed as treasure because it can grow, through "use," into a child.

²⁸ OED 2nd ed., definition 12b for *species* and 3a and b for *specie*, meanings now obsolete. The earliest dates for these English usages are 1618, 1615, and 1617 respectively, but since earliest OED citations cannot be assumed to be earliest usage, these meanings may well have been extant when Shakespeare was writing. In any case the Latin word *species* applied to gold and silver as kinds of metal that were stamped into coins. Although he uses neither "genus" nor "specie/s" as English words, Shakespeare does collocate "coin" with "the figure of an angel/ Stamped in gold" and with silver being "ten times undervalued to tried gold" (MVI.vii.56-57 and 53). A passage using stamping of coins as a metaphor for begetting children refers to those who "do coin heaven's image/ In stamps that are forbid" (MM II.iv.45-46). These Shakespearean usages suggest that *species* as money was available as a pun.

“usury” and “loan” (terms that draw on and extend the commercial framework of sonnet 4), and also by reference to the commonplace notion of usury as ten percent:

That use is not forbidden usury
Which happies those that pay the willing loan;
That’s for thyself to breed another thee,
Or ten times happier be it ten for one. (6.5-8)

Strictly speaking, the usury rate was 1/10, not 10/1, but a switch in arithmetic method (in this case, from percentage to multiplication, enabling the profit to be whole numbers of children) is suggested by “refigured” in the next quatrain:

Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
If ten of thine ten times refigured thee:
Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart,
Leaving thee living in posterity? (6.9-12)

The multiple refiguring of one instance into many is especially appropriate to the *species* topic, because under one important sense of *species*, all individual members possessed exactly the same essence (a feature true of coinage). The “treasure” the speaker pleads the youth to supply is, in this sense, his essence—his beauty—and all his offspring will share it. Moreover, another sense of both Latin terms, *species* and *forma*, is appearance, shape, form, or figure (Lewis and Short), a sense occurring in sixteenth and seventeenth century English as well.²⁹ “Form” in particular could mean a mold—either physical or conceptual—that provides the pattern for a physical shape.³⁰ The concept of a “refigured” or multiplied youth implies an action which generates a number of new instances out of the same “form.” A common medical view of the time held that the male seed contained the formative power to shape offspring (the female

²⁹ OED 2nd ed. definition 3a for *species*; definition 3 for *form*.

³⁰ In Aristotelian metaphysics, “form” is a pattern, immaterial but real, which shapes every object.

supplied the raw material or tissues to give substance to the male form). In this sense the “treasure” instilled in a female womb by the youth would quite literally mold the *species* of the youth—his essence-as-beauty—into new copies of the same *species* in his children.³¹

The couplet returns to the two attributes of the youth which constitute the whole *rationale* for the procreation series: his narcissism (which the speaker of the sonnets *hopes* is *not* an essential and unchanging quality) and his beauty:

Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair
To be death’s conquest and make worms thine heir. (6.13-14)

The sonnet thus closes with a pointed rebuke that provides a sharp contrast to the *imagined* refiguring of the youth into multiple beautiful children. The notion that *instead* of children a clump of wriggling “worms” could be his heir certainly constitutes a repugnant substitution of a lesser *species* for the lovely one of the *beauteous* youth.

Similitudo. Sonnet 7. Under *similitudo* Cicero discusses reasoning from parallel cases, including comparisons “equal to equal” (x.43). This topic, he says, is of more interest to orators and philosophers than to jurists; he might have added poets to his first grouping. Through use of this topic “orators and philosophers have licence to *cause* dumb things to talk, to call on the dead to rise from the world below, to tell of

³¹ Baldwin shows Shakespeare’s familiarity with the concepts of *forma* and *species* as multiple instances of something with insignificant (or non-essential) variation in his section on Cicero’s *Topica*. An amusing example occurs in *Much Ado about Nothing* when Dogberry lists several accusations against Conrad and Borachio, all of which mean exactly the same thing. Don Pedro answers in a similarly nonsensical vein, to which Claudio comments, “Rightly reasoned, and in his own division” (*Ado* V.i.224-25; Baldwin II 113). Baldwin also provides an instance from *Love’s Labor’s Lost* in which the pedant Holofernes, speaking about his extemporaneous composition, uses “forms” and “figures” as synonyms, along with a superfluity of other terms signified by the Latin term *forma*, including “shapes, objects, ideas, apprehensions” (*LLL* IV.ii.66-67; Baldwin II 112).

something which could not possibly happen, in order to add force to an argument or lessen it" (x.45). Sonnet 7 employs such poetic licence in personifying the sun as a king. Though small-scale similitudes appear scattered through the procreation sonnets, sonnet 7 is the only one of the seventeen to reason from parallels in an extensive way, in this case by devoting an entire sonnet to a single analogy. The rising and declining king-like sun is described through all twelve lines prior to the couplet; and the whole process is analogized to the youth in the couplet.

The sonnet opens with a description of the rising sun and the reverence this personified light source garners from human witnesses:

Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
Serving with looks his sacred majesty (7.1-4)

The sonnet continues by depicting the course of the sun in its diurnal path across the sky. The three quatrains describe respectively the sun rising, reaching its zenith, and declining, together with the changing attitude of onlookers below. The admiration of "each under eye" to "his sacred majesty" continues through "his middle age":

And having climbed the steep-up heav'nly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage: (7.5-8)

But this adoration changes when the sun begins to set:

But when from highmost pitch with weary car
Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,
The eyes ('fore duteous) now converted are
From his low tract and look another way: (7.9-12)

The parallel to the waning loveliness that comes with age is drawn in the couplet,

which points to the likeness by punning on son/sun:

So thou thyself out-going in thy noon,
Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son. (7.13-14)

While son/sun are homonyms, and in their similarity of sound perhaps indirectly suggest the *similitudo* topic, the meaning of this topic's name is so plain that it allows little room for the kind of wordplay evident in some of the other procreation sonnets.

Differentia. Sonnet 8. Cicero defines *differentia*, or difference, as “the exact opposite” of *similitudo*; the comparisons drawn are in the form of contrasts rather than likenesses (xi.46). Sonnet 8 repeatedly describes the differences between the youth's own harmonious qualities—he is “music to hear”—and his distaste for music and its harmonies. The difference between the two is marked by a *chiasmus* in the first line, and the second line uses word repetition (*diacope*) to describe the similitude that *should* mark them:

Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy. (8.1-2)

The youth remains “sad” or somber, perhaps even morose, when hearing music, rather than responding with the pleasure sometimes considered in early modern theories of the mind to result from hearing musical harmonies.³² The phrase “sweets with sweets war not” also evokes the sense of the English word “difference” as disagreement or dispute, since the youth is represented as at war with himself. The next two lines emphasize this discord between the “music” of the youth's voice on the one hand, and his displeasure in music on the other, by delineating the difference as a paradox:

³² “Sad” is defined as “morose, dismal-looking” for Richard II V.v.70 (*OED* 2nd ed., definition 5e). Lorenzo in *The Merchant of Venice* explains the power of music to Jessica, who is “never merry” while listening to music (V.i.71-82).

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Why lov'st thou that which thou receiv'st not gladly,
Or else receiv'st with pleasure thine annoy? (8.3-4)

In these lines, this discord within the youth is phrased in terms that emphasize *dissimilarity*, thus fitting the topic *differentia* by focusing on the opposite of *similitudo*.

The second quatrain further describes the dissimilitude between the youth and music. It also personifies the music as “chiding” the youth:

If the true concord of well-tunèd sounds
By unions married do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear. (8.5-8)

The multi-part music, melded into a pleasing whole, chides the still single youth, divided by inner discord. He should instead heed the lesson of the music and imitate the “true concord” of the strings portrayed in the third quatrain, which are likened to a family unit of “sire and child and happy mother”:

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; (8.9-12)

The similitude expressed in this quatrain expresses the harmony which the speaker urges and contrasts sharply with the discord described elsewhere in the sonnet. The couplet summarizes this unison and warns what will ensue should he fail to follow the speaker's advice:

Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee, “Thou single wilt prove none.” (8.13-14)

The youth is thus chastised for not conducting his life in a way consonant with his own (intrinsically sweet and harmonious) nature. The references to “many” parts and “one” larger concord also allude to the *discordia/concordia* concept, in which

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subsidiary differences are harmonized into a larger whole (which is the case, of course, in any music with parts or chords). The youth can bring his discordant singleness into a larger harmony, his *discors* into *concors*, by marrying to form a family and having a child. Remaining different, single, and apart from the harmony of a larger whole, will be fatal: “Thou single wilt prove none” (14).

We can once more observe the language of this sonnet playing with the Latin name for the topic being utilized. *Differentia* is based on the present participle *differens* of the verb *differo*. This verb means literally to bear (*fero*) apart or in pieces (*dis*, a particle meaning asunder, apart, in two or more pieces), and that sense appears in line 8 in the phrase “the parts that thou shouldst bear.” This phrase also encapsulates the chief directive of this sonnet, that the youth should bear (or bring forth) a part of himself in the form of a child. Expressing a part of himself (in the form of the distillation and treasure referred to in sonnets 5 and 6) will actually make a new whole, of “sire and child and happy mother.”

Contraria. Sonnet 9. *Differentia* or dissimilitudes and *contraria* or contraries might seem by their names to be much the same. The kinds of opposition Cicero discusses under *contraria*, however, are stronger than under *differentia*, though still not logically opposed (as in the thirteenth topic, *repugnantia*). Contraries are two statements whose constituent terms are opposed in some way. In *Topica* Cicero lists several different kinds of contraries: opposites, which “belong to the same class, but differ absolutely, as wisdom and folly”; privatives (*privantia*) such as humanity and inhumanity, where a prefix such as “in” changes the meaning of a word to signify the absence of something; qualities near either end of a comparative spectrum, such as many versus few, or long

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versus short; and negatives, such as “if this is so, that is not” (xi.47-49).

Sonnet 9 employs several kinds of these contraries. The basic contrary of the sonnet is a complex one, between “single life” which is “issueless,” and marriage which produces children (in Cicero’s terms single life versus marriage are opposites while having issue or not is a privative). This theme underlies all the procreation sonnets, of course, but in sonnet 9 a version of this contrast is repeated in each of the three quatrains (which is not the case in sonnet 8). In addition, each quatrain describes an accompanying contrary. The first quatrain presents a comparative contrary (at opposite ends of a spectrum); it contrasts the *single* widow who might one day weep his death if the youth marries, versus the *whole world* weeping as a widow if he remains single and without children:

Is it for fear to wet a widow’s eye
That thou consum’st thyself in single life?
Ah! if thou issueless shalt hap to die,
The world will wail thee like a makeless wife; (9.1-4)

The words “issueless” and “makeless” in this quatrain point to the youth’s single, childless state as contraries to the mate and children the speaker is urging; they are privative contraries (in this case signified by the suffix “-less” rather than a prefix).

The second quatrain sets the bereavement of the whole widow-like world, if the youth remains single, against the comfort individual widows may take in their children. This contrast is given as a negative contrary (two contrasting states which are incompatible): the *absence* in the world of his “form” in children, versus the presence of such forms (children) for “every private widow.”

The world will be thy widow and still weep,
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,

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When every private widow well may keep,
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind. (9.5-8)

In the third quatrain, the lesson for the "thrifless" youth (2.8) uses two comparative contraries to contrast two kinds of waste, of money and of beauty. The "use" of each has opposite effects. The spending of money by an "unthrift" (9.9), a wasteful kind of use, is opposed to a privative contrary, the unused beauty of the youth who holds his own coin, his "beauty's treasure" (6.4), within himself. These contrary kinds of waste, however—one of action, one of inaction—have opposite results. The waste of money, while lost to its owner (and thus not "used" in the sense of earning interest), is not lost to the world but conserved; it simply has a different owner. But the waste of beauty "kept unused" (9.12) results in its obliteration:

Look what an unthrift in the world doth spend
Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it;
But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,
And kept unused, the user so destroys it: (9.9-12)

The couplet also contains a complex contrary built from two opposites, hostility versus amicability, and self versus others. The speaker, elaborating on his accusation that the youth is his own "foe" (1.8), infers from that statement that the youth therefore cannot really have any regard for others.

No love towards others in that bosom sits
That on himself such murd'rous shame commits. (9.13-14)

This hostility towards himself is exactly the opposite of charitable love toward others implied initially by the youth's not wanting to "wet a widow's eye" (9.1). This couplet, like the characterization of the youth as a "glutton" in sonnet 1, has a parallel in *Ad Herennium*. The couplet paraphrases the textbook's first example of *contraria*,

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reasoning by contraries (a figure of thought; IV.xviii.25). That example is, “Now how should you expect one who has ever been hostile to his own interests to be friendly to another's?” The sonnet does not use the device of a rhetorical question, however, but makes instead a strong and reproving claim, which then serves as the basis for the argument of the next sonnet.

***Adiuncta.* Sonnet 10.** The topic *adiuncta* covers corollary arguments drawn from information or inferences that are not an essential part of the original statement or proposition. In *Topica*, Cicero first mentions an inference concerning the legal status of a woman's will (iv.18); his more extensive treatment later in the treatise dwells on the utility of this topic “in conjectural issues which come up in trials” (xi.50). These issues pertain to circumstantial evidence giving plausibility (or implausibility) to the alleged crime, such as signs of preparation before or during the event, signs of guilt or perturbation such as pallor, and the proverbial smoking gun (Cicero's “bloody sword,” xii.52), all of which can suggest intent to commit an act.

Shakespeare's use of this topic in sonnet 10 is a corollary of the claim in sonnet 1 that the youth is his own enemy (“thyself thy foe,” 1.8). The argument of sonnet 10 is an even closer corollary of the related but stronger claim in sonnet 9 that he has murderous self-intent. Sonnet 10 infers from this premise of intentional self-harm that the young man is “possessed with murd'rous hate” towards himself (as well as towards others). This argument is not only distinct from the original accusation, first made in sonnet 1 and developed in sonnet 3, that the youth is narcissistic; it actually claims the exact opposite—that he is filled with self-hatred. Hence the argument of sonnet 10 that the youth does not love others is clearly far from a necessary deduction from the initial

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argument. Although a corollary of the claim that he is his own foe, it is inconsistent with another part of the original proposition and it is therefore clearly auxiliary, even tangential, to the main line of argumentation in the procreation series.

In a nod to the connection of the topic to courtroom procedure, the sonnet uses language evoking circumstantial evidence in an adversarial, mock-judicial context, and incorporates inferences about “intention” and “state of mind” that are relevant to courtroom argumentation and are discussed in *De inventione* just prior to the *adiuncta* topic (I.xxvii.41). The sonnet opens as if responding to an attempt by the youth to deny the accusation made in the closing couplet of in sonnet 9 that he loves no one (“No love towards others in that bosom sits/ That on himself such murd'rous shame commits”):³³

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. (10.1-4)

The adversarial stance is particularly marked in the opening address, which is most readily construed as “For shame! You should deny that you bear love to anyone” (i.e. not claim that you do indeed love others; for additional construals see Booth 148). A judicial context is invoked by the terms “evident” and “conspire” (10.4, 6). The second quatrain lays out circumstantial evidence of the youth's conspiracy to “ruinate” his “beauteous roof” by drawing an inference about his state of mind from the youth's failure to reproduce. Although the conflict is solely within the youth himself, the

³³ The confrontational tone reflects in part the fact that sonnet 10 is a part of the refutation portion of the oratorical argument (see pp. 68-69 in Chapter 1).

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language is suggestive of a property damage suit between neighbors (Cicero includes a number of property questions in his discussion of various topics, though not in connection with this one).

For thou art so possessed with murd'rous hate,
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
Which to repair should be thy chief desire. (10.5-8)

This circumstantial evidence about state of mind, inferred from the accused youth's failure to reproduce, substantiates the previous claim that the youth is “unprovident” (10.2) towards himself.

Perhaps the most marked adjunct in the sonnet is the reason for reproduction urged in the third quatrain and closing couplet. This argument can certainly not be deduced from the original reason for reproduction provided in sonnet 1, that perpetuation of such beauty is “the world's due” (1.14), or even from the various reminders of the youth's mortality that support the reasoning of previous sonnets. Rather, the speaker makes a personal plea to the youth purely on the basis of their relationship:

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 thy self at least kind-hearted prove:
Make thee another self for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine or thee. (10.9-14)

This new line of reasoning is clearly extraneous to the structure of the original argument. In fact it hardly merits the term “line of reasoning”; rather it is an emotional plea that contradicts the claim of the sonnet in lines 1-2 that the youth clearly cannot bear love toward anyone else since he is so “unprovident” toward himself.

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Sonnet 10, like some of the preceding sonnets, includes wordplay associated with the topic *adiuncta*. It employs to an unusual degree a figure in *Ad Herennium* termed adjunction (*adiunctio*), in which “the verb holding the sentence together is placed not in the middle, but at the beginning or the end” (IV.xxvii.38). If one sets aside the two exclamatory phrases “For shame” at the opening of the sonnet and “O” in line 9, a verb begins four out of the sonnet’s six sentences: the first two (“deny” and “grant”), the fourth (“change”), fifth (“be”), and sixth (“make”). And the verb “prove” ends the second coordinate clause in the fifth sentence (line 12). This repeated use of this *adiunctio* figure, like the pointed reference to parts of the body in the *partes* sonnet (sonnet 2) or the complex allusions to meanings of *species* in sonnet 6, highlights the *adiuncta* topic employed in this sonnet.

Antecedentia, Sonnet 11. Arguments based on antecedents focus on aspects which *necessarily* precede the event or question under consideration. In Cicero's *Topica*, arguments from antecedence, consequence, and contradiction are termed “the peculiar province of the logicians” (xii.53). In fact in his more detailed treatment of these arguments, Cicero terms them a single “topic divided into three parts” and gives three ways of wording the same argument (three related syllogisms) about a single case (xiii.53), although in his introductory list of the seventeen topics he gives examples from three distinct cases, not worded syllogistically. Cicero's emphasis on the combination reflects his focus upon judicial argumentation, in which conclusions about innocence or guilt depend upon antecedent law, subsequent action, and whether the fit between the two is logically conjunctive or disjunctive. In non-judicial argumentation these three need not be so closely entwined, and in fact some of his examples (xiii.55-

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57) employ contraries (topic 9) rather than contradictories (topic 13).

Shakespeare's use of these topics in sonnets 11, 12, and 13 shows an awareness of the relation among them as presented in Cicero's *Topica*. All three sonnets use arguments that combine antecedents, consequents, and either contraries or contradictions, but each sonnet has a distinctive emphasis.

The whole of Sonnet 11 is devoted to examining two alternative antecedents—reproducing or not—which have sharply differing consequences. These contradictory alternatives are not actually stated, however, until the final line of the sonnet, each receiving but a half-line description (sonnet 13, in contrast, emphasizes its *repugnantia* topic by opening with a statement of contradictory alternatives). The focus of sonnet 11 is on describing these two alternatives in terms of their associated qualities, paired with a description of their consequences, in each of the three quatrains. The sonnet begins with an apparent logical impossibility in the first line: “As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st,” but the contradiction vanishes when we get to the beginning of the second line, “In one of thine.” The first quatrain as a whole focuses on the child that will grow as the youth ages:

As fast as thou shalt wane, so fast thou grow'st,
In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st
Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth convertest. (11.1-4)

The “fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st” is the antecedent required for the youth to grow “in one of thine” when he “from youth convertest.” Such an antecedent act will result in “wisdom, beauty, and increase,” while no reproduction will result in the contrary states of “folly, age, and cold decay,” for the youth himself and even for

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Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase,
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay;
If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore year would make the world away. (11.5-8)

Results from antecedent failure to reproduce, if generalized across the human species, could hardly be characterized in more drastic terms.

The remainder of the sonnet sets up another set of contrasting antecedent conditions, this time between “those whom Nature hath not made for store” and those “whom she best endowed.” The actions which should follow each condition are specified in the third quatrain:

Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:
Look whom she best endowed, she gave the more,
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish: (11.9-12)

The former may be allowed to “barrenly perish,” but the latter—and in particular the youth—should “cherish” his “bounteous gift,” advice elaborated in the couplet:

She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die. (11.13-14)

The couplet, too, contains an antecedent—“She carved thee for her seal”—and a consequence, though not an inevitable one—“Thou shouldst print more.” The latter injunction is contrasted with the alternative, “let that copy die.”

The sonnet as a whole thus sets up many antecedent states and describes possible results. The other parts of Cicero's triplet topic, consequences and contradictories, are used less consistently in this sonnet; many of the states or actions which are described *as* following the antecedents may follow but are not inevitable, and many of the

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contrasts are between contrary states or actions (in the sense of the topic *contraria*) rather than logically contradictory ones.

***Consequentia*. Sonnet 12.** In the sonnet based on the twelfth type of argument, *consequentia*, inevitable consequences receive a much greater emphasis than the other parts of Cicero's triple topic, antecedents (topic 11) or contradictories (topic 13). In *Topica*, Cicero distinguishes between effects (topic 15) and consequences by the property of inevitability. A consequence "necessarily follows something," while an effect may follow but need not (*Topica*, xii.53).

The first eight lines of sonnet 12 consist of a whole string of the speaker's observations on the ruin of beauty by time:

When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silvered o'er with white;
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: (12.1-3)

All of these observations point to the inevitable consequence of time's passage. The antecedents to these "wastes of time" receive only brief mention. The "brave day" that precedes night, the "sable curls" that become silvered, the leaves that "erst from heat did canopy the herd" are all described as existing in the past. Time's effect on the youth is then brought into the circle of the speaker's observations:

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, (12.9-12)

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sonnet, but the emphasis in lines 11-12 is on the forsaking and dying of “sweets and beauties” rather than on their growth. The couplet focuses as well on “Time’s scythe” and his inevitable harvesting of the youth; the antecedent remedy, “breed,” is named and recommended, but not described:

And nothing ‘gainst Time’s scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence. (12.13-14)

Contradictory statements play an even lesser role. As in sonnet 11, apparent contradictions turn out not to be actual contradictions. Lines 11-12 contrast dying sweets and beauties with sweets and beauties growing, but the sweets and beauties are not the same ones—some “die,” while “others grow.” In the couplet, the broad claim in line 13 that “nothing ‘gainst Time’s scythe can make defence” seems contradicted by the exception then named. “Breed” can indeed provide a kind of defense. As worded, these two statements are logically contradictory. But breeding does not actually contradict the broad claim about Time’s scythe, since the fact that all living things must die is not in fact contradicted by the statement that they can have offspring.

Thus the argument of this sonnet is overwhelmingly one of consequences, with antecedents making those consequences more poignant, and contraries serving, as in sonnet 11, to highlight the difference between breeding and barrenness.

***Repugnantia.* Sonnet 13.** The thirteenth class of argument, *repugnantia*, was described by Cicero as comprising logical contradictions. Philosophers of logic now term such statements disjunctive propositions. Two statements are logically contradictory if they are mutually exclusive *and* cover the universe of possibilities regarding the terms of the statements. An example relevant to sonnet 13 is the

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following: You will live forever; you will not live forever. Both statements cannot be true, and both cannot be false; one of them must necessarily be true.

Sonnet 13 opens with reference to two seemingly incompatible states, which I will argue turn out to be exactly this opposed pair of statements:

O that you were your self! but, love, you are
No longer yours than you yourself here live; (13.1-2)

Expressing a desire for someone to be himself or herself usually indicates that person is ill or has not been behaving normally, and the speaker wishes he or she might return to a normal or healthy state. Here, the second state is one of necessary mortality—the youth can only live “here” (in this world) for a limited time. Therefore the opposed state, being “your self,” must constitute an unending state of health or eternal life, which would result if the youth really held possession of his own being. Hence the opening line seems to represent a wish that the youth’s life were without end, eternal as his soul.³⁴ Such an ever-living quality is the fabled attribute of true love, as I discussed under the topic *totum*, above; and if the youth is identified as a (primrose) true-love, the first line could be paraphrased as “O that you were true-love,” which is a quality that “decayed neuer” (Spenser, *FQ* IV.x.27.9). The remedy against mortality that the speaker urges is to make his “semblance” (at least potentially) eternal:

Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give: (13.3-4)

“Semblance” here is the same concept as one sense of *species* in sonnet 6—appearance—but the emphasis on multiple copies especially appropriate to that topic is absent here.

³⁴ This gloss is used in the Bush and Harbage edition of the *Sonnets* (33).

The remedy is described further in the second quatrain through several statements phrased as logical contradictions. These refer to a “lease” which has no terminal date, and to the youth’s being himself again (alive, in essence) after he is dead:

So should that beauty which you hold in lease
Find no determination; then you were
Your self again after your self’s decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear. (13.5-8)

These contradictions are reconciled not through logic, since they cannot be, but through the identification between the youth’s “self” and his “issue,” which carries his essence and bears the stamp of his “form” (either in the sense of appearance, or in the Aristotelian sense of an immaterial template that gives matter its shape, or in the sense of a platonic Form).

Sonnet 13 also makes some use of the related topics of Cicero’s triad, antecedents and consequences. “This coming end” is the necessary consequence that follows from the fact that “you yourself here live” (i.e. death follows life); and giving his “sweet semblance” to his issue constitutes the antecedent act that can, in a sense, stave off the “coming end.” Such an antecedent, plus the dire consequences of failure to husband resources, are both referenced in the third quatrain in wording that metaphorically invokes the need to preserve household, family, and self:

Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honor might uphold
Against the stormy gusts of winter’s day
And barren rage of death’s eternal cold? (13.9-12)

Many of the phrases in the last two of these lines, “stormy gusts,” “winter’s day,” “barren,” “death’s eternal cold,” echo and amplify the wintry language that occurs in

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part of sonnet 12, though here such consequences take up a much smaller portion of the sonnet. The answer to this quatrain-long query, “none but unthrifths,” is provided in the couplet, along with a plea that looks both backward in time and forward, as do the associated topics *antecedentia* and *consequentia*: backward to the youth’s father, and forward to the youth himself as a father.

O none but unthrifths; dear my love you know
You had a father, let your son say so. (13.13-14)

The sonnet focuses not so much on these inevitable temporal sequences, however, as on the recommended remedy of procreation; the inevitability of death is brought forward in order to urge the youth, in the phrasing of the preceding sonnet, to “brave” or fight against Time. Since *repugnantia* is a word derived from *repugno*, to fight or contend against (the particle *re-* serving as an intensifier of *pugno*), the phrasing “to brave him” might have been more suited to this sonnet instead of the preceding *consequentia* sonnet. Instead, however, like sonnets 5 and 6, sonnets 12 and 13 are linked by a move from general conditions to the specific case of the youth. The remedy for “Time’s scythe” in sonnet 12, “breed,” is applied in sonnet 13 specifically to the childless youth. Breeding is the action that will, metaphorically though not logically, resolve the contradictions set up in the first eight lines of the sonnet.

***Efficiens.* Sonnet 14.** Under this heading in *Topica*, Cicero discusses causes (*causae*) which are mechanistic and the result of a “force” (*vis*), as well as other causes which in Aristotelian-based metaphysics would be termed material, formal, instrumental and accidental. His discussion is quite lengthy and differentiates necessary and sufficient forces from those that require accessory causes or acts of will, and those

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that are uniform (an example of the latter is that “everything that is born must die”) from those that vary (xv.58-xvii.66). He also discusses the Stoic doctrine of Fate as a chain of causes, and “Fortune” as the name given to events that proceed through “obscure and unseen” causes (xv.59, xvii.63-64). It is precisely this type of “obscure and unseen” cause that is taken up in sonnet 14, in the form of astronomical influences.³⁵ Through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, the stars, especially the “wandering stars” or planets, were widely viewed as accessory or obscure causes connected with fate and fortune, since they were believed to cast material emanations down on the earthly matter below them resulting in concrete physical modulations. Such physical influences were generally conceived as operating mechanistically and hence would be categorized as an “efficient” cause. The perennial disputes about the influence of the stars on human actions centered not on whether the influence existed but on its magnitude. As physical beings, humans could not escape being subject to these obscure causal forces, but how much they influenced the immaterial parts—the soul, and to some extent the mind and the will—remained a subject of dispute.³⁶

Cicero also notes the close connection between the topic of causes and that of effects, his next topic. He states that

just as the cause shows what has been effected, so what has been effected points out what the cause was. This topic is wont to give a marvellous fulness of expression to orators and poets . . . when they declare what will be the outcome of each situation. (xviii.67)

What will be the “outcome of each situation” is explored playfully in this sonnet. For

³⁵ Most of what was termed astronomy then would now be called astrology.

³⁶ See, e.g., Seznec 57 ff.

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a full eight lines the speaker describes his *inability*, despite his abilities in “astronomy,” to fathom the causal forces of planetary influences that were thought to affect such things as luck, plague, crop success or failure, weather, and fortunes of state:

Not from the stars do I my judgement 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. (14.1-8)

The “stars” the speaker claims he *does* have the ability to fathom are the youth's eyes:

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 thy self to store thou wouldst convert: (14.9-12)

Concerning the youth his prediction is in fact perfect, though ambiguous, because he covers all the possibilities. He concludes:

Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is truth's and beauty's doom and date. (14.13-14)

In this (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) fashion the speaker is able to declare with certainty “what will be the outcome of each situation,” whether that situation constitutes reproduction or barrenness.

Effectum. Sonnet 15. Effects are the counterparts to causes, as noted in Cicero's short paragraph on this topic quoted just above. Hence we find the effects of stars and sky on natural things a part of the subject matter in sonnet 15, although not all of the effects in this sonnet derive from the force of an efficient cause. The focus is not on weather or fortunes, however. The major effect is that living things on the “stage” of

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the world are transitory “shows”:

When I consider every thing that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment,
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheerèd and checked ev’n by the selfsame sky,
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory; (15.1-8)

The metaphor of the world as a stage whose inhabitants receive comment, applause, and sometimes disapproval weaves together starry influence with the *theatrum mundi* concept so that the cycles of growth and decay common to living things are presented as affected by unseen forces from the sky. The third quatrain, however, avoids pointing directly to such influences on the youth, referring simply to time and decay:

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. (15.9-12)

The couplet then describes how the speaker battles these cycles in the present of the sonnet’s moment:

And all in war with Time for love of you,
As he takes from you, I engraft you new. (15.13-14)

The terms effect and consequence are similar in common parlance, and the Ciceronian topics of sonnets 12 and 15 might be considered indistinguishable. Sonnets 12 and 15 use some of the same terms: the change from day to night due to time’s passage appears in both, sonnet 12’s “wastes” is matched by sonnet 15’s “decay.” Important differences distinguish the two, however. As noted under topic 12 above, consequences *necessarily* follow an act or event. Thus in sonnet 12, day must follow

night, old age must follow youth (unless death intervenes, of course), and winter must follow summer. Moreover, the speaker's focus is on signs of mortality—night, barren trees, bier-borne sheaves; “summer's green” exists only in the past.

The *effects* of passing time, however, include growth as well as aging. The stars' “secret influence” cause “increase” prior to “decrease”; men are both “cheerèd and checked.” In contrast to the *consequentia* sonnet, this *effectum* sonnet focuses on the middle time between birth and death and on the brevity of life's “perfection,” which “holds but a little moment.” Death is not described as a mowing down, despite the plant metaphors that sonnets 12 and 15 share. Instead it is delicately intimated in the reference to stage practices in which finery of departed gentry or nobility is used for costuming until no longer fit for display. Like the proverbial old soldiers of song, men in this sonnet do not die; they simply fade from memory. In addition, the struggle of time to change the youth's metaphoric “day . . . to sullied night” is ongoing in this sonnet, whereas in sonnet 12 the (literal) day has already “sunk in hideous night.” This focus on the intermediate time licenses the speaker's description of his ongoing “war with Time” in the couplet.³⁷

Thus the “war with Time” that the speaker conducts in sonnet 15 does not offer the life after death of some later sonnets, but renewal *during* the life-span of the youth.

³⁷ Waddington (97, 103) presumes that the couplet refers to future action on the part of the poet-persona, and that the action referred to is “the new theme of immortality through the poet's love and art” (95); but the tense indicates a present rather than a future action, and the writing of the poem itself—“I ingraft you new”—is exactly such an action taking place in the “present” of the sonnet's dramatic action. The assaults of time and decay need not have had “tangible” effects for the poet to open his war on them. My interpretation presents only a slight modification of Waddington's reading, and is consistent with his main point, that this is a “*Prudentia*” sonnet which brings memory and foresight to bear on present action. Much the same can be said of many of the procreation sonnets, however.

The substitution of the theme of renewing the young man with verse for an exhortation to reproduce has often been noted by critics and has been a source of puzzlement. It introduces a theme that is celebrated in sonnets 18 and 19 as well as in other parts of the sequence, but the reasons for its introduction at this point, and in this particular way, have remained obscure. My analysis of Cicero's topical structure in the procreation sonnets elucidates these issues. The grafting metaphor is appropriate to the *effectum* topic, which focuses on intermediate effects rather than final consequences.³⁸ Moreover, the literary propagation theme fits here because it provides a remedy to which biological procreation can be compared in the next sonnet, under the topic *comparatio* or comparison.

***Comparatio*. Sonnet 16.** Cicero's discussion of comparisons, like that of causes, is quite lengthy. Common categories include comparisons to something greater, lesser, or equal in terms of quantity, quality, value, or particular relationships (xviii.68).

Erasmus in *De copia* treats *comparatio* as a means of amplification usually rising from a lesser thing to a greater (Trousdale 46). This is the emphasis applied in sonnet 16 and facilitated through the introduction of the propagation-in-verse theme in sonnet 15. Having described his own "war with Time" on behalf of the youth in the conclusion of the previous sonnet, the speaker begins sonnet 16 by placing a higher value on the "mightier" battle the youth can undertake on his own behalf:

But wherefore do not you a mightier way
Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time?

³⁸ The play on "engraft" in the sense of grafting onto plant stock, and "graph" as mark or write (from the Greek *graphein*) has often been noted. Perhaps a word association during composition led from the Latin *efficere*, which can mean to make or form, to *graphein*, possibly through the intermediate *effingere*, to form, express, portray.

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And fortify yourself in your decay
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme? (16.1-4)

Sanctioned by the biblical injunction to go forth and multiply, having children is a method of propagation “more blessed” than the “barren rhyme” of poetry, which couples one similar rhyme word with another but has no inherent ability to thereby generate new individuals.

The sonnet also employs further comparative statements to argue its case. The youth’s potential children would provide reproductions more faithful, more true-to-life, than any portrait could ever be:

Now stand you on the top of happy hours,
And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
Much liker than your painted counterfeit. (16.5-8)³⁹

The third quatrain brings together poetry and painting in order to once more argue their lesser power to reproduce the youth, either in “inward worth” or “outward fair,” relative to the generative capacity of biological reproduction:

So should the lines of life that life repair
Which this time’s pencil or my pupil pen
Neither in inward worth nor outward fair
Can make you live yourself in eyes of men. (16.9-12)

Neither a copy of the youth in painting, even by the greatest limner of the period (“this time’s pencil”), nor the speaker’s “pupil pen” through its paired rhymes, can actually re-pair or generate a wholly new, living copy of the youth’s life. Nature’s inherent artistry enables the youth to “draw” a much better version of his own image:

³⁹ The youth is again figured as a flower, one who can cause the flowers in a “maiden garden” to be fertilized.

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To give away yourself keeps yourself still,
And you must live drawn by your own sweet skill. (16.13-14)

Only such an expenditure of self via nature's own methods of generating beauty (sexual coupling) can faithfully reproduce the youth "in eyes of men."

***Testimonium* or *Iudicium*. Sonnet 17.** This last topic is Cicero's sole "extrinsic" topic. Arguments based on this topic are constructed not through logic, linguistic analysis, or various kinds of similarities, dissimilarities, and comparisons, but by citing the testimony of others, particularly those whose judgment is highly regarded. Cicero describes the topic as including "everything that is brought in from some external circumstance in order to win conviction" (xix.73). The strength of such testimony depends on the authority and believability of the witness. Cicero does not give a single name to this topic but in the comparative table in the 1539 Cologne edition of Agricola's *De inventione dialectica*, Cicero's topic is termed *iudicium*, a judgment or opinion, and identified with Themistius's topic *communiter acci*, things which are commonly called or summoned.⁴⁰ In Renaissance texts such external evidence usually comprised testimony from authoritative sources such as the bible, proverbial wisdom, and respected authors. Erasmus's *Encomium matrimonii* makes extensive use of the weight of such *auctoritas*, citing Biblical passages showing divine sanction for marriage, Roman laws and examples, and the punishment of adulterers by ancient Greeks (using the literary *exemplum* of the Trojan war) and ancient Hebrews.

The kind of argument from the *iudicium* topic offered in sonnet 17 differs,

⁴⁰ Literally, commonly to be called, summoned, or fetched, since *acci* is the passive infinitive of *accere* (Lewis and Short).

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however, from such usual citations of authorities. Indeed no authorities are cited, although external opinion is still the subject of the sonnet. In a playful twist on the topic, the speaker doubts that his verse will have such *auctoritas* in the future:

Who will believe my verse in time to come
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet heav'n knows it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts. (17.1-4)

Rather, the speaker expects to be regarded as a liar:

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 heav'nly 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 stretchèd meter of an antique song: (17.5-12)

The speaker's (allegedly) true description of the youth's merits will be scorned as if they were lies told by gossipy old men, or flattering verse like the "stretchèd meter of an antique song" (12). The phrase "stretchèd meter" suggests not only hyperbole but the hexameter line of much classical poetry—"antique song" (i.e. ancient as well as antic). In its playful mockery of poetic "rage," however, these lines also echo and thus point toward a preeminent poetic *auctor*, Horace, who, after much attention to restraint and decorum, concludes his poetic treatise on the art of writing poetry (*Ars poetica*) with a vivid description of the mad poet in his poetic furor, mocked by his audience. Modeling his writing on such an *auctor* would be no mean goal and the allusion serves to lend the speaker, indirectly, some of the *auctoritas* he professes to lack.

The shift through most of sonnet 17 from procreation to poetic creation, and from the consequences of time on the youth to the consequences of time on the

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speaker's poetry, serves as a transition to the rest of Shakespeare's sonnets. In the couplet, biological breeding is paired with the poetic offspring that will carry imprints of the youth into future generations:

But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice, in it and in my rhyme. (17.13-14)

The analogy in the first quatrain likening the speaker's verse to a "tomb" accords with the greater value the speaker places on biological reproduction in sonnet 16; seventeen sonnets into the series (and after many warnings to the youth about his mortality), the speaker's verse is as yet like an image carved in low relief in tomb statuary—superficial and partial. But the couplet places the two kinds of offspring in parallel without offering any comparison of their value. Implicitly, however, the claim for the value of poetic propagation in sonnet 17 is greater than the limited claim of sonnet 15, which extends no further than the life-span of the youth; in sonnet 17, the youth can receive a kind of afterlife in the speaker's poetry, when both of them are dead.

Through its use of Cicero's extrinsic topic, then, this sonnet serves as a transition to the epideictic series on the youth, which begins with sonnets of praise. In sonnets 18 and 19 the poet embarks on the attempt he describes in sonnet 17 to "write the beauty of your eyes,/ And in fresh numbers number all your graces" (17.5-6).

The procreation series of seventeen sonnets thus serves several functions simultaneously: it displays the rhetorical skills of the speaker while gradually introducing his voice and some of his major concerns, including beauty and an acute consciousness of its transience. Its theme of procreation segues easily into the theme of poetic creation taken up in the ensuing two sonnets and at intervals over the course of

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the first 126 sonnets. In all of these ways the procreation series serves as a fitting introduction to the rest of the *Sonnets*, even though the procreation theme itself never reappears. But it is not the only introductory set. Two shorter sets of five sonnets each, 18-22 and 127-131, use the three definition topics, *totum*, *partes*, and *notatio*, plus *comparatio* and *iudicium*, to define and characterize the kind of desire motivating the speaker in the ensuing sets of sonnets, one set to the Fair Youth and one to the Dark Mistress. Such repetition of structure invites acts of correlation, comparison, and contrast among the three sections, and the results offer signposts to interpretation of the *Sonnets* as a complex whole whose component parts reflect and comment upon each other's meaning. I take up these two briefer exordia and their implications in the next chapter.

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Chapter 3. Shakespeare's Three Exordia and the Metamorphosis of Desire

In this chapter I describe short exordia which provide introductions to the two sub-series, one focused on a male "Master Mistress" (sonnets 18-126) and the other on a dark, promiscuous woman (sonnets 127-154).¹ These second two exordia are much briefer and structurally simpler than the exordium constituting the procreation series, and parallel each other. The presence of formally structured introductions indicate that the two sub-series should not be read as mere reification of critical practice, as has sometimes been argued. Although reading them as coordinate sub-series is certainly not the only legitimate way to proceed, such a mode of interpretation is invited by the rhetorical and topical structures examined here as well as by numerical and other patterns analyzed by Fowler, Gratziani, Neely, and Roche.² After considering these two short exordia I then pursue the avenue which examining the three exordia together opens up for interpretation of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* as a whole.

The status of these two brief series as exordia is marked by their use of five topics from Cicero's list. Three of these are the introductory definition topics, *totum*,

¹ I include the two anacreontic sonnets 153 and 154 because they pertain to love for a mistress.

² Heather Dubrow cautioned against uncritically reifying these sub-series, but I think enough evidence exists from Fowler's, Gratziani's, and Roche's numerical analyses and from patterns established in an array of English sonnet sequences, as discussed in the earlier work of Carol Neely, as well as from the present study, to indicate that these sub-series provide one available way, and I would argue an authorially sanctioned one, of reading Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. The fact that extraction of poems and adaptation by readers were even more common reading practices in Shakespeare's day than in ours does not alter the legitimacy of examining the *Sonnets* as a composite whole. Bredbeck (58) thinks that the procreation sonnets can be addressed to either a man or a woman, since they exhibit a "sustained neutrality of gender" up until the pronoun "Him" in line 11 of sonnet 19. In this he is mistaken. Although gender is implied more frequently via metaphor than in actual statement, "tender churl" in sonnet 1 specifies that the receiver is male, as do sonnets 3 (he can till an "uneared [i.e. nulliparous, and therefore virginal] womb," and 9 (his death can cause his widow to shed tears).

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partes, and *notatio*, which in these sub-series define and characterize the speaker's desires for the Youth and the Dark Mistress. These are followed by just one of the thirteen intrinsic topics, comparison. This single one is perhaps the most familiar, both as a topic and as a figure of thought, among all of Cicero's list. Comparison is also, of course, the figure of thought most typical of love poetry. Sonnets 21 and 130 both play with this topic by subverting it, sonnet 21 by refusing to make the standard comparisons "with sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems" (21.6), and sonnet 130 by refusing to provide the standard blazon ("My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun," 140.1). The key words "true" and "false," which can be said to characterize the two sub-series, occur in these two comparison sonnets.³ Finally, closing each short exordium is a *iudicium* sonnet. Working again through subversion of usual practice, these two sonnets further characterize the quality of the speaker's desires by demonstrating in a distinctive way the speaker's *loss* of judgment concerning his two beloveds.

Together, the three exordia provide coordinated introductions to several kinds of desire. The procreation set portrays the speaker's desire for "fairest creatures" and their perpetuation, along with the narcissistic self-love that characterizes the young man. The two shorter exordia characterize particular desires of the speaker's: one for a fair youth "more lovely and more temperate" than a summer's day, and the other for a woman who, at least in the speaker's eyes, possesses a paradoxical black beauty. These four kinds of desire overlap to some degree, but alertness to their qualities can

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guide the reader in recognizing the further blurring among them that is developed in each sub-series. The three *notatio* sonnets 3, 20, and 129 in particular use distinctive images or qualities to characterize the kind(s) of desire expressed in that sub-series. Recognizing sonnets 20 and 129 as *notatio* sonnets provides a structural explanation for their position and importance in each sub-series. This importance has long been recognized for sonnet 20, the Master-Mistress sonnet, though largely in terms of a divide in the narrative or in the speaker's stance toward the youth between the sonnets that precede it and those that follow it. Sonnet 129, on the other hand, the lust-in-action sonnet, has often been considered an interruption in the sequence of lighter-toned sonnets which surround it. But this sonnet faithfully diagnoses the illness that the speaker laments over and rails against later in the Dark Mistress sonnets.⁴ These two *notatio* sonnets, then, together with sonnet 3, convey distinctive images which serve as prisms through which to view the kind of desire expressed in the rest of that particular series: a prudential desire for the perpetuation of fairest creatures and the distinctive—one might even say notorious—qualities that define the speaker's desires for the lovely youth and dark mistress in the ensuing sets. They also point to the interrelationship among those kinds—the differences, the similarities, and the varying overlaps that point to the fluidity of the speaker's desires for these three kinds of love objects.

After the two *iudicium* sonnets 21 and 131, the courses of the two sets differ.

The Fair Youth series takes up common amatory themes usually addressed to a mistress, such as expression of the lover's diffidence and sleepless nights, before

⁴ An exception is Kerrigan in his edition of the *Sonnets*, who describes 129 as "an epitome of its group" (56). My analysis suggests that the Dark Mistress sonnets are not so "disjunctive" and "wildly various" (57) as Kerrigan believed, however.

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quickly moving to the first notes of reproach (in sonnet 33) and on to a complex set of sonnets which strike varying positions of admiration, admonition, shame, pride, and consolation, as discussed by a wealth of commentators. The Dark Mistress series continues with a sonnet that follows convention by wooing a cruelly disdainful mistress, although it concludes unconventionally by offering to swear (falsely) that “beauty herself is black” (132.13). Then, like the Fair Youth series, the Dark Mistress series moves quickly to reproach (for accepting a male friend’s love though not his own; sonnets 133-134). More wooing sonnets follow, though with the contrasting valence of being addressed to a mistress who cannot finally be possessed by the lover, not because she is chaste but because she is promiscuous and is “the bay where all men ride” (137.6).

After discussing these two exordia I examine what the similarities and differences among the three exordia suggest about interpretation of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* as an organized whole. The following table summarizes the sonnet-topic correlation I discuss in the next two sections.

Table 3. Sonnets in Two Short Exordia Identified by Ciceronian Topics

Ciceronian Topic	Fair Youth Sonnet	Dark Mistress Sonnet
<i>Totum</i>	18	127
<i>Partes</i>	19	128
<i>Notatio</i>	20	129
<i>Comparatio</i>	21	130
<i>Iudicium</i>	22	131

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The Exordium to the "Fair Youth" Sonnets

The exordium to the Fair Youth sonnets intermingles the propagation-in-poetry theme introduced toward the end of the procreation series with praise, and thus provides a segue between the procreation series and the praise-and-blame subject matter of the Fair Youth sonnets that follow. The exordium also characterizes the speaker's desire for the youth, a characterization which has been a source of critical dispute for centuries. I describe my understanding of this characterization. In addition, although I acknowledge that I cannot hope to settle such a long-standing controversy, I am able to provide some information about how one of Shakespeare's contemporaries appears to have interpreted the male-male love of the Fair Youth sonnets, and I take up this question in the next chapter. Finally, the exordium extends the portrait of the speaker's *ethos* through characterizing his defiance of time on behalf of the youth, and also by implying changes in attitudes and failure of judgment on the part of the speaker.

The three topics *totum*, *partes*, and *notatio*, as I noted in the previous chapter, constitute Cicero's three topics for defining an issue or a case to be argued.

Shakespeare used these topics in the procreation series to define the procreation argument in general terms (*totum*) and in personal terms for the youth (*partes*), and to simultaneously characterize the youth's self-love and the speaker's prudential response (*notatio*). The two shorter exordia to which I now turn use these same three definition topics and in similar ways, with one important exception: the change from deliberative to epideictic rhetoric means that they do not define a proposition to be argued.

***Totum*. Sonnet 18.** In keeping with Cicero's prescription that the *totum* topic include a summary of the subject being treated, sonnet 18 provides a synopsis of the

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new project that the speaker has proposed in sonnet 17, making the youth live anew in his verse. Because there is no overarching issue to be deliberated in the Fair Youth sonnets, in contrast to the *totum* sonnet of the procreation series, there is no need to include any statement about points of disagreement, or narrate any acts (or failures to act). Instead, the sonnet begins the project of reproducing the youth in verse by questioning how to blazon the youth's qualities. In the process of posing and then answering this question, the sonnet employs the other major aspect of the *totum* topic, distinguishing people or things that pertain to the speaker's subject by describing qualities they share with other members of their genus. Within the sonneteering tradition, the standard way of blazoning attributes is through comparison (and in fact Cicero mentions that orators and poets "define by comparison, using metaphors with a pleasing effect"; vii.32). In this case the relevant attributes are the qualities of the youth's beauty, and the first two quatrains define those through analyzing the qualities of another member of the youth's genus of summery things, a summer's day.⁵ Even something so praiseworthy suffers by comparison:

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: (18.1-8)

Picking up the metaphoric identification in several procreation sonnets of the youth with day and springtime, this sonnet singles out his attributes as "*more* lovely and *more*

⁵ This is a more inclusive class than the genus summery blooms, discussed in Chapter 2 (p. 105).

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temperate" (emphasis added).⁶ Four lines detail imperfections common to summer days: rough winds; seasonally brief; too hot; too cloudy. Two more lines sum up the subjection of all fair things to decline, a note sounded frequently sonnets 1-17. These attributes of a summer's day define the youth through negatives: He does *not* have such imperfections. But then comes something new. *His* summery qualities are not mortal but "eternal"; he will *always* be "fair" in the poet's verse. The rest of the sonnet describes that difference in terms of the new kind of reproduction offered by the lover-poet, who in the "now" of the poem acts to eternalize the youth in his verse:

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. (18.9-14)

The poet's "eternal lines" now do reparative work parallel to the lineal "lines of life" urged by the speaker in sonnet 16, and enroll him permanently (or so the speaker claims) in the genus of summer things.⁷ The implication of "breathe" and "give life" in the context of early modern reading practices (more often spoken than silent) is that the poem will be spoken aloud and that each such utterance, infused with the breath that was considered the essence of life, renews the youth's being. The youth's summer will consequently never be shaded by Death; his present life will "grow" into "eternal lines" rather than wane like the setting sun of sonnet 7. All these marvelous qualities will appertain through the power of the very poem we are in the process of uttering.

⁶ Examples include sonnet 1, "only herald to the gaudy spring," the whole of sonnet 7, and sonnet 15, "your day of youth."

⁷ "Lines of life" may pun on "loins"; cf. Booth (579).

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The sonnet also adheres to the *totum* topic by treating the eternalization theme in relatively impersonal terms, just as sonnet 1 treats the procreation theme from the general point of view of what “the world” wants. Sonnet 18 includes no reference to either the poet’s actions (writing verse) or his motivations. All readers and potential readers, whose eyes can read the lines and whose breath can make the youth’s “summer” live again, are brought into the audience in line 13. The only reference to the poet’s work is the impersonal pronoun “this” in the final line of the couplet.

Partes. Sonnet 19. In the same way that sonnet 2 treats a part of the procreation argument by focusing on the personal consequences of childlessness for the youth, sonnet 19 treats a part of the perpetuation theme by focusing on the poet’s action and emotional state as he attempts to defy time. This way of treating the perpetuation project fits Cicero’s prescription for defining a subject by enumerating its parts, in this case time’s various actions and the poet’s personal “war with time” (15.13) for the sake of the youth. The sonnet’s structure as an extended apostrophe to a personified Time helps to convey the speaker’s intensity. (Apostrophe is a figure recognized in texts on *elocutio* as especially suited to conveying strong feelings.) Contributing to this effect are the vividly depicted destructive acts, reprehensible and violent as they seem, that the speaker grants “devouring Time” may perform:

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood; (19.1-4)

As in sonnet 2, this sonnet employs the topic *partes* as a trope, enumerating many parts of creatures in the poet’s inventory of his challenges to Time: the “lion’s paws,” the

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“keen teeth” of the tiger, his “fierce jaws,” the phoenix’s “blood.” These creatures of the world are described as the “earth’s sweet brood,” parts of mother Earth’s offspring.

In the second quatrain, the same trope is used:

Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet’st,
And do whate’er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world and all her fading sweets;
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime, (19.5-8)

“Glad and sorry seasons” are portions of the year that a personified Time is said to “make,” and mutable beauty in the “wide world” is individuated into “her fading sweets.” Even Time is characterized in terms of body parts as “swift-footed.”

Compared to the violent deeds the poet permits Time to enact, the “most heinous crime” the poet then describes demonstrates his high valuation of the youth’s worth:

O, carve not with thy hours my love’s fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
Him in thy course untainted do allow
For beauty’s pattern to succeeding men. (19.9-12)

Again in this final quatrain, the sonnet continues to play with the term *partes* as a trope. Time’s actual (rather than figurative) parts, “hours,” are described in figurative terms as if they are instruments in the hands of Time, which can “carve my love’s fair brow” like a knife, or draw lines with a pen. Note that the poet’s plea with Time not to leave its mark on the youth also refers to a particular body part—the same brow with which sonnet 2 opened (“When forty winters shall besiege thy brow”). Finally, whereas the couplet in sonnet 18 uses general and impersonal terms in referring to the poet’s efforts to preserve the youth, the couplet in 19 uses the first person possessive

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pronoun to describe both the youth and the poet's verse:⁸

Yet do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young. (19.13-14)

Sonnet 19 thus makes decided use of the *partes* topic as a source of invention for the main thought of the sonnet, as well as using it as a trope. In contrast, the metaphoric parts of the body with which the sun is described in the *totum* sonnet 18—"sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,/ And often is his gold complexion dimmed"—do not refer to parts of an individual entity (a summer's day), but represent qualities of heat and cloudiness in some instances of the genus comprising summer days. Thus, in sonnet 18 both the youth and the summer's day are treated as kinds with particular attributes rather than individuals divisible into parts, while a personified Time and the many creatures included in sonnet 19 point to the emphasis on individuals and body parts appropriate to the *partes* topic, as occurs in sonnet 2.

Notatio. Sonnet 20. Sonnet 20 characterizes in vivid terms the kind of desire aroused in the speaker toward the lover whom he sometimes praises and sometimes blames in the ensuing sonnets. This sonnet has received as wide a variety of interpretations as any poem in all of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. Moreover, it has very often been read as a key to interpretation of the subsequent Fair Youth series, most recently by Bruce Smith, who sees its profession of sexual desire as a complete shift of tone from the preceding sonnets and as a means of introducing a series of sonnets (21 through 126) on a consummated homosexual relationship (Smith 1991: 252). In

⁸ "My love" can refer to the speaker's passion as well as the youth, but the latter sense must be primary because that is the result which can counter Time's marring of the youth's appearance.

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assuming this sonnet has an important role to play in influencing interpretation of the rest of the Fair Youth series (when that series is read as a set, which as I noted above it need not be), commentators have, in a sense, already viewed it as a *notatio* sonnet. But recognizing its role as part of a structured exordium to the Fair Youth series offers a firmer basis on which to evaluate how it indexes the desire it describes, and also a basis for comparing that kind of desire to those of the other two *notatio* sonnets.

Before examining this sonnet, however, I want to consider additional ways in which the Master-Mistress sonnet fits the category of a *notatio* sonnet. As I observed in the discussion under sonnet 3 in the previous chapter, *notatio* and its English cognates were used in Shakespeare's day to refer not only to outstanding or remarkable qualities, but in particular to visually distinctive characteristics, especially those associated with the face. In addition, in Shakespeare's plays such words refer especially to characteristics visible to the public eye, often in the context of high social status—people “of note” (e.g. in *Cymbeline* I.vi.23, “he is one of the noblest note”). Often the significance of these publicly visible characteristics requires interpretation from observers, as in the example from *Much Ado about Nothing*, discussed in the previous chapter, concerning the contrary interpretations of Claudio and the Friar about Hero's moral character. As observed by critics beginning with Dorothy Hockey in 1957, the word “nothing” in the title of *Much Ado* is a pun on the word *noting* in Elizabethan pronunciation (Kókeritz 132). The “much ado” over the noting of Hero, instigated by Don John's deceit, turn out to be about “nothing” since Hero is not in fact guilty. This same pun occurs in line 12 of sonnet 20, and how to interpret the “one thing” that is, for the speaker, “nothing,” has given rise to endless variations in

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interpretation of this sonnet, as I discuss below.

Distinctive qualities of the youth's appearance, together with observations entailing interpretation and misinterpretation, are described in sonnet 20. Like sonnet 3, the Master-Mistress sonnet refers to visual images with special focus on the face, though without providing details that would paint a physical portrait of the youth. The sonnet opens with reference to the youth's face in the first line, and pointedly characterizes the speaker's desire in the second:

A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion, (20.1-2)

The speaker identifies his desire as a "passion," a particularly intense kind of longing that involves suffering on the part of the lover. This is the kind of desire associated with love poetry in general and with sonnet sequences in particular. The epithet *master-mistress* identifies the love object as contrary to the norm in gender, and as superior to other mistresses; this "mistress" is the master of all others. These lines also point to the speaker's interpretation of the youth's most visible attribute, his face, as that of a "woman."

These characterizations are then paralleled by a description of the master-mistress's heart and its difference from that of fickle womanhood, based on the standard misogynist stereotype. The "heart" here is a metaphor for disposition, which is often read in the face, as the speaker is presumably doing here:

A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion; (20.3-4)

These lines point to visual signs supposedly associated with gender that are interpreted –or perhaps more properly misinterpreted–by the speaker. This "woman's face" and

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“woman’s gentle heart” arouse the speaker’s “passion” toward the youth. To see a similar association of such gender-linked description with Shakespeare’s use of *notatio* cognates elsewhere in his works, we can turn to the first speech in *Cymbeline* II.v, when Posthumus, thinking his wife Imogen has deceived him and been unfaithful, goes on an extended rant about women’s weaknesses, as those were conceived in the long-standing misogynist tradition. Ironically, he is describing not her failings but his own. A long string of epithets and characteristics is introduced by the command, “note it”:

. . . Could I find out
 The woman’s part in me—for there’s no motion
 That tends to vice in man, but I affirm
 It is the woman’s part: be it lying, *note* it,
 The woman’s; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
 Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
 Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
 Nice longing, slanders, mutability,
 All faults that [have a] name, nay, that hell knows,
 Why, hers, in part of all, but rather, all
 For even to vice
 They are not constant, but are changing still. (19-30, emphasis added;
 emendation in brackets)

and so on. The gendered “noting” of sonnet 20 does not have this bitter, vicious quality, but a similarly moralistic tone appears in the second quatrain, which describes another feature of the face:

An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling [i.e. wantonly],⁹
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth; (20.5-6)

The “gilding” brightness of the master-mistress’s eye carries the sun-like qualities of sonnet 18 into this description.

⁹ It is Tarquin whose eyes roll lasciviously in *The Rape of Lucrece*; see discussion under sonnet 129 (p. 163, below).

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The sonnet continues with lines describing the master-mistress's power, an additional characteristic which has aroused the speaker's "passion":

A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth. (20.7-8)

While the exact meaning of the phrase "all hues in his controlling" has been subject to much debate, clearly it does describe a power that is visual in nature and that penetrates through the eyes, traditionally regarded as the windows to the soul, to fasten the eyes of male onlookers and to strike wonder into the purportedly weaker vessel ("steals" suggests that the spectators cannot will their eyes to move elsewhere). At a minimum this ability to control "hues" suggests the same kind of power to influence the complexion of onlookers that Claudio has over Hero's changing complexion during the accusation scene in *Much Ado*—though in a more positive vein.

Most conspicuously, the characterization of the youth in this sonnet is capped by a description in the last quatrain of the "addition" which, as this little myth goes, a personified Nature supplied, "adding one thing to my purpose nothing." Unlike most of the other attributes, this one does *not* pertain to the face:

And for a woman wert thou first created,
Til Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing. (20.9-12)

Since "thing" was slang for sexual part (either male or female; see Booth 164 for Shakespearean usages), this "one thing" is by several indicators the male sexual organ. As discussed by a variety of commentators, this "one thing" is "nothing" or "no thing" for the speaker—that is, it is not the female "thing" he was expecting on the basis of his interpretation of the youth's face and heart; and it is of no use or value to him in

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answering his aroused desires. Thus, having described through most of the sonnet the qualities that arouse his desire, including beauty that would suit a woman, the speaker seems to admit that this “one thing” must serve to give sexual pleasure to women, not himself. The “addition” thus (allegedly) prevents sexual consummation with his master-mistress (i.e. “use,” with its procreative profit of coined children), and the speaker separates the love he envisions between the youth and himself from what would have been its sexual consequences under different circumstances:

But since she pricked thee out for women’s pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love’s use their treasure. (20.13-14)

Thus the speaker’s observation of the youth’s face, his exercise in noting, leads him to see a woman’s beauty and mildness in this fair youth. To account for his misinterpretation, the speaker invents a myth about the youth’s shaping by Nature.

The speaker does not himself abjure any sexual act between the two of them, but he does do so on behalf of the youth by asking for his love (“mine be thy love”) while conjuring the youth, as in the procreation sonnets, to invest women’s wombs with the “treasure” that can result in children (“thy love’s use”). However, as (again) many critics have noted, ambiguity arises concerning the meaning of these last six lines, because “nothing” can also mean vulva, and if interpreted this way, the line means the exact opposite from the denial just described, and the speaker seems to be reasserting his desire to sexually consummate the relationship (see e.g. Booth 164-65).

In keeping with the *notatio* topic as used in sonnet 3, sonnet 20 offers an ethical portrait of the speaker, but that portrait differs strikingly from the earlier one. Not only has the prudential love that characterized the speaker in sonnet 3 become an erotic

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passion, marked by the kind of love which wants to receive something in return (“mine be thy love”) rather than give freely for the sake of the beloved; but the last few words of sonnet 20 abandon the whole monitory stance of the procreation sonnets by connecting sex (“love’s use”) with pleasure rather than with wisdom and responsibility toward the future. The shift is marked by the rhyme of “pleasure” with “treasure” in the couplet. The latter word had implied children in sonnet 6, but if that implication carries into this sonnet, the speaker in effect implies that the youth will have bastard children by investing the wombs of multiple “women” with “treasure.” This significantly altered and highly non-prudential course is the last we ever hear of the procreation theme in Shakespeare’s sonnets as a whole. I discuss the quality of desire and the ethical implications of this *notatio* sonnet further below, when comparing this exordium to that of the “Dark Mistress” series.

Comparatio. Sonnet 21. While Cicero mentions several categories of comparisons—to a greater, a lesser, or an equal thing—the first is by far the most commonly seen in Renaissance texts (this preference is reflected in Erasmus’s *De copia*, as mentioned in the previous chapter). Comparison from a lesser to a greater thing has already made an appearance in sonnet 16 (“Then wherefore do you not a mightier way”) and in sonnet 18 (“Thou art more lovely”).

Sonnet 21, however, rejects such “proud compare.” This difference is initially justified by distinguishing the youth from the “painted beauty” praised in others’ verses:

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Stirr’d by a painted beauty to his verse,

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Who heav'n itself for ornament doth use,
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse, (21.1-4)

This sonnet marks a distinct shift in the terms of the poet's praise. Using "heaven itself" for ornament, to "paint" the youth's beauty, is a fair description of the work done by sonnet 18, in which the youth is characterized as being more lovely than a summer's day, and the sun ("eye of heaven") and sky ("often is his gold complexion dimmed") are brought in as lesser things by comparison. And although the preceding sonnets have not used *all* of the items catalogued in the second quatrain, some of them have appeared (and others appear further on in the sequence):

Making a couplement of proud compare
With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
With April's first-born flow'rs, and all things rare
That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems. (21.5-8)

The identification of the youth as "only herald to the gaudy spring" in sonnet 1 certainly compares the youth to "April's first-born flowers" and sonnet 7 analogizes the youth to the sun. The reason for this change of tune is then provided:

O let me true in love but truly write,
And then believe me, my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air: (21.9-12)

The poet's request to the youth in sonnet 20 that "mine be thy love" has apparently been answered in the affirmative. As a result of this acceptance, the speaker says, in effect, that he will no longer exaggerate. His fidelity in description will now reflect his fidelity in love. He will be "true" in both.

The closing couplet reaffirms the speaker's refusal to engage in vaunting comparisons by denigrating those who do so (those who "say more") as transmitters of

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“hearsay” or gossip (by implication, false gossip). And the justification for his reticence confirms the shift in tone. Although he has previously spoken of the youth’s love for him (part of the argument of sonnet 10) and addressed the youth as “dear my love” (sonnet 13), at this point a covetous note enters the speaker’s language. He will not advertise the youth’s beauty because he wishes to keep the youth to himself:

Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise that purpose not to sell. (21.13-14)

And indeed, the next thirty sonnets are about the relationship between speaker and beloved and refrain from the kind of vaunting comparisons to “all things rare” (21.7) among nature’s beauties forsworn in this sonnet. In sonnet 52 the rare “treasure” of the youth is analogized to “captain jewels in the carcanet” (52.2, 8). Not until sonnet 53 do we find a comparison from a lesser to a greater thing, and then the comparison is not to nature’s rarities but to literary archetypes of beauty (Adonis and Helen of Troy).

This *comparatio* sonnet thus portrays a change in the attitudes and desires of the speaker. The next sonnet, the final one of the exordium, does so even more pointedly.

***Iudicium* or *Testimonium*. Sonnet 22.** As noted in the previous chapter, “judgment” or “testimony” is Cicero’s one “extrinsic” topic, and includes any witnesses or authorities cited to support a claim or an argument. In sonnet 17, Shakespeare drew on this topic in an atypical way, to express the speaker’s doubt about whether his own verse would be treated as authoritative in the future in the way that Latin classical verse was in Shakespeare’s day. Sonnet 22 also draws on the *iudicium* topic in an unusual way; the testimony offered is that of the speaker’s “glass” or mirror. As discussed in Chapter 2, looking into a mirror is emblematic of two

conflicting qualities, wisdom (*prudentia*) and narcissism (*philautia*). In this sonnet, the impartial testimony of his mirror concerning his own aging body will remain unconvincing because what he “sees” is the youth’s loveliness. His previous wisdom seems to have been transformed here into the youth’s narcissism. His new blindness occurs because, according to the commonplace notion of exchanged hearts between true lovers, his own heart lives in his beloved’s breast rather than in his own body.¹⁰ This identity between self and lover means that his heart is enclosed within the beautiful body, the “seemly raiment,” of the youth:

My glass shall not persuade me I am old
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.
For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me:
How can I then be elder than thou art? (22.1-8)

The speaker seems to have lost sight of himself in this lovers’ unity; but he still has some words of wisdom and *caritas*, or unselfish love, to offer. For the sake of his lover and his lover’s heart, he will take special care of himself, asking that the youth do the same for him:

O, therefore, love, be of thyself so wary
As I not for myself, but for thee will;
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill. (22.9-12)

Another note of covetousness like that of the closing couplet in sonnet 21 creeps in at this point, however. True love is supposed to last forever; therefore when the speaker

¹⁰ This exchange of hearts has a much wider applicability than B. Smith’s interpretation of it as reflecting that part of the marriage rite which describes man and wife as “one flesh” (1991: 253).

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dies and the heart in his body (i.e. the youth's heart) dies with him, he refuses to offer life to the youth through return of the exchanged heart:

Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain;
Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again. (22.13-14)

Thus, while the speaker declares his passion for the youth to be "true" love, we can see that along with this fidelity comes a selfish quality.¹¹

I pursue this change further below, in my comparison among the three exordia. First, I turn to the Dark Mistress sonnets.

The Exordium to the "Dark Mistress" Sonnets

Like the exordium to the Fair Youth sonnets, this exordium characterizes the passion of the speaker and what he will attempt to accomplish. In the process it reveals certain ethical failings and a loss of judgment on the speaker's part. The exordium begins by defining a "black" beauty which is contrary to any standard notion, and conflicts with the youth's "fair" beauty. This dark beauty is a paradoxical concept because "fair" usually meant both beautiful and light in coloration (e.g. pale skin, blonde hair), while "black" commonly meant unattractive, even ugly. In defining this atypical kind of beauty, sonnet 127, like sonnets 1 and 18, treats its subject matter in impersonal terms. Like sonnets 2 and 19, sonnet 128 takes up the same issue from a personal point of view; in this case it portrays the speaker's own individual attraction to the dark mistress and begins an attempt to woo this dark, voluptuous woman. The

¹¹ Fineman observes an "increasing thematic egoism" on the part of the speaker through the Fair Youth sonnets, citing sonnets 3 and 22; but he does this in the context of examining how the sonnets' praise of the youth reflexively returns its attention to the speaker of that praise, rather than by examining any implied affect (205).

notatio sonnet 129 characterizes the kind of passion that is driving the speaker of the Dark Mistress sonnets. In contrast to sonnet 20, which claims to abjure sexual action, this lust-in-action sonnet constitutes a vivid portrayal of raw sexual desire stripped of any socializing conventions. Unlike sonnet 20, this sonnet does not emphasize the face, but the portrayal has a strong ethical cast, even more so than the paired portraits of self-love and *caritas* in sonnet 3. Although sonnet 129 has frequently been regarded as out of place, I argue that the definition of the speaker's passion would be incomplete without it. Only if one is looking for narrative continuity or for thematic coherence (as many in the New Critical tradition were) does this stark and intense poem on lust seem not to fit with the poems around it.¹² Sonnet 130, like 21, refuses to make the usual kinds of comparisons, but the terms of the two refusals are diametrically opposed. While sonnet 21 emphasizes the speaker's attempt to write "truly" about the fair youth, sonnet 130 refuses to speak falsely (belie) the dark mistress with "false" comparison. This seems like a small distinction, perhaps only a difference in phrasing or emphasis, but it has large implications. Those implications begin to emerge in sonnet 131. In this final sonnet of the exordium, the speaker acknowledges that (contrary to his claim in sonnet 127), others do not see beauty in her. Moreover, he mentions her "black deeds" but makes no comment on them, leaving the reader to question not only his "judgment" that her "black is fairest," but other aspects of his judgment as well.

Totum. Sonnet 127. Sonnet 127 bears resemblances to both sonnets 1 and 18. Like

¹² Philip Edwards, unlike most other commentators, sees 129 as essential and a key break in the speaker's self-deception, which otherwise operates in the various courtship and wooing postures of sonnets 127-136 (22). Although his argument puts more emphasis on the portrayal of the speaker's psychological state, Edwards' argument for an order based on an carefully constructed presentation of a desire-laden condition comes close to my argument for the rhetorical role of this sonnet.

sonnet 1, sonnet 127 in its first quatrain presents generalized claims about beauty and the inheritance of beauty, but with a contrary theme: instead of calling for the perpetuation of beauty and all things fair, sonnet 127 mourns its loss and replacement by “black.” Even though black never used to be labeled “beauty,” black is now “beauty’s successive heir”:

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame; (127.1-4)

The reason black is beauty’s heir is that beauty is rumored to have had illegitimate offspring: false beauty, less than skin deep because applied using the art of cosmetics:

For since each hand hath put on nature's pow'r,
Fairing the foul with art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace. (127.5-8)

Beauty’s lack of a name in these newer days results from the shame accrued from the “foul” who only *appear* fair.

This sonnet also fits the *totum* topic by defining concepts and terms involved in the proposition, as specified by Cicero. In this case those include beauty, false beauty, and a paradoxical black fairness possessed by the speaker’s mistress. These first two quatrains oppose cosmetically applied, artificial “beauty” to natural beauty (like that created by a personified Nature in the myth-like narrative of sonnet 20). As in sonnet 18, the parts of bodies that appear in this description (“each hand,” “art’s false borrowed face”) are metaphors for the quality of false (cosmetic) beauty.

The state of affairs described in these first two quatrains forms a prelude to the major claim of the sonnet, which is that the speaker’s dark mistress can legitimately be

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called beautiful. This will enable him to justify his own preference for her. The third quatrain continues to follow Cicero's dictum about defining things central to the proposition, this time of persons. It describes the coloring of the mistress's eyes; and it also provides a little *narratio* which offers an explanation of this property. They mourn for the slandering of true beauty by false beauty:

Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her brows so suited [i.e. also black] and they mourners seem
At such who, not born fair, no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem: (127.9-12)¹³

The sonnet closes by bringing in all observers' voices to authorize the speaker's preference for his mistress's coloring. In doing so it adheres to the *totum* topic's emphasis on inclusiveness, and parallels the general claim in sonnet 1 about what "the world" wants:

Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so. (127.13-14)

Sonnet 127 thus presents some general statements about the distinctions between blackness and beauty, but it also makes the paradoxical claim in the couplet that blackness and beauty *should* correspond as they do (or the speaker implies) in his mistress. The sonnet never directly claims, however, that beauty's heir is itself beautiful, only that mourning and the mistress's black coloring suit each other.¹⁴ Beauty's heir may in fact be unattractive. These general claims constitute the epideictic frame within which the speaker at times praises and, more often, castigates his dark

¹³ I follow Kerrigan's (1986) emendation of line 10, changing the repeat of "eyes" to "brows."

¹⁴ The couplet does not fully cohere syntactically; for other ways of construing its meaning, see Booth (436-37).

mistress, and himself for desiring her, through most of the remaining sonnets.

Partes. Sonnet 128. Sonnet 128, like sonnets 2 and 19, makes the transition from general claims to personal consequences and the speaker's emotional involvement in its development of the *partes* topic. It also defines the effort the speaker undertakes in the sub-series (as 19 did in the Fair Youth series), which is to woo his mistress. As in sonnets 2 and 19, the is topic also used as a trope: sonnet 128 includes a generous sprinkling of body parts, plus parts of a musical instrument—eleven, all told (sonnet 127, in comparison, has only four or five).¹⁵ The poem is ostensibly about the speaker's plea to kiss his lady—first on her hands, then on her lips. He first describes her power to move him, which often occurs when she plays music—so much so, that he identifies her metaphorically as his “music.” Standing by while she plays music with her “sweet fingers” and so “confounds” his “ear” with pleasure, he envies the wooden keys of her instrument:

How oft, when thou my music music play'st
Upon that blessèd wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway'st
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood's boldness by thee blushing stand! (128.1-8)

The last phrase, while seeming to refer to the speaker's lips—and by synecdoche to the whole man as well—suggests also the “flesh” which in sonnet 151, “rising at thy name, doth point out thee,” to “stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side.”

Through its use of synecdoche, the sonnet thus simultaneously describes the

¹⁵ When Kerrigan's emendation of the second “eyes” to “brows” is included, the count is five.

arousal of the speaker and identifies his desire to act on that arousal. Not only is the mistress's beauty paradoxical—dark rather than light—her music does not have the ordering capabilities assigned to music in sonnet 8, where the young man is identified as “music to hear” (8.1). Instead, the dark mistress's music embodies those faults described by puritan moralists such as Phillip Stubbes. While he allowed that music was able to “mitigate care, sorrow, and such other perturbations and passions of the minde,” he condemned music in public gatherings as “a Directorie to filthy dauncing,” which “through the sweet harmony and smooth melody thereof . . . estrangeth the minde, stirreth up filthy lust, womannisheth the mind, ravisheth the heart, enflameth concupiscence, & bringeth in uncleannes” (128). In these views, Stubbes echoed standard theories of the effects musical vibrations could have on the body and, through the medium of the body, on the mind and soul.¹⁶

Thus both of the speaker's loves, male and female, are identified with music, but in sonnet 8 music has an instructive and healing role, while in sonnet 128 its effect is to disorder the speaker. He is reduced, as Vendler observes, to spectating ear and lips (545). A sign of this disorder is that he wishes his lips would “change . . . state” with the wooden “chips” or keys, transforming him from animate and human into inanimate, “dead wood”:

To be so tickled they would change their state
And situation with those dancing chips

¹⁶ Francis Meres in *Palladis Tamia* (1598) describes two kinds of music: a kind “that dooth assuage and appease the affections, and a kinde that doth kindle and prouoke the passions” (287). The distinction is classical, appearing in Plato and Augustine (Scarry 102). Mazzaro says Ficino distinguished lyric, which “aims at man's rationality,” from the score, which aims at “man's passions” (90). The distinction aligned instrumental music with rhetoric, and lyric with logic (91). See also Reiss's discussion of theorists such as Fogliano, Gaffurio, Ficino, Zarlino, and Descartes (170-71, 176-77, 194).

O'er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more blest than living lips. (128.9-12)

On its surface, sonnet 128 is comic, with its bashful, blushing lover who wishes to intermingle self, lady and musical instrument in a shifting erotic dance in which he seeks to become the instrument she tickles (no matter how many other “jacks,” or ordinary fellows, she treats in the same fashion). But the speaker’s confusion when her music enters his ear, and the reduction of his watching “I”/eye to sensory orifices—ear, mouth—are important guides to the rest of the sequence, in which the speaker gradually reveals his subjection to his “sickly appetite” (147.4). Her music (at least as he receives it) is not that which heals the soul, but that which “confounds” it.

In the couplet, the speaker escapes from his abject wish to be transformed into dead wood by switching his focus from the mistress’s fingers to her lips. The switch allows him to remain human by boldly wishing to kiss her lips instead:

Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss. (128.13-14)

Through its comic description of the speaker’s desire to be a senseless dancing jack, the sonnet defines in a light tone but with serious import the quality of the speaker’s personal engagement with the dark mistress he desires.

Notatio. Sonnet 129. As implied by the preceding *partes* sonnet, explicitly stated in sonnet 151 (where the speaker’s “flesh” is “contented . . . / To stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side”; ll. 8, 11-12), and strongly suggested in various others such as the two “Will” sonnets (135 and 136), the primary species of desire in this series is sexual consummation with an admittedly promiscuous, rather than the usual cruelly chaste, mistress. This seems a fair inference despite the speaker’s occasional protests to the

contrary, as when he claims that he is not “to base touches prone” (sonnet 141); we have seen his overwhelming desire for touch already in sonnet 128. Sonnet 129, the *notatio* sonnet of the Dark Mistress exordium, defines the headlong rush toward consummation that the speaker’s seemingly innocuous desire for touch becomes, or perhaps is revealed to be, in later sonnets of the Dark Mistress series. Sonnet 129 characterizes the unmitigated male sexual desire for the waste (punning on waist) of a sexually experienced mistress.¹⁷ Hence this “lust-in-action” sonnet presents a striking quality symptomatic of the speaker’s desire in the Dark Mistress series.

As I observed in discussions of sonnets 3 and 20, the term *notatio* and its English cognates refer to distinctive or visually salient qualities, particularly those with ethical implications, and many such usages appear in Shakespeare’s plays. The term also refers to the mark made by Roman censors beside the names of citizens they censured for immorality or for lack of patriotism. The related term *nota* likewise referred (among other things) to these same marks of the censors, and to brands made on bad slaves. Shakespeare probably knew these usages, since in *Love’s Labor’s Lost* the phrase “from my forehead wipe a perjured note” appears (IV.iii.123), and allusions to what appear to be the same two concepts of censor’s mark and slave’s brand occur in sonnets 111 (“thence it comes my name receives a brand”) and 112 (“Your love and pity doth the impression fill/ Which vulgar scandal stamp’d upon my brow”). Usually in Shakespearean texts only a couple of these concepts of shameful brand, perjury, and marked visual qualities are linked with words related to *notatio* and *nota*, but in *The*

¹⁷ For the pun waste/waist, see Booth (443), who cites Kökeritz (152) and *Hamlet* II.ii.231-35, where Hamlet’s phrase “Fortune’s waist, or the middle of her favors” is equated by Guildenstern to “her privates” and then by Hamlet to “her secret parts.”

Rape of Lucrece, all appear together in the description of Tarquin's "black lust" (654) when he first approaches her bed and gazes, "rolling his greedy eyeballs in his head" (366). Four stanzas blazoning her physical characteristics are followed by the lines,

What could he see but mightily he noted?
What did he note but strongly he desired?
What he beheld, on that he firmly doted,
And in his will his willful eye he tired. (414-417)

It is the notorious qualities of such sexual desire, activated perhaps by sight but not in themselves visual, that sonnet 129 describes, although ironically the sonnet's speaker is aroused not by a classic, chaste beauty like that of Lucrece but by qualities that he describes as traditional beauty's contrary—darkness and promiscuity.

Thus, although the sonnet is not visual in its description, it is densely packed with descriptive epithets bearing a strong ethical cast, appropriate for the *notatio* method of definition as employed by Shakespeare in sonnets 3 and 20. The distinctive ethical qualities also encompass portraiture of past, present, and future behaviors, as in sonnet 3. The sonnet opens with a succinct statement defining this particular species of willful desire; the definition includes an epithet that simultaneously characterizes lust and its object: a "waste [waist] of shame."

Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action . . . (129.1-2)

All the remaining lines of the three quatrains define lust through various means: by listing qualities and behaviors associated with lust (quatrain 1), by describing lust experientially from the dual temporal perspective of prior anticipation and subsequent remorse (quatrain 2), and by describing the extremity such desire engenders, before,

during, and after action (quatrain 3):¹⁸

. . . and til action, lust
Is perjured, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoyed no sooner but despisèd 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. (129.2-12)

The extremes that accompany lust serve to mark lust's absolute difference from the classic ideal of virtue, whose key quality is moderation. Finally, the couplet describes the generality of the condition: all men suffer from it, and unavoidably so:

All this the world well knows, yet none knows well
To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell. (129.13-14)

The speaker's claim that all the world knows the extreme qualities of lust and yet cannot avoid such aroused desires may seem to be special pleading on his own behalf, but the combination of experiential description and philosophical characterization gives the sonnet a tone of strongly felt but nevertheless reasoned judgment about the exigencies of sexual desire.¹⁹ Vendler observes that these

¹⁸ Rhetorical figures which structure this sonnet are analyzed by Peterson (227-31) and Hammond (2002: 407-09). Peterson finds structural and thematic parallels between sonnet 129 and a section in Wilson's *Art of Rhetoric* on sentence schemes including gradation, regression, and isocolon. Hammond finds structural and verbal parallels between sonnet 129 and a sonnet in *Tottel's Miscellany* now assigned to Lord Vaux, and a similar sonnet in Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie*.

¹⁹ One can historically contextualize the sonnet's claims for the universality of such experience by noting that the London of 1600 had over a hundred brothels for a total population slightly over 200,000 (Honan 98, 96). The adult male population would of course have been less than half that number (and the number who could pay for "waists of shame" at the brothels smaller still). It should be noted that these numbers provide a conservative approximation of the extreme commonness of non-marital heterosexual relationships for males, since an additional percentage took place outside of the commercial trade.

sequential shifts prevent the sonnet's definition of lust from being understood from either a purely affective or a purely judgmental point of view (553). By describing the affects associated with lust from a standpoint outside rather than immersed in the experience (in contrast to some later sonnets in the sequence), sonnet 129 presents an ethically imbued portrait of lust. In contrast to the personal stance of the speaker of sonnet 3, who counsels how an evil outcome might be avoided (in accordance with Loriclus's scholia in Aphthonius), the speaker of sonnet 20 explains that the evil result of lust *cannot* be avoided. All must grapple with this kind of desire, and in some form suffer its consequences.

Comparatio. Sonnet 130. Sonnet 130, one of the most familiar of Shakespeare's sonnets, is even more emphatically an anti-comparison sonnet than its counterpart in the Fair Youth series, sonnet 21. Sonnet 130 provides an anti-blazon that claims to discredit the traditional kinds of comparisons frequent in love poetry, which rise from a lesser to a greater thing, so that the mistress's eyes are like suns, her cheeks like roses, and so on. The negation of such hyperbolic praise is achieved through a falling trope—the speaker's mistress is lesser than such natural marvels in every way:

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: (130.1-12)

The resulting anti-blazon approaches insult (particularly in modern readings, since the meaning of “reeks” has altered substantially since these lines were written).

The couplet attempts a rescue that suggests the speaker—as in sonnet 21—is committed to unvarnished truth. It does so using another rare category of comparison, between things of equal value. His mistress is not really lesser in quality as the preceding twelve lines imply, but “as rare” as any mistress similarly treated to extravagant poetic praise:

And yet by heav’n I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

These lines imply that the speaker does not “belie” or falsify her attractions through inaccurate comparisons. Yet two aspects of this statement allow it still to belie her. The lines suppose that praise of mistresses in amatory verse is in general hyperbole. However, there may exist a category of mistresses whose beauty is *not* exaggerated (and therefore truly rare), whereas the speaker only compares his mistress to those whose praises are *indeed* exaggerated (and who therefore are not rare but ordinary). In addition, although the speaker may *think* his mistress is rare, she may not actually be so. This latter possibility is more or less acknowledged in the next sonnet.

***Iudicium* or *Testimonium*. Sonnet 131.** The *iudicium* sonnet of the Fair Youth series, sonnet 22, brings in the testimony of an impartial mirror only to show the inability of the speaker to heed what it shows him. This parallel *iudicium* sonnet, sonnet 131, likewise shows the speaker unable to heed external testimony. In this case that testimony is others’ judgment about the attractions of his dark mistress. The sonnet opens with a protest against the mistress’s cruelty, presumably in refusing to

yield to the speaker's wooing. She is as "tyrannous" and "cruel" as the typical proud beauty:

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear doting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel. (131.1-4)

Her proud behavior may not be justified, however. Some witnesses deny that her face has the quality to engender desire in the beholder, in other words that she has beauty to draw love. This acknowledgment contradicts the claim of sonnet 127 that "every tongue" says beauty should emulate the dark looks of his mistress.

Yet, in good faith, some say that thee behold
Thy face hath not the pow'r to make love groan;
To say they err I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to myself alone. (131.5-8)

In this account, he is too timid to stand up and strongly claim before these harsher witnesses that their judgment is mistaken. His own heterodox opinion is witnessed by the "thousand groans" of unfulfilled desire:

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. (131.9-12)

The effect of this contradictory testimony concerning his mistress's looks, especially in light of the preceding sonnets of this "Dark Mistress" exordium, is to place his judgment that her "black is fairest" sharply into question. And the couplet clinches his own loss of judgment. He loves her and desires her, even though her "deeds" are decidedly unworthy of admiration:

In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds. (131.13-14)

This final line contains no second thoughts about his declared love for her, nor does it question that her deeds are indeed “black.” His sole concern in the couplet is what he terms the “slander” against her beauty, or against the beauty he, at least, perceives in her. This utter absence of any ethical response to her “black deeds” is startling, though the smooth tone of his calmly delivered assessment in the final line of the poem tends to gloss over the omission.

Reading the Three Exordia Together: Shifting Change

As a set, the three exordia suggest that Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* were structured as an extended portrayal of qualities and kinds of desire, tested in the crucible of the speaker’s experience. Each *totum* sonnet (1, 18, 127) sets out a general topic, and that general argument or claim is translated into personal terms in each *partes* sonnet (2, 19, 128). Sonnet 2 describes in vivid terms time’s eventual effect on the youth’s body, and 19 and 128 portray the poet’s feelings and attitudes toward the love object of youth or lady, and describe his personal efforts to either fight time’s ravages through his verse (19) or to plead for his mistress’s favor (128). The *notatio* sonnets in particular define using memorable images or attributes the kinds of desire characteristic of each sub-series. Remaining sonnets in each exordium fill out the argument (the procreation series), or amplify on the attributes of the different types of desire the speaker expresses in the remaining Fair Youth sonnets and Dark Mistress sonnets.²⁰

The parallels among the three exordia invite the reader to read across the three

²⁰ I consider the implications of the orderliness of the three exordia for the 1609 publication in Appendix B.

sub-series and exercise the kind of judgment that seems to slip increasingly further from the speaker's grasp. Each exordium defines and characterizes a different kind of desire, but as we have seen, the characteristic desire within each sub-series overlaps somewhat with those in the others. This phenomenon becomes more marked as each sub-series progresses. The result is that the "shifting change" which the speaker lays to "false women's fashion" (20.4) increasingly marks his own discourse and actions. In this respect the speaker is like Posthumus in *Cymbeline*, who in the passage quoted in the previous section describes various weaknesses as the "woman's part" but in fact is diagnosing his own ills.

At the outset two distinct kinds of desire appear in the procreation series. This series identifies the speaker's impulse toward biological reproduction as a prudential love of beauty and takes for granted the platonic and neoplatonic truism that beauty draws love. This prudential *caritas* or charity is centered on the well-being of others, the beautiful youth in particular. The diagnostic *notatio* sonnet 3 opposes the speaker's wise yet loving advice, which flows from this *caritas*, to the short-sighted narcissism of the youth. Sonnet 3, as I discussed in the previous chapter, uses the emblem of looking into a mirror to characterize both the self-love of the youth and the speaker's prudential advice to "re-pair" the youth's face by bringing children into the world. The implication of this sonnet is that in doing so the youth would transform his self-love into wisdom.

We do not witness such a transformation, however. The transformation that appears in the short exordium to the Fair Youth works in opposite fashion, and transforms the wisdom of the poet into a self-regarding erotic passion. First we see the

speaker's effort to reproduce the youth's beauty through poetic creation, the purpose set out in a general way in sonnet 18 and declared as an emotion-laden personal contest with a personified Time in sonnet 19. This personal undertaking on the youth's behalf either mutates into, or reveals itself as, erotic desire in sonnet 20, the master-mistress sonnet. Ostensibly because of the male gender of the love object, erotic desire becomes bifurcated into a possessive and even narcissistic love for the youth in the Fair Youth series, and a barely concealed physical drive toward sexual consummation in the Dark Mistress series, diagnosed in the "lust-in-action" sonnet. This bifurcation is not clear-cut, however. The Fair Youth series, while not explicitly identifying sexual consummation (unlike the Dark Mistress series), does acknowledge sexual desire—engendered by Nature, although also apparently foiled by her.²¹

The *notatio* sonnet 20 of the Fair Youth series records this erotic attraction of the speaker to the youth, whose supplemental addition by Nature ostensibly stymies physical consummation of the speaker's erotic desire. Eros's distinguishing feature in both classic myth and modern psychology is a felt lack, an absence or need which can only be supplied by the lover.²² This lack induces much more than sexual acts, however, and erotically tinged supplements tendered by the lover appear repeatedly within the Fair Youth series. The youth's love, for instance, bestows a metaphoric "wealth" to the poet's meager fortune (sonnet 29); his "love and pity" fills and heals

²¹ In this assessment I differ from Bruce Smith in *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* (1991), an argument I critique in the next chapter.

²² The classical locus of this story is Plato's *Symposium*, where the comic poet Aristophanes recounts how early powerful creatures were cut in two by Zeus, and the resulting diminished humans have ever since languished and searched for their missing half.

the stamped impression of “scandal” on the poet’s brow (sonnet 102; similarly for the “brand” on the poet’s name in sonnet 111); the youth’s “good report” compensates for the speaker’s “bewailed guilt” (36.14, 10); similarly the youth’s “store” of worth compensates for the speaker’s dearth of merit (sonnet 37).²³ This “store” compensates via an engrafting process similar to that of sonnet 15, except that the benefit is reversed: Whereas the speaker engrafts the youth anew via his writing in sonnet 15, the speaker engrafts himself, via the love he bears the youth, to the abundance of the youth’s beauty, social position, and accomplishments (“I make my love engrafted to this store,” 37.8). A similar reversal in benefit of a supplemental “good report” is seen in sonnet 96 relative to 36: When the youth acquires an “ill report” (95.8) of “wantonness” (96.1), the poet in turn provides the “good report” to compensate. The mutuality of this exchange is indicated by the identical couplets in sonnets 36 and 96, the same description covering both supplemental offerings:

But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Accompanying the erotic passion of sonnet 20 is a possessiveness, which first appears in the anti-comparison sonnet 21 (“I will not praise that purpose not to sell”). Later in the sequence, this possessiveness becomes more explicitly a jealous fear of losing the youth’s affections commingled with anxiety about the youth’s activities and companions when he is away from the poet. The poet fears the “filching age will steal” the youth from him (sonnet 75), a concern expressed also in sonnets 48 and 61:

²³ As observed by John Barrell, sonnet 29 can also be read as a plea for patronage—“wealth” in a more literal sense.

“thou wilt be stol’n, I fear” (48.13); “For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,/ From me far off, with others all too near” (61.13-14).²⁴ This jealous possessiveness signals the eroticism of the relationship.²⁵

Once the speaker confesses to erotic desire for the youth in sonnet 20, the speaker himself becomes identified with the narcissistic gazing by which he characterizes the youth in the procreation series. In sonnet 3, the *notatio* sonnet of the procreation series, the speaker’s *caritas* for the youth and the youth’s own narcissism are distinct and are attributes of two different individuals. A shift toward the speaker’s own narcissism is first intimated in sonnet 20, when the speaker (along with other men and women) gazes at the youth, rapt by his beauty. In sonnet 22, the prudential wisdom about his future aging is screened from view by the “seemly raiment” of the youth’s beauty, so that he declares he will not believe the evidence of his “glass” that he is older than the youth. Later the speaker actually describes himself as narcissistic: “Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye” (62.1). He sees himself in his mind’s eye as possessing the youth’s beguiling qualities and as guilty of the youth’s sin of self-love, until he is chastened by the sight of himself in a mirror, “Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity” (62.10). In both these sonnets, prudential love is not totally absent; in sonnet 22 the speaker will be “chary” of his lover’s heart so as to prevent it from “faring ill” (22.11, 12); in sonnet 62, he is caught up short by the sight of his real,

²⁴ To “watch” is to stay awake late into the night.

²⁵ Erotic love’s distance from *caritas* is recognized in *Love’s Labors Lost*, when, in the discovery scene revealing first one then another of the king and his companions to be in love with the women from France, Longaville says accusingly to Dumaine, “thy love is far from charity,/ That in love’s grief desir’st society” (IV.iii.125-26).

aging self. Then, and only then, does he recognize his difference from the youth. But the narcissism for which he chided the youth no longer seems such a grave error; his greater sin seems to lie not in self-love *per se* but in self-love of such an unlovely face: “Self so self-loving were iniquity” (62.12). He explains his confusion by his own virtual merging with the youth, with whom he identifies so closely that he calls him “my self”:

‘Tis thee (my self) that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days. (62.13-14)

Although in fact this is love for another, not for self—perhaps even *caritas*—the terms of its description give it the ethical force of narcissistic self-involvement. The cosmetic “painting” which he abjures elsewhere as false beauty, he here endorses, although in metaphoric rather than literal terms; he is quite willing to paint *himself* with the youth’s attributes. This diminished sense of judgment, first shown in sonnet 22 when he seems blinded to his own condition by the beauty of the youth, becomes more marked in later sonnets such as 113 and 114. The speaker shapes every object he sees, “the rud’st or gentlest sight,” to the youth’s features (113.9) and makes “monsters and things indigest” into “Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble” (114.5, 6).

Sonnet 20 also indexes the trajectory of the speaker’s passion toward the youth over the course of the Fair Youth sonnets. The note of frustration signaled in sonnet 20 concerning sexual desire increasingly marks the nonsexual dimension as well. From the sonnets that describe the withdrawal of the youth, the speaker’s “sun,” behind a cloud (33-35) through various additional trials, including threats of separation due to the speaker’s “bewailed guilt” (36.12), his defects, his travel, the challenges of a rival

poet or poets, his own neglect of his beloved, and accusations of sycophancy by a “suborned informer” (125.13), the overall movement of the set points toward dissolution of the relationship. This is true despite the speaker’s increasingly more urgent avowals, as in sonnet 116, of love borne out “ev’n to the edge of doom” (116.12). The intimations of obstacles become more frequent, and the speaker’s response that he remains a “true soul” (125.14) more insistent, just prior to the return to the theme of nature and mortality in sonnet 126. Thus, by the end of sonnet 125, with the speaker having been “impeached” by a “suborned informer” (though not convicted), the speaker’s (self-described) defeat in the sexual arena described in sonnet 20 has extended throughout the larger realm of the relationship. The speaker’s love may be “true” despite some suggestions to the contrary, and he may still regard the youth as his (“my lovely boy,” 126.1), but the relationship appears to have ended.

While the exordium of the Fair Youth series indexes erotic passion that is described as sexually charged but not overtly sexual, that of the Dark Mistress series introduces a distinctly sexual passion. The sexual drive portrayed in the Dark Mistress series is not described as stemming from the love of beauty that inspires procreation, and is anything but prudential. The speaker avows in the opening *totum* sonnet of the Dark Mistress that his lady has the kind of beauty that inspires love, but that claim he later terms perjury, his “perjured eye” (also I/aye) (152.14). The *partes* sonnet 128 indicates that this kind of misdirection of desire arises from his “confounded” senses. The characteristic that actually seems to draw him is not beauty but promiscuity and the promise of consummation, the fleeting “bliss” (129.11) such promiscuity entails and that is so trenchantly characterized in the Dark Mistress *notatio* sonnet 129.

If true beauty inspires true love, the paradoxical dark “beauty” of this black mistress inspires “false” love. The speaker characterizes this version of desire as false in several respects: It is a desire for a quality of “beauty” that is not generally recognized by that label, despite the speaker’s assertion in the *totum* sonnet 127 that “every tongue says beauty should look so.” It is a desire which “confounds” the speaker’s senses and his judgment, as shown in the *partes* sonnet 128 when he wishes to trade places with “dead wood.” This confounding leads him to speak and swear falsely, although initially he denies it. The implication of sonnet 130 is that the kind of desire expressed in the Dark Mistress sonnets typically leads to the “false compare” of poetic blazons to one’s mistress; and two sonnets later he is readily making the kinds of extravagant comparisons he has just resisted in order to advance his plea for his dark mistress’s “pity” (a common euphemism in amatory verse for sexual yielding). He belies his assertion in sonnet 130 that his mistress’s eyes are “nothing like the sun,” for instance, by claiming that “truly” her eyes ornament her cheeks even more than “the morning sun of heav’n/ . . . becomes the grey cheeks of the east” (132.5-6), and further, if she grants his wish he is willing to swear falsely that “beauty herself is black/ And all they foul that thy complexion lack” (132.13-14). He admits that they both have “sealed false bonds of love” (142.7), to others and eventually to each other (sonnet 152).

The quality of possessiveness that might be expected in sonnets to a love object, and that appears in the Fair Youth series, is missing. The speaker pleads to be just one among any number of lovers, and is content to remain uncounted and unvalued: “Then in the number let me pass untold” (136.9). It is the mistress, instead, who is

“covetous” and “put’st forth all to use” (134.6, 10); she wants many lovers and takes into her possession the speaker’s friend (sonnets 133-134, 144), among others. She is (according to the speaker) “the bay where all men ride” (137.6).

The desperation, unreason, even quasi-madness so vividly portrayed in the *notatio* sonnet 129 as the universal experience of lust appears with increasing intensity in the latter part of the Dark Mistress series. Over the course of this sub-series this sonnet’s descriptive epithets increasingly are revealed as diagnostic of the speaker’s plight. The last part of the series (sonnets 147-152) describes the speaker as trapped in a state of dire woe and unreason, as for example in the third quatrain of sonnet 147:²⁶

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; (147.9-12)

This sonnet and sonnet 152 both end with the speaker affirming that he perjured himself at the outset of the series, and abrogating the claims he initially made for black as “beauty’s successive heir” (perjury, the reader will recall, is the first defining attribute of “lust in action”):

For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night. (147.13-14)

Sonnet 152 closes with a variation on these lines in which he castigates his own falsehood:

For I have sworn thee fair: more perjured eye,
To swear against the truth so foul a lie. (152.13-14)

²⁶ Thomas C. Kennedy has observed that by recognizing his loss of reason, the speaker in Sonnet 147 is actually beginning the process of freeing himself from his fevered longing.

Even the closing anacreontics, through their myth-like stories, depict a lover who is “sick” (153.11) and “diseased” (154.12). They are lighter in tone and hence provide relief from the intensity of the previous six poems; but they nevertheless present the speaking lover as victim of the same universal trap, having succumbed to lust’s bait: he finds “no cure” (153.13) except in his mistress’ “eyes”/ayes, her acquiescence to his desire. In sonnet 154, the passion of love’s fire (mythologized as Cupid’s “heart-inflaming brand,” the desire that in sonnet 129 marks man’s condition) cannot be cooled by the waters of the supposedly “healthful remedy” of the springs (154.11).

I have argued that the three exordia introduce distinctive varieties of desire. Each sub-series develops a multi-faceted portrayal of its particular variety through the lens of the speaker’s experiences. The different kinds are not utterly discrete, however, and some overlap across sub-series exists. I have already noted how the speaker’s erotic desire in the Fair Youth sonnets absorbs some of the narcissism that is an attribute of the youth in the procreation sonnets, although the benevolent and prudential love the speaker shows in the procreation sonnets does not entirely disappear. A cautionary voice enters occasionally, gently chiding the youth against being “fond on praise” (84.14), and warning against a “fault” with the words “take heed, dear heart” (96.1, 95.13). Conversely, a non-prudential note enters the procreation series when, as I noted in the previous chapter, the speaker pleads with the youth to “Make thee another self for love of me,” invoking their special relationship rather than offering any reasoned argument (the *adiuncta* sonnet, 10.13).

Considerable overlap between species of desire is evident in the Fair Youth and Dark Mistress sonnets. Both objects of desire inspire the poet to blame and praise,

although they differ in the proportion allotted of each. Both sets are grounded in erotic desire, and sexually suggestive language permeates both.²⁷ When the speaker is named *Will*, the term for that part of the mind or soul that acts on motions of the appetite, such a grounding seems virtually inevitable.²⁸ Yet in other respects the desire for the youth and that for the woman are opposed. One is inspired by classic loveliness, the other by a paradoxical black mystique; one ostensibly is stymied in the sexual arena, the other aims for and achieves sexual consummation. One repeatedly attempts to idealize the love expressed, the other moves toward an increasing sense of revulsion; one is a love “of comfort,” the other “of despair” (144.1). In one, the speaker becomes entangled in self-love, in the other in self-hate.

The greatest overlap among the kinds of desire represented in the three sub-series is not in characteristics, but in outcome—specifically, in the failure of the outcome desired by the speaker. The opening procreation series attempts to persuade the young man to absorb the kind of prudential care expressed by the speaker and to combine that with sexual and erotic love in order to uphold the “beauteous roof” of himself and his lineal descendants; such a course would banish the youthful narcissism of which he is guilty.²⁹ But the *Sonnets* as a whole show no evidence that the youth

²⁷ Sexual double entendres are painstakingly documented by Stephen Booth in his edition of the *Sonnets*.

²⁸ It is well known that several sonnets pun on the name “Will,” including 57 and especially 135 and 136. For an exploration of the moral errors of the will recorded in the *Sonnets*; see De Grazia (1978, 1980).

²⁹ The suggestion that the youth could love a wife in any other than a sexual way is barely present in the procreation series. Perhaps it is intimated in the widow’s tears of sonnet 9 (“Is it for fear to wet a widow’s eye”), but the sonnet suggests only that she would love him, not that he would love her. Repeatedly he attracts gazers and love, but indications that he reciprocates are limited.

ever heeds his plea, or ever will. At the close of the sub-series to the Fair Youth, poem 126 (a sonnet in the general sense of short poem) does not return to the argument for procreation which prefaced the main body of the Fair Youth sonnets. Such a return would keep open the possibility of rebirth and renewal for the youth. Its absence implies the failure of the admonitory project promoted by the speaker in the procreation series, as well as pointing up the limits on the power of rhetorical suasion, no matter how skillfully deployed, to influence action.

A similar failure of aim occurs in the remainder of the Fair Youth series. The exordium opens with the aim of perpetuating the youth's beauty and life through encomiastic verse, and in sonnet 19 the poet dedicates himself to this effort: "My love shall in my verse ever live young" (19.14). At intervals through the sonnets to the youth this defiance of the inevitabilities of time is renewed (sonnets 54, 55, 63, 65, 81, 100, 101, and 107). Sonnet 65, while admitting that "sad mortality" oversways all, hopes (against the laws of nature) that

. . . this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright. (65.13-14)

Sonnet 81 refers to the deaths of both the poet and his lover, but foresees immortality of a kind for the youth:

Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I (once gone) to all the world must die; (81.5-6)

The irony of this project, noted by many critics, is that it is the poet's name which hundreds of years later has "immortal life" while that of the youth—at least within the *Sonnets* themselves—is utterly anonymous, other than his poetic epithet of a prince-like

True-love or (prim)-Rose.³⁰ This name is indeed rehearsed over and over when these sonnets are read today: It is this “budding name” that “blesses an ill report”; this name is the reason the youth’s “errors” are “to truths translated and for true things deemed” (95.3, 8; 96.7, 8). As to his given name, however, the poet seems to fulfill his promise that if it is the youth’s will, “in my tongue/ Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell” (89.9-10). Thus the apparent dissolution of the relationship by the youth, who in the penultimate Fair Youth sonnet has heard accusations by a “suborned informer” against the poet’s claims to be a “true soul” (125.13, 14), within the implied narrative seems to result in the failure of the eternalizing claim of the poet about immortalizing the youth’s name. Rather than the youth himself living ever young in the poet’s verse, as claimed in sonnet 19, by the close of the Fair Youth sonnets it has become the record of the poet’s love for the youth which will survive. This shift is recorded in the meaning of “love” in sonnets 19, 65, and 107: In 19.14 “love” refers primarily to the youth (see discussion above of this *partes* sonnet); in 65.14, where the poet wishes that his love may shine bright in black ink (quoted above), “love” can refer equally to the youth and the poet’s love for him; while in 107 the word refers primarily to the poet’s record in rhyme of his own passion:

My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes,
 Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
 While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes. (107.10-12)

It is the poet who will live, while the youth will have a “monument” in verse:

³⁰ See the narrowing of identifying characteristics discussed under the *totum* topic in the previous chapter. Additional oblique references to this epithet occur in later sonnets: e.g. “thy budding name” (95.3); “my rose” (111.14).

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent. (107.13-14)

"Monuments" in the culture of Shakespeare's time are often tomb monuments, and it seems the poet himself is here guilty of the accusation he once flung at one or more rival poets, who "would give life and bring a tomb" (83.12). The logic of this transformation over the course of the Fair Youth sonnets suggests that the "monument" of the poet's verse is indeed a tomb whose inscription has been lost, perhaps even buried by the poet.³¹

Finally, while the desire of the speaker that the dark mistress give him her lips to kiss (128.14) is met, that aim turns out to have been one he later rues. His regret is signified by the self-censure in sonnets 147-152, and probably also by the poet's testimony in the Fair Youth series about "wretched errors" caused by a "madding fever"; that fever has resulted in his always "losing" when he thought to "win" (119.5, 8, 4). His achievement he later seems to recognize as the bitter success of an oath-breaker, and in sonnets 147 and 152 he confesses to having perjured himself in his initial claim (in the *totum* sonnet 127) that all tongues praise the paradoxical darkness of her beauty. His "love" for the mistress is "false" (a word repeated often in the

³¹ It is perhaps fitting that the numerical structure of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* as analyzed by Alastair Fowler is a triangular or pyramidal number (the two terms were often synonyms); the pyramidal structure is recognized as a tomb monument in Milton's epitaph "On Shakespeare" (see Fowler 187-88). Parenthetically Fowler and Roche both devise methods for correcting Shakespeare's number of total sonnets, 154, to the number 153 that represents the correct pyramidal number; a simpler explanation may be that Shakespeare represents his speaker as guilty of overweening pride and attempting (like the builders of the Tower of Babel) to build too high, vanity disparaged in Spenser's "The Ruines of Time" ("In vaine doo earthly Princes then, in vaine/ Seeke with Pyramides, to heaven aspired/ ... To make their memories for ever live:/ For how can mortall immortalitie give?"; 407-8, 412-13 in *The Yale Edition*). Armisen (2005) relates Augustine's analysis of the number 153 to Shakespeare's sonnets, and discusses the use of a number one larger than a recognized symbolic number ("*forma + 1*"; 223). One unit in excess has been recognized in medieval literature as signifying transgression (Metcalf 147; see also Hopper 131).

Dark Mistress sonnets) in that it is actually sexually motivated desire–lust, not love.

The result of these various failures is that instead of the conjunction among prudential, sexual, and erotic love that might have made the *Sonnets* a success story, we witness the speaker himself being converted from prudential to frequently self-interested and sometimes harmful desires. From the failure of the procreation argument ensues a cruel disjunction in the speaker's experience between benevolent *caritas*, erotic love, and sexual consummation. This disjunction is especially apparent in the permutations of desire described in the three *notatio* sonnets. Eros is absent from sonnet 3; instead the sonnet expresses a more functional viewpoint, endorsing a pretty woman's receptiveness to the youth's "tillage" and a resulting child blessing "some mother" (3.6, 3.4). In contrast, sonnet 20 diagnoses the speaker's "passion" as a sexually imbued erotic love that resists consummation, and cannot result in children. In sonnet 20 the speaker repeats the language of "use" and "treasure" (child in the womb) that he plays with in sonnet 6, but such reproduction is connected simply with "pleasure" and interest in perpetuating the youth's beauty in offspring is absent from all the remaining sonnets. Moreover, while sonnet 3 mentions family ("thou art thy mother's glass") and implies a succession of familial generations, the couplet of sonnet 20 playfully implies that the youth will have multiple sexual partners by using the plural terms "women's" and "their" ("But since she pricked thee out for *women's* pleasure,/ Mine be thy love and thy love's use *their* treasure"; emphasis added). Ironically, the speaker's language of promiscuity in sonnet 20 is fulfilled in an unexpected manner in the presumed love triangle sonnets, when the youth apparently beds the dark mistress while acting, supposedly, on behalf of the speaker (e.g. "Take

all my loves,” 41.1; “thou might’st my seat forbear,” 42.9; and “I have confessed that he is thine,” “he” being the youth who “came debtor for my sake,” 131.1, 11). The speaker claims to remain uncertain about whether this consummation has taken place, since when his two loves (“of comfort and despair”; 144.1) are together, they are far from him. With slightly macabre-tinged humor, he expects to see proof only when, like a hunted fox being smoked out of a hole, his youthful friend is forced out by the inflammation of venereal disease (“this shall I ne’er know but live in doubt/ Til my bad angel fire my good one out”; 144.13-14). Within the Fair Youth series, the speaker at intervals again takes up his prudential stance (as noted above), but rather than urging reproduction these sonnets warn against a “sensual fault” (35.9; see e.g. 64, 94, 95) and, in closing, remind the youth that despite the speaker’s monument in verse, he remains subject to nature’s laws and therefore mortal (sonnet 126). The same Nature who pricked him out for women’s pleasure will finally render him up to Time’s scythe.

The sexual drive described in the *notatio* sonnet 129 is far removed from the prudential concern with reproduction, and neither this sonnet nor any of the Dark Mistress series touches on the subject of offspring. In a promiscuous relationship that breaks the speaker’s “bed-vow” (152.3) and that of his mistress, the production of a bastard child would only break another taboo. Yet it is in the context of this sub-series, in the love for the dark mistress (whether by the youth or the poet), where sexual consummation that could actually result in children occurs. Nevertheless it is the cycle of desire and disgust described in sonnet 129 that characterizes the Dark Mistress series, with the speaker’s disgust growing intense in sonnets 147 through 152. The “hell” that is the terminus of lust according to sonnet 129 becomes manifest after

sonnet 146, which laments the speaker's subjection to his "sinful earth" (146.1). That "hell" is interpreted by the speaker to be an attribute of his own mistress in sonnet 147: she is "as black as hell, as dark as night" (147.14). Her "foul faults" (148.14), says the speaker, constitute "just cause of hate" (150.10) and entice him to betray his "nobler part to [his] gross body's treason" (151.6). Yet even these claims are unreliable, since the speaker admits that "My thoughts and my discourse as madman's are,/ At random from the truth vainly expressed" (147.11-12); the cause for his confounded state lies in his own will, not in the mistress's body. His is an illicit desire which results in sterility ("a waste"; 129.1) and cannot, in the phrasing of sonnet 3, bless some mother.

While in the sphere of nature the speaker's desires result only in sterility, he is not infertile. But the fertility engendered by his desire is not that of the body but of the imagination, a turn intimated in the rhetorical plenitude of the procreation series. In this switch toward fertility of the mind, as discussed in the previous chapter, the speaker seems to endorse Ficino's neoplatonist view that desire for beauty inspires pregnancy of both body and soul. Pregnancy of the body Ficino regards as a lesser good than pregnancy of the spirit—a stance rejected in sonnet 16, but perhaps endorsed in the exultation over death of sonnet 107. In his commentary on Plato's *Symposium* Ficino discusses the desire of an older man for physical consummation with a younger, but in a move echoed (consciously or unconsciously) by sonnet 20, he views it as a mistake of nature in which desire for beauty cannot actually result in its propagation. In the case of love between men, such desire should be directed toward propagation of what Ficino regards as the eternal part of man, the mind and soul. For Ficino and to

varying degrees for subsequent neoplatonists, including Spenser in his Hymns to Love and Beauty, the desire for beauty is ultimately a desire for union with the divine One, the godhead.

Yet Shakespeare, as so often, deeply questions the dogma he inherits. Desire for the divine is the one standard species conspicuously absent from Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. In that respect the disjunction of procreative, erotic, and sexual desires in the speaker's experience results in spiritual frustration and sterility as well. For all their neoplatonic rhapsodizing about the youth as the platonic Idea of beauty, and what might be termed a religiosity of feeling, the Fair Youth sonnets never look toward divine love. Moreover, in the Fair Youth series the speaker sometimes uses language that suggests he is blasphemously substituting worship of the boy for worship of the divine. At one point the speaker is at pains to deny the accusation that he is making a god of his young lover:

Let not my love be called idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an idol show (105.1-2)³²

And in succeeding sonnets, the speaker first describes himself as repeating the praises of the youth as if they are liturgy:

. . . like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same,
.....
Ev'n as when first I hallowed thy fair name. (108.5-8)

Then two sonnets later he openly identifies the youth as the god of his religion,

³² Vendler points out that the speaker's denial depends upon his substituting a platonic religion for the Christian one. The youth possesses a platonic trinity of virtues rather than a Christian trinity; he is "fair, kind, and true" (105, repeated three times, in lines 9, 10, and 13). Vendler notes that these are the platonic virtues of the Beautiful, the Good, and the True, with an emphasis on beauty (445-46).

although a god from whom he has strayed. The youth is “A god in love” (110.12).

This god, however, remains one step below standard divinity:

Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Ev’n to thy pure and most most loving breast. (110.13-14)

The Fair Youth sonnets thus signal their exclusion of the standard Christian variety of divine love by using language that mimics Christian phraseology but does not signify Christian matters.³³

Spiritual sterility is also signaled in the one sonnet of the whole series often taken as specifically religious. In sonnet 146 the speaker opens by admitting his spiritual poverty and chastises himself for his preoccupation with bodily things (a preoccupation that is certainly a feature of the Dark Mistress series, though 146 does not specifically mention sexual desire):

Poor soul, the center of my sinful earth,
Feeding these rebel pow’rs that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay? (146.1-4)³⁴

He goes on in this vein, imagining the eventual destruction of the physical body:

Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end? (146.5-8)

³³ An additional instance is sonnet 33, which in its description of dark clouds obscuring “heaven’s sun” and in its number allude to Jesus’s death, traditionally at the age of 33. Ironically, the “stain” of the youth does not redeem the speaker, but makes *him* “bear the strong offense’s cross” (34.12). (Like sonnets 1-2, 18-19 and 127-128, the pair 33-34 describe a situation in dispassionate or general terms, and then in terms of personal effect.)

According to Fowler, Shakespeare’s sonnets also incorporate in their numerical structure various patterns and numbers associated with Christianity and with the divine. Such structures may form another mode in which the sonnets allude to sacred matters while excluding them from the speaker’s frame of reference.

³⁴ I follow Vender’s well-reasoned emendation of the second line (611).

As a remedy he imagines buying “terms divine” not as a means to a blessed afterlife conjoined to a loving deity, but simply as a means to end death and dying:

Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more: (146.9-12)

This injunction that his soul live upon the body's loss is wishful thinking that assumes his soul can gain life merely through his body's aging. The buying/selling metaphor has no substantive meaning and the metaphor of bartering seems inappropriate (certainly it contradicts Protestant doctrine, in which salvation is brought about through grace, not purchase or merit). Moreover, “terms divine” is an oxymoron which segments into limited “terms” something without beginning and without end. Such reasoning cannot possibly release his soul from its assault by the “rebel powers” of his physical body. And his conclusion depends upon a sophistic quibble that identifies the two instances of “death” in the couplet:

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then. (146.13-14)

The fallacy behind this conclusion is that the first “death” refers to the “pining” and eventual destruction of his own body, while the other seems to refer to a generalized and personified “Death” that “feeds on men” generally. Logically, the death of the speaker's body does not result in any general end to death. The speaker of this sonnet wants enrichment of his soul, but he looks only inward, never upward to any deific power or divine love which might do for him what he claims to do for the youth,

“engraft [him] new” (15.14).³⁵

This sonnet thus demonstrates the confused state of the speaker’s mind as it is revealed in the next six sonnets. The hope expressed at the end of sonnet 146 for a time when “there’s no more dying” is dashed by the subsequent admission of illness (“My love is as a fever”; 147.1) and confession that “Desire is death” (147.8). After the demonstration of illogicality and deceit (or self-deceit) in sonnet 146, it should be no surprise that the speaker declares himself “past cure” or that “now reason is past care” (147.9). The next phrase, “Frantic mad with evermore unrest” (147.10), is one way to define and recognize the hell that is predicted in sonnet 129. When death ≠ death, the referentiality of language, at least as this speaker uses it, has proven false; *verba* ≠ *verba*, and *verba* ≠ *res*. This lack of correspondence is exactly the state he describes in the next several sonnets, when he realizes he cannot distinguish between the truth of his senses (his eyes) and his judgment (his eyes, or affirmations of what is beautiful and what is not).

The focus of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* on human love and their omission of the divine is indicated by this metaphoric burial of religiosity within the “sinful earth” of the Dark Mistress sonnets, and by the way the Fair Youth sonnets are circumscribed by birth in the procreation series and by death in the abbreviated poem 126. The sophisticated sonnet 146 offers no real escape from the endless cycle of illness and desire presented in sonnets 147-154. The Fair Youth series begins and ends with the inevitability of

³⁵ In viewing the sonnet’s argument as sophisticated I differ from previous commentators (e.g. De Grazia, 1978: 388; 1980: 128-29). Edwards also understands this poem as religious and oriented heavenward (29), but as in the case of 129, he recognizes its “irrupting into the narrative” as necessary and the poem as appropriately positioned rather than out of place (31).

death; that inevitability provides one motivation for the procreation argument and is reiterated in 126, which in its short 12-line form suggests the cutting off of life that must inevitably come. The lack of any renewal of the procreation argument reinforces the disjunction between procreation, erotic love, and sexual consummation in the three sub-series and in the speaker's experience.

The preceding analysis identifies failure and eventual death as the signal outcome of each sub-series. Lack of biological procreation engenders poetic creation, but the love between the poet and the youth fails finally to be sustained and the speaker's "monument" in verse ends up entombing the name of the youth it claims to have been written to celebrate, except as an utterly non-specific "True Love." The Dark Mistress series concludes in moral darkness and confusion. To what extent might early readers have concurred in these characterizations? This has heretofore been an unanswerable question. Early reader response recognized as relating to the sonnets hardly goes beyond Francis Meres's praise in 1598 for Shakespeare's sonnets circulated among his private friends. However, in a 1605 collection of poems called *Wittes Pilgrimage*, John Davies of Hereford seems to have acknowledged and imitated Shakespeare's praise of a well-loved friend whom he describes as a second self. Davies also writes about different kinds of desire in his early seventeenth century philosophical text *Microcosmos*, and a good deal of his characterization resonates with aspects of Shakespeare's sonnets. Of course there is no reason to believe that early seventeenth century readers were univocal in their responses to amatory poetry. We already know that was not the case, and Davies himself, in his epigram to Shakespeare published in Davies' 1611 volume *The Scourge of Folly*, acknowledged that some

people “raile” against Shakespeare’s writings. But Davies himself was a defender of Shakespeare’s “raigning wit,” and in his philosophical and religious writings he appears a reliable source of conventional wisdom on subjects such as human passion. His sympathetic view of Shakespeare, his defense of poets, and his philosophical redaction in verse in *Microcosmos* all make him a very nearly ideal early reader of Shakespeare for anyone wanting to know what a contemporary might have thought of Shakespeare’s sonnets. I turn now from my own interpretation of Shakespeare’s sonnets to Davies’ early texts in order to provide an anchor for my interpretations in early reader response.

Chapter 4. Reader Response to Shakespeare's Sonnets

Despite the admiration reported of Shakespeare's "sugred" sonnets in the 1598 compendium of knowledge and wit *Palladis Tamia*,¹ Shakespeare's *Sonnets* are known in part for the relative lack of attention they seem to have received and the scarcity of copies made into commonplace books either before their publication in 1609 or after.² Partly because of this scarcity of evidence about how Shakespeare's sonnets were interpreted by his contemporaries, critics over the last two centuries, especially the last forty years or so, have proposed wildly divergent theories about the tone and meaning of Shakespeare's sonnets, especially those declaring passionate love for a young man. Much energy has been expended on the tenor of sonnet 20 in particular, and on the purport of the Fair Youth sonnets as a whole. In fact interpretation of this one sonnet has often been the precipitant through which conflicting accounts of the Fair Youth series have crystallized. Earlier criticism, from Malone through much of the twentieth century (reviewed by Stallybrass), usually argued that the defeat of the speaker by Nature's "addition" points to the speaker's heterosexuality. This tradition of criticism reads the ensuing sonnets on love between two men as an expression of Renaissance male friendship. On the other side, several more recent critics, from Martin Seymour-Smith through Joseph Pequigney and Bruce Smith, have claimed Shakespeare for, as W.H. Auden put it (while denying the assertion), the "Homintern" (Smith 1991: 231). For Pequigney and Smith, sonnet 20 represents an explicit declaration not only of

¹ *Palladis Tamia* 281.

² Duncan-Jones 1983: 154; Marotti 1990: 151.

homosexual desire, but of impending sexual consummation of that desire, and Smith finds in the Fair Youth sonnets an unprecedented, and short-lived, freedom of expression about a physically consummated homosexual relationship. The Dark Mistress sonnets have come in for their share of conflicting interpretations as well. De Grazia (1994) has argued that it was this set of sonnets, rather than the sonnets to a young man, which would have been viewed in Shakespeare's day as scandalous, and Traub (1999) has argued that with these sonnets Shakespeare attempted to displace the notion of non-normative sexual desire away from homosexual relationships and onto heterosexual ones.

I have found one early reader who belies many of these more recent critical views. Two texts by John Davies of Hereford, both published before the *Sonnets*' 1609 appearance in print, appear to pay homage to Shakespeare's Fair Youth sonnets. They refer to two relationships which Davies seems to characterize as similar to that depicted between poet and young man in the *Sonnets*, and Davies' characterization is clearly one of patronage and friendship rather than an active homosexual relationship. Davies' two texts also eulogize poetic practice by pointing to the renown a poet can bring to a patron. They do not address the kind of desire characterized in the Dark Mistress sonnets, but Davies' philosophical text *Microcosmos* does so at some length.

Of course Davies is only one reader, and there were no doubt a variety of responses to Shakespeare's sonnets. At one extreme were those who viewed any amatory subject with disdain. Spenser apparently felt compelled to defend himself from one such critic highly placed in Queen Elizabeth's government (the critic is generally assumed to be William Cecil, Lord Burghley; see Hamilton's note to *The*

Faerie Queene IV Proem 1.1). Perhaps there were also those who viewed the sonnets to a young man as savoring of prohibited sodomitical desires, and who would have condemned them for that reason. Others may have welcomed them for expressing the same desires, although Smith's scenario (1991) of Shakespeare organizing these sonnets to express the open secret of consummated homosexual love is less likely, as I will argue further below. Again, some readers may have read the Dark Mistress sonnets as scurrilous because they dealt with another sort of morally prohibited desire, despite the fact that extramarital sex on the part of men was an extremely common and to some degree a socially accepted phenomenon.³ However, among the range of conceivable possibilities, Davies' response seems likely to be relatively mainstream, and also a sympathetic interpretation of Shakespeare's sonnets by a fellow writer who seems to have been personally acquainted with Shakespeare. His views, both of the undeserved scorn poets receive and the fame they can offer to patrons, are certainly common.

Davies' mainstream qualities are evident in his *curriculum vitae*. He was a humanist who went to Oxford, worked as a tutor, and published works in the fashion of the moment, including a philosophical work in verse (*Microcosmos*, first printed 1603 and reprinted 1605), a volume of short poems that included a sonnet series (*Wittes Pilgrimage*, ca. 1605), a volume of epigrams (*The Scourge of Folly*, 1611), and other things such as devotional, theological, and occasional verse. Davies was also a teacher of handwriting; his work reprinted in the seventeenth century more than any other was

³ On the social acceptability of some extramarital sex by males, see A. Fletcher (1999).

The Writing Schoolemaster, or, The anatomie of Faire Writing.⁴ Davies' epigram to Shakespeare in *The Scourge of Folly* is well known though its interpretation is disputed; but what has not been previously noted is that parts of Davies' philosophical poem *Microcosmos* and a page-long poem to his "other selfe" Nicholas Deeble in *Wittes Pilgrimage* parallel, and appear to echo, Shakespeare's themes and eroticism in the Fair Youth sonnets.⁵ The latter poem even addresses someone named "Will" before it addresses "Nic."

The earlier of these texts is *Microcosmos* (published in 1603 and again in 1605). This philosophical work on the "little world" of man focuses more on the mind and its "motions" or passions and less on anatomy than later works by Helkiah Crooke (*Microkosmographia*, 1615) or Phineas Fletcher (*The Purple Island*, 1633). In the context of Shakespeare studies, *Microcosmos* is known for its section on "players" (actors), which in part scoffs at those who must speak using others' words but makes an exception for certain players who otherwise spend their time well, including two known for painting and poetry. A marginal note identifies "W.S." and "R.B." as the actors with these additional skills, initials which point toward William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, the latter chief actor for the Lord Chamberlain's Men and the King's Men and an amateur painter (Chambers 213). The passage on these exceptional

⁴ Davies' texts all contain frequent use of italics and capitalization. The rarity of typographical errors and the relatively consistent spelling, punctuation, use of italics and capitalization indicate that the typographical features of Davies' texts reflect authorial practices, and I do not modernize his text (in contrast to Booth's practice with Shakespeare's sonnets).

⁵ Deeble wrote three commendatory poems in the material prefatory to *Microcosmos*, one in Latin ("*Liber Lectores alloquitur*") and two in English ("To the Reader" and "To the Booke"), plus an eight-page congratulatory poem printed at the end of the same work (1603: fol. Oo1 -Pp1).

individuals echoes aspects of the theme of sonnet 111; Davies, like the sonnet speaker's "dear friend" (111.13), chides "fell *Fortune*" for refusing these two players "better *uses*" and says the stage "doth staine pure gentle *bloud*" (Davies *Microcosmos* 213).⁶ This concept is similar to the sonnet speaker's complaint about his nature being "subdued/ To what it works in, like the dyer's hand" because of Fortune (111.6-7).⁷

Microcosmos also includes a section on poetry and patronage in which Davies touts the power of poets to commemorate those they write about. This section also parallels some aspects of Shakespeare's sonnets. Davies claims that poets can bring life to those whom they spend their pen and ink upon, and frets about the undeserved disdain and lack of remuneration they receive from potential patrons. He discusses poets' use of "loose lines" or sexually suggestive language. In several ways, especially in his sexual punning, this commentary seems to fit Shakespeare's Fair Youth sonnets remarkably well, except for (from our distance, at least) his emphasis on naming.

Citing the commonplace "as poore as a Poet," he explains the poet's disdained state:

What *Guift* to *Greatnesse* can lesse welcome be
Then *Poems*, though by *Homer* pend perchaunce?
It *lookes* on them as if it could not see,
Or from them, as from *Snakes* away wil flee. (118)

Davies answers this query by pointing to the renown "*Greatnesse*" will achieve by sustaining writers with their patronage:

⁶ Davies also references these two actors by their initials in a marginal note to *The Civile Warres of Death and Fortune*. The line is: "Yet some she guerdond not, to their desarts" (Chambers 214). Line 1 of Sonnet 111 reads, "O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide."

⁷ Recently, MacDonald P. Jackson has noted these parallels in wording, and Brian Vickers (2007: 50-54) has suggested that Davies borrowed from Shakespeare's sonnets prior to their publication in 1609.

Though no *praise* for *penning* it thou gaine,
Yet *praise* thou gett'st, if thou that *Pen* sustaine
That can eternize thee in *Deathe's* despight,
And through *itselfe* thy grossest *humors* straine,
So make them pure (at least more pure in sight)
Which to *Posterity* may be a *light*. (118)

The poet, in this description, can improve upon the facts of a man by straining out “grossest humors” through his “pen,” a bawdier metaphor for the distilling process Shakespeare’s speaker uses (e.g. “my verse distills your truth,” 54.14).⁸ The resulting purified renown engendered by the pen’s liquid flow can provide a kind of afterlife—or take it away:

For, with a *droppe* of *ynke* the *Penns* have pow'r
Life to restore (being lost) or *life* bereave,
Who can devour *Time* that doth *all devoure*,
And go beyonde *Tyme*, in lesse than an *how're*. (119)

He goes on to give examples of ancient heroes such as Achilles and Aeneas whose names would have been lost without poetry, and explains:

For, without *memory*, *Names* need must vade;
And *memory* is ay the *Muses Trade*. (119)

Again he returns to patrons’ scorn, and his reply is where his section on “loose lines” appears:

But how can the *Daughters of Memory* [i.e. the Muses]
Remember *those* of whom they are dispis'd?
Who, though with loose *Lines* they are oft disguiz'd
Yet when they list, they make immortal *lynnes*
And, who soere by those *lines* are *surpriz'd*⁹

⁸ Its bawdiness is due to the prevailing view that semen was strained or purified blood, itself made up of mixed humors.

⁹ “Surpriz’d” seems to offer a pun on the sense “held worthy above all others,” based on the meaning of “sur” from French meaning over or above, and “prize” or “price” as value.

Are made eternal, *they*, and their *Assignes*,
Or wel, or ill, as *Poesy* defines. (119)

He thus defends amorous language by saying that poets, though they often disguise their meaning with “loose lines,” have the power not only to create long-lasting poetry, but to commemorate family lineages in “immortal *lynnes*.” Davies includes a marginal note to gloss “loose” as “lascivious, obscene, etc.” (The margins of *Microcosmos* are filled with classical quotes and notes, a significant number of them seemingly unnecessary; in *Microcosmos* Davies seldom leaves doubt as to his meaning.) Such “loose lines” have the same kind of procreative power lasting into future generations, Davies suggests, as producing actual heirs, virtually the same claim made in Shakespeare’s Fair Youth sub-series.¹⁰ In one of his superfluous marginal notes, Davies restates what he just said using monument and tomb imagery; and in another he explains the poet’s worry about libel: “Good and ill renowme are immortal and prevaile even over the remembrance of Tyme, which Poets have powre to give. When Poets commend mens names to monument they neede no Tombes” (119). “But Poets lie open to a mischief; for as Alchimists are suspected for coyning: So are Poets for libelling” (118).¹¹

Parenthetically it might be noted that Davies here raises one possibility for the absence of any clearly named addressee(s) in any of Shakespeare’s sonnets in their published form. Avoidance of offense to some particular individuals is not a motive I

¹⁰ “Lines” in Davies’ phrase may include a pun on “loins,” as noted by Booth (579) for Shakespeare’s sonnet 16.

¹¹ Although tomb and womb imagery is certainly not unique to Shakespeare, it occurs in Shakespeare’s sonnets.

want to advocate here, but if the Fair Youth sonnets represent in part a failed attempt at patronage, as Alvin Kernan (27) and Arthur Marotti (1990) have suggested—and as they themselves suggest in sonnets 124 and 125—then there seems no reason for the kind of commemorative naming Davies views as an important role for poetry. If Davies did have Shakespeare's sonnets partly in mind, he may not have been aware at this early date that the sonnets would eventually be published without any overt identification of addressee other than the printer's dedication to "Mr. W.H." If he did know of Shakespeare's failure, perhaps a refusal to name is indexed by his laconic reference to the ability of poets to "bereave" life as well as make it immortal.¹²

In his collection of verse and epigrams *Wittes Pilgrimage*, Davies himself uses "loose lines" in a poem to his "deere Friend Maister Nicholas Deeble." Remarkably, Davies in this poem seems to acknowledge a similarity between his own address to Deeble and some enterprise of Shakespeare's. Davies opens not by addressing Deeble, but by speaking to someone he calls "good Will," the phrase he uses later in his epigram to Shakespeare in *The Scourge of Folly*. The opening lines acknowledge Davies' inferiority to this "good Will" in poetic capability; in theme and in some phrasing the lines closely echo Iago's stumbling effort to invent verse at Desdemona's request (from *Othello*, known to have been performed in 1604, the year before the probable publication of *Wittes Pilgrimage*). Davies also begs Will's indulgence, perhaps with a glance at Shakespeare's reputedly quick wit:

¹² Davies himself so assiduously cultivated those with power that he included in *Microcosmos* not only dedicatory poems to the king, queen, and his native city, seventeen pages of poems at the latter end of his treatise to members of the clergy, the nobility (including two catch-all sonnets to any nobility of England and Scotland he might have inadvertently omitted), and various others.

I am about it, good *Will* giue me leave,
Stirre mee not faster than my *Witt* can moue.¹³

In the next line Davies refers to his main addressee in the third person, using doubling
wordplay (a combination of anadiplosis and anaphora) to call attention to the
identification he makes between himself and his friend:

What though Hee bee my selfe, my selfe must giue
My selfe, some time, to show my selfe my loue.

Neither this poem nor any surrounding ones provide any other clues to the identity of
the “good Will” addressed, and since Shakespeare was, even then, the best known
writer named “Will,” I suggest that the most obvious addressee should be inferred and
that the first few lines are indeed addressed to Shakespeare.¹⁴

Switching then to address “Nic,” he soon makes an obscene pun on the desire
and state of his “Pen,” which must drink ink in before it can flow out: “my Pen must
drinke, or shrink/ Sith it doth thirst so sore to write to Thee.”¹⁵ He goes on with

¹³ “Give me leave” is too common a phrase to be identifiably Shakespearean, but it occurs in some
52 instances in 27 plays. The lines from *Othello* are:

I am about it, but indeed my invention
Comes from my pate as birdlime does from frieze;
It plucks out brains and all. But my Muse labors,
And thus she is deliver'd. (II.i.125-28)

Wittes Pilgrimage has no date, but is conjectured by the STC to have been published about 1605. If so,
this would suggest that Davies was one of those who knew of or had seen Shakespeare's sugared sonnets
before their publication in 1609. Late in the seventeenth century John Aubrey in his *Brief Lives*
described Shakespeare as “of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit” (Schoenbaum 256).

¹⁴ That “Will” was the name Shakespeare was known by is noted by Thomas Heywood in *The
Hierarchie of the Blessed Angels* (published 1635): “Mellifluous *Shake-speare*, whose enchanting Quill/
Commanded Mirth or Passion, was but *Will*” (Chambers 219).

¹⁵ For bawdy puns on “pen” in Shakespeare see Hulme 133-43 and “pen” in Williams; such
punning can of course be found in other writers. A thematically similar wordplay in the context of male-
male friendship, not specifically about pens but about ejaculation, is cited by Bray. In that case Henry
Howard, whose grandniece Frances Howard was about to marry the very powerful royal favorite Robert
Carr, wrote a letter in which he compared any passing pain he might have felt from Carr's preceding
letter to “the pain which my Lady Frances shall feel when the sweet stream follows” (qu. Bray, 1990: 9).

another double entendre using a common euphemism for the sexual act, “to do,” and plays with the idea that too much haste makes for a soft (and doubled-over or double-tipped) pen: His ink in his now full pen “will make him do/ His busnesse kindlie”:

Now on . . .
But stay . . .
You are too hastie: soft, be rul’d, take leysure:
Now *Single*, well fedd, now, thy Motion’s Kind.
Beware thou double not: a single friend
Cannot endure such Trickes . . .

Such wordplay on the state of his instrument is certainly clumsy, but his friend Nic may have enjoyed this kind of humor, since Davies refers to his friend’s salty wit.

The piece of Shakespeare’s writing that best matches this poetic effort of Davies is the Fair Youth sonnets, with their claims of identity between the speaker and his “fair friend” (104.1). Like Shakespeare’s speaker, Davies appears to be lesser in social position (see below), but denies that he writes for any pecuniary goal:

I loue thee for thy Loue, lo, ther’s my Reason:
Nay, did’st thou hate mee (as thou maist in time)
Yet should I love Witts Salt, which Thee doth Season,
And, thy rare other Guifts; lo here’s my Rime.

In these lines Davies, like Shakespeare’s speaker (e.g., sonnets 89-90), anticipates a possibility that his addressee may not always love him, but he declares in a jocular way that he will love on anyway.

Davies goes on to say that he is paying homage to the greater man in words that include more phallic humor about his “prancing pen,” which dares approach only so near to his friend:

Thus farre, in *measure*, hath my prancing Pen
To Thee approcht: Pen, homage now, why for

So should it bee: for still the worser men
Must paie the better, reurence which they owe.¹⁶

There may be another witty echo of a Shakespearean text here: The line about Davies' prancing pen is identical in its opening and closing to the first line of the Chorus's epilogue in *Henry V* ("Thus far, with rough and all-unable pen"). The difference lies in the middle words; the Chorus expresses humility about the author's efforts, while Davies, an acknowledged master of penmanship, suggests his own facility.

Deeble wrote verse as well (including four commendatory poems in *Microcosmos*) and Davies even suggests their two pens might dance together:

Now Sir, if my rude Pen may fetch yours in,
After the manner of a Cushin-dance,
Leave when you will, and as you list begin,
Your Discords to mine breed no variance:
But, how so ere your Feete bee placed they shall
In Loue, jump with my Feete, Hands, Hart, and all.¹⁷

Acknowledging potential disagreements between the two of them, he declares his steadfastness and concludes by hoping to be a Pythias to Deeble's Damon (a relatively safe wish, since Pythias offered to sacrifice his own life for Damon, but both were pardoned):¹⁸

Bee thou my *Damon* then, and I will be
At least a *Pythias* (if not more) to Thee!

¹⁶ This phrasing is similar to a sixteenth century translation of Cicero's *De amicitia* concerning the obligation of the lower status man to pay reverence to his friend with higher status. See discussion of that text below.

¹⁷ A cushion dance involved one dancer taking a cushion to another not yet dancing, the other kneeling (and at least sometimes receiving a kiss), and then joining hands in the dance; this went on until all were dancing and then was reversed one by one until the dance was over.

¹⁸ See Hamilton's note to *FQ* IV.x.26 line 5.

The features of this poem and Davies' various commentaries on the value of poetry suggest that he admired the theme of loving friendship and emulated the "loose lines" he thought Shakespeare had written to his own "fair friend" (104.1). The closing couplet illustrates that Davies evokes a friendship like that of the legendary true lovers set apart in Spenser's Temple of Venus, discussed in Chapter 2. That Davies thought of such pairs as heroic in some sense is evident also in his second dedicatory poem in *Wittes Pilgrimage*. Following his first dedication to Philip Herbert, Earl of Montgomery, he includes another to Herbert together with his "most honorable other halfe," Sir James Hayes (A3^r). He describes this pair as "an undevied One" in a bond which (like marriage) is sanctioned by both divine and human authority:

Since God and King, and your mindes sympathie
Haue made you two, and undevied One,
(One, as of two loue makes an Vnity,)
I cannot giue a Guift to one alone:
For (will I, nill I) if to one I send
A token of my loue, or loues desire,
That sending to the other must extend,
Since loue doth make your Vnion so intire!

The scorning of pecuniary motive is an integral part of such friendship, in Davies' view:

Your Sovereigne (that with Judgments Sharpest Eye
Transpearceth all that is oppos'd to it)
Saw ye were made for loue of *Maiestie*
Sith carelesse were ye of more * benefit.

The asterisk refers to a marginal quotation from Seneca: "Hee is truly liberall and magnanimous which delights more in good renowne than money" (subsequent marginal quotations are given in footnotes). Davies goes on with his praise, claiming that the reason these two love each other is the same reason he provides in his poem to Deeble:

O they are worthy to be *Minions*
To God, and King that loue but for their loue:
Who, to them both, and their dominions,
Yield fruites of sweete *Affectes* for bothes behoue.

Men with such power are more likely to hurt others than benefit them (a theme pursued in Shakespeare's sonnet 94), but these exercise self-control and contend who will do the greater good:¹⁹

No *Sunne* ere saw two Faurites of a King
(For, for the most part, such hurt Great, and smalle)
More deere to al for their Place mannaging,
Than your (deere Paire) prest to do good to all!
In loue contending who, for *Vertues* sake,
(O blessed Strife, excelling *Vnity*!)
Shall do most good, and most * men bounden make
To you, to whom the World it selfe would tye:²⁰

This conceit of the World tying itself to the Unity of Herbert-Hayes provides a reduplication of the marital union concept though with no particular carnal associations. Davies goes on to describe how such virtuous contending will not only bring them fame, but give them a charmed existence:

Hold on rare Spirites; this emulation
Is such as, with fine force, your fames aduance
Beyond the compasse of Confusion,
And reach of *Envy*, *Sclander*, and *Mischance*.

Davies emphasizes again the lack of self-serving quality he sees in this relationship:

O strive you still to show the World yee scorne
To turne such publicke grace to priuate * gain:

¹⁹ See Schoenfeldt for an analysis of control of affect signaled by sonnet 94.

²⁰ This conceit of the whole world wanting to be the wife of this "Vnity" is similar to one in Shakespeare's sonnet 9, in which, if the youth fails to have children, "The world will be thy widow and still weep." The marginal note is: "That bounty and magnificence which stands in travaile & diligence is both more honest and also spreades further, & is able to profit more. Cicero."

(As you were for your selues * onely borne)
Sith all, but *Vertue*, is as vile as vayne.²¹

Davies closes by pledging to “legend” their lives and place them near Castor and Pollux “in the Heau’nly Spheare.” He signs himself “The sincere louer of your heroicall Vertues.”

The hold such friendships had as an ideal in the English Renaissance is shown by Alan Bray in his book *The Friend*, which traces the evidence for vowed friendships from the eleventh century to a few vestiges in the nineteenth century. The signs and seals of friendship he finds include tombs of “wedded brothers” or “sworn” comrades-in-arms who in at least some cases underwent ceremonies similar to marriage: plighting troth at the church door, affirming the bond by taking the Eucharist, and sharing a single tomb, with tomb images and heraldry which correspond to those of wedded husband and wife.²² Such relationships, like those of god-parentage, fosterage, and the exchange of children for education and service among households, brought the pledged friends within the compass of kinship with its benefits and its obligations (before the eighteenth century, “friends” was a term that included one’s relatives). The bonds of such friendships were conceived as extending beyond the grave (2003: 74); among the living, such relationships and the rhetoric of disinterested friendship provided one means of negotiating the dangers of power, risks to honor, and ethical challenges

²¹ Davies’ marginal notes are: “As the touch-stone trieth gold, so gold trieth men. Plato.” “He is a vicious person, saith St. Augustine, that attendeth onely his owne profit.”

²² The historical traces of such friendships between women and among the lower classes are much rarer than those for males from the upper classes, but Bray does find some evidence among these other groups. The final friendship and shared grave Bray considers is that of Cardinal John Henry Newman and his friend Ambrose St. John (2003: 290-305). The term “wedded brothers” derives from “wed” meaning pledge.

inherent in traditional societies. Whether or to what extent these relationships were sexual is largely unavailable in the historical record (though not entirely, and Bray discusses some instances of what seem to have been sexual relationships), but as Bray showed in his previous study *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, the charge of “sodomy” was often more a political than a sexual allegation.²³ Bray finds evidence of a greater diversity among the practices of friendship than can be explained by any single theory of how such relationships actually functioned (2003: 36-41).

This concept of pledged friendship is what Davies refers to in his dedicatory poem to Herbert and Hayes and in his poem to his friend Nicholas Deeble. It appears to be the concept he thought Shakespeare’s sonnets referenced. Such a context does not exclude erotic language; it may even enable such language as safely amusing—as is clearly the case in Davies’ poem to Deeble—unless the relationship was under suspicion for some other reason such as too great a disparity in class.

The section of *Microcosmos* on various kinds of love and affection (in the section on motions of the soul) offers an explanation of Davies’ mixing of erotic and friendship themes in his poem to Nicholas Deeble. Davies offers a scheme considerably more complicated than the traditional Aristotelian distinction between *philia*, love between equals, and *eros*, love between unequals in which each partner fulfills a need felt by the other—the distinction to which Bruce Smith points in

²³ The meaning of the term sodomy was broader than it is today; see Bray (1995). Charges of sodomy were brought for purposes of religious propaganda, suspected treason or sedition, or in cases when a higher status man kept a lower class man as his bedfellow. The class distinction holds for the accusations about Sir Francis Bacon, who kept a serving man rather than a gentleman as his bedfellow, and in an earlier period for King Edward II, whose favors to the non-noble Piers Gaveston evoked anger and jealousy among the English nobility.

dismissing loving friendship as the subject of the Fair Youth sonnets (249). Davies draws on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, but also on Cicero's *De amicitia* and on Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. He describes love as lawless, in the sense that it knows no boundaries, and lists the "Furie Amatoriall" as one of four kinds of furies (the other three being prophetic, mystical, and poetical—a catalogue similar to Theseus's linking of the lunatic, the lover, and the poet as "of imagination all compact" in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* V.i.8, though Davies does not include the madman). Davies then categorizes love in various ways: the kind of beauty or goodness which arouses love, the ends of love (pleasure, utility or commodity, virtues such as justice and prudence), love of God versus love of other men. He praises love's ability to "transubstantiate" the mind: "*Sinners* may turn *Seraphins* by Love" (68). True love, he says, is unselfish love—or if the lover loves himself, he does so because he resides in his beloved, due to their exchange of hearts (notions that appears several times in Shakespeare's Fair Youth sonnets, as discussed in Chapter 3, p. 154). "Then *Loue* is pure, & at high'st *pitch* besides." Yet such love is rare:

But such high *Raptures* are too rarely found,
 In fraile *humanity*, that on *Earth* bides;
 Though *loue* the *Soule* therefore perhaps may wound
 Yet stil t'wil be to the [thy?] owne *Body* bound." (69)

Here, perhaps, lies Davies' explanation of the lasciviousness of even loving friendship. The earth-born poet's amatory fury knows no bounds, and his desire is such that each kind of "pen" is inextricably bound to the other. Even love of God, says Davies, is only "in *desire*" and imperfect unless and until perfected by God, and produces a combination of pleasure and pain:

Pleasant, in that it settis the *soule* on *fire*
With *loue* so good; and *paine* it breeds again,
For that it hath not, what it would have fain. (69)

This kind of see-sawing between desire and satisfaction, described explicitly in sonnet 75 (“thus do I pine and surfeit day by day”), is referred to several times in the Fair Youth sonnets (e.g. also 52, 118). Davies’ characterization shows that such intensity and oscillation, sometimes taken as a clear sign of sexual desire, could also signify relationships that were not categorized as sexual.

The same is true of Davies’ use of the concept of exchanged hearts. The exchange of hearts in Shakespeare’s sonnet 22 has been read by Booth and Bruce Smith, among others, as echoing the “one flesh” scripture from the marriage service. But Davies uses these same conceits in reference to other kinds of love, including intimate friendship and divine love. In *Microcosmos*, placing God in the position of both the sonnet lady and the sonneteer wounded by Love’s darts, he describes sinners “wounding with *loue-shaftes Gods hart*” so that each, God and the sinner, is moved by the other “As twixt them al there were no *Hart* but *one*” (68). Just as mortal lovers have their images engraved in each others’ hearts, “So, in *Gods Hart* w’are graven by *Loves Arte*,/ And in our harts *Loue* doth his *forme* ingraue” (68). According to Davies, any true love works in this fashion, because

The *ende* or scope of *loue* is to *vnite*;
The faster therefore it conglomerates
Two harts, or of them makes an *vnion* right,
So much the more her *vertue* shee elates,
And perfectlie her *kinde* effectuates. (69)

The only qualifier is that man is such a “*Chaos* of extreame *Defect*” that his love of God is limited to desire, although he “longs (perhapps) to love with al effect,/ That

God and *he* might thereby be *intire*" (69). But this deficiency is supplemented by God's "boundlesse *loue*." The result is that man's love becomes a flame that melts "the *marrow* of the *Spr'ite*/ Making it liquid" so as to remold it in mercy's form, and so that it is "made *intire* with * *L O V E*, true *loues* delight" (69). The bawdiness of loving "with al effect" ("al" being a pun on "awl" or penis, and the "effect" being a unity of souls analogous to sexual conjunction) extends into the lines allying religious ecstasy with sexual climax, both brought about by heat and producing on the one hand a seminal, and on the other a spiritual, effluent. While the modern view is that these two categories are entirely distinct, one being material and the other immaterial, such was not the case in Davies' day. Male seminal fluid was believed to have a powerful immaterial force which shaped the growing fetus. And spirit, while not visible to the human eye, was often thought to have some sort of substance, since it was theorized to be the factor which interconnected mind and body, serving as a medium of communication between the two.²⁴

In Davies' characterization of kinds of desire, we do not see a dichotomy between erotic love on the one hand, a relationship based on disparity and need, versus friendship on the other, a relation based on similarity. This supposed duality has been the criterion by which critics over the last two centuries have evaluated the Fair Youth sonnets. But such a simple dichotomy does not even appear in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, the ancient source for these concepts. Aristotle says that similarity in virtue is more likely to result in enduring friendships, but he also discusses "proportion" in

²⁴ Davies gives an overview of philosophical and medical thought on the soul, but he does not specifically mention theories of spirit; a brief discussion appears in Booth (441-42).

friendships when one person is superior to another (Book viii, 1158b and 1159a-b). In the words of a mid-sixteenth century English version, “the greater man ought to geue unto the lesse winnyng [i.e. favors], and the lesse ought to geue unto the greater honor and reuerence. And this ought to bee accordyng to the deseruyng of them bothe: in these waies is conserued frendeship” (12^r). A modern edition explains: “when the affection is in accordance with merit, then a kind of equality results, which is of course thought to be a mark of friendship” (152). And further, “when it happens that people love in accordance with merit, they are lasting friends and their friendship lasts. It is in this way that unequals as well can best be friends, since they can thus be equalized” (153). It is this kind of just proportion that Davies refers to in his poem to Nicholas Deeble, when he presents himself as lesser in some way (probably social status).

The same concept of proportionality between socially disparate friends appears in Cicero’s book on friendship, *De amicitia*. Putting Aristotle’s theory into the practical world of Roman society, Cicero describes a truly gracious friend as overlooking the lower social status of his friends. In the words of a mid-sixteenth century English translation, the speaker in Cicero’s dialogue praises Scipio for never putting “hym selfe foorth before Philus, before Rutilius, before Mummius, or any of his baser freendes” (46).²⁵ Rounding out this portrait of disparity in friendships are the storied friendships from classical and biblical tradition. These consist of socially disparate pairs, as a glance at Spenser’s examples in the Temple of Venus episode, such as David and Jonathan, and Theseus and Pirithous, show (*FQ* IV.x.27). Such plighted

²⁵ Bruce Smith again overlooks friendship between unequals in his *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (2000: 61).

friendship overcomes or provides a respite from social inequalities or other potentially distancing characteristics. The similarity between such friendship and erotic desire is noted by Aristotle's sixteenth-century English translator, who describes such friendship as an intense and exclusive personal relation: "There can be but one verteous [sic] frend. As a man can haue but one louer that he loueth intierly." He explains, "That loue is of aboundaunce, the whiche is but to one alone" (18^r). The same view is expressed by Montaigne in his essay "Of Friendship": "For, this perfect amity I speake of, is indivisible: each man doth so wholly give himself unto his friend, that he hath nothing left him to divide else-where" (1603 Florio translation, 94).

The Fair Youth sonnets do not adhere fully to this model of friendship. The exclusivity and fabled permanence of such a relationship between "virtuous" friends is deeply challenged in the course of the sub-series. Even so, there remain elements that Davies and others, whether or not they were referring to these sonnets, would identify as "heroic." The claim to fight against Time for the youth's life, for example, first made in sonnets 15 and 19, is renewed periodically. Even though transferred to the literary domain from the traditional martial context of Spenser's legendary lovers, the claims of these sonnets can be characterized as "Braue thoughts and noble deedes" (*FQ* IV.x.26). Sonnet 63, as Fowler (176) points out, is the climacteric number which traditionally marked the end of a lifetime; hence in 63 (and 65, discussed in Chapter 3) the speaker describes his attempt to defeat the effects of time:

His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green. (63.13-14)

The adjective "green" identifies the youth with the floral world of nature to which the

poet repeatedly links him.

Davies' emphasis on the heroic and sacrificing qualities of such "unions" offers further insight into a thematic thread of the Fair Youth sonnets that has received little direct critical commentary. Beyond the speaker's efforts to fight Time's scythe, there are other respects in which some of the Fair Youth sonnets portray heroic love that Davies would have identified as a mark of virtue. Fidelity was a highly esteemed virtue, and Davies values love for its own or for virtue's sake over that for gain. We can see the sonnet speaker voicing his adherence to this ideal repeatedly over the course of the sub-series. In the face of accumulating obstacles, the speaker vows repeatedly to remain true, and these vows grow more insistent as the sub-series draws to a close.

For example, despite being "more weak in seeming," the poet pledges that his love not only remains true, but is "strengthened" (102.1). Countering apparent accusations of infidelity from the youth in sonnets 109, 110, and 117, the speaker responds in sonnet 116 that *he* will not "to the marriage of true minds/ Admit impediments," although apparently the youth is doing just that (116.1-2).²⁶ Like the true lovers near the Temple of Venus, he will bear his love toward the youth "even to the edge of doom" (Doomsday, the Day of Judgment; 116.12). Commentators have observed that this vow is taken from the marriage sacrament, like some other terms in this sonnet; but Bray's study of friendship shows that exactly the same kind of vow pertained to some of the couples he examines.²⁷ In sonnet 123, Shakespeare's speaker

²⁶ Vendler (490) is the only critic, so far as I know, to note the adversarial quality of this sonnet.

²⁷ Some were buried together, even facing each other, in the apparent hope that when they arose from the grave on Doomsday, the loved one would be the first thing they beheld (Bray 2003: 296).

emphatically claims that Time will not be able to claim him as altered in his love:

No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change,
.....
This I do vow and this shall ever be:
I will be true despite thy scythe and thee. (123.1, 13-14)

These heroic claims to fidelity are carried even further in the two penultimate sonnets of the sub-series, 124 and 125. As John Klause has shown, sonnet 124 incorporates both the language and political context of Robert Southwell's 1591 manuscript *An Humble Supplication to Her Majestie*, which protested the "unjust treatment of Catholic clergy and laity under the regime's penal laws" (225). The speaker aligns himself, in effect, with the English Catholics accused of treason, imprisoned, and sometimes executed for holding to their faith. In Klause's words, the pamphlet describes these Catholics as firmly against "the government's 'Pollicy,' formulated by heretics" (i.e. Protestants, whom the pamphlet calls Apostata; 229-30). They may be regarded by scoffers as "'God Almightyes fooles,'" but they are politic "in honesty" rather than "guilty of 'huge Treason'" (230). Thus, in the sonnet, the speaker's love for the youth is no "child of state," to be "unfathered" as "fortune's bastards" (124.1-2) (alternately the fate of both Mary and Elizabeth).²⁸ Instead, the speaker's love for the youth stands against "Policy, that heretic"; it

. . . all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with show'rs. (124.11-12)

To witness his testimony, the speaker calls on the "fools of time,/ Which die for

²⁸ The pamphlet says Catholics are blamed for "any displeasing accidents" and made "'Fathers . . . of [such] infamous orphans," when they are not themselves responsible (Southwell 77; Klause 229). Officers of the state also abuse their power: "displanting of our offspring [they] adopt themselves to be heirs of our lands" (Southwell 82).

goodness,” though they have lived for “crime” or treason. These witnesses are like the Catholics in Southwell’s text, as defined by the Queen’s proclamation. In this sonnet, Shakespeare’s speaker declares himself immovable and apart from any expediencies of “th’inviting time,” which prompts first one policy and then another for some “short-numb’red hours” (124.8, 10). Like the Catholic martyrs, he will remain constant to the bitter end.

Sonnet 125 likewise declares the speaker in possession of a “true soul” (125.13). This time he is responding to the accusations of a “suborned informer” who claims that his love is not true, but merely a search for favor. In Davies’ terms, the speaker loves not for “honesty” but “profit,” identified in *Microcosmos* along with pleasure as one of the two lesser causes of love. The speaker’s defense against such accusations refers back to sonnet 25 and some of its terms (favor, honor, fortune) which identify the speaker as barred from the sphere of public honor:

Let those who are in favor with their stars
Of public honor and proud titles boast,
Whilst I whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlooked for joy in that I honor most. (25.1-4)

The next two quatrains recount examples of those who have gained such favor only to lose it again, and in the couplet their loss is contrasted with the speaker’s secure state:

Great princes’ favorites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigold at the sun’s eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famousèd for fight,
After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honor razèd quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled:
Then happy I that love and am beloved,
Where I may not remove, nor be removed. (25.5-14)

The later sonnets 116, 124, and 125 belie the speaker's early faith that he is excepted from this fickle realm. It is exactly such removal that sonnet 116 foresees, while protesting that such change is not part of a love entailing the "marriage of true minds." In sonnet 125, the speaker claims he cares nothing for being in the position of a "great prince's favorite," who might enjoy the honor of helping to carry the canopy of state:

Were't aught to me I bore the canopy,
With my extern the outward honoring,
Or laid great bases for eternity,
Which proves more short than waste or ruining? (125.1-4)

The speaker protests that he has not loved for the profit or "favor" the youth can bestow:

Have I not seen dwellers on form and favor
Lose all and more by paying too much rent,
For compound sweet forgoing simple savor,
Pitiful thrivers, in their gazing spent? (125.5-8)

This description of "dwellers" who pay out more than they can afford in order to seek favor from a powerful dignitary suggests a situation like that at Elizabeth's court, where proper form at times demanded considerable living expense and extravagant gifts to the monarch. Her return favors, however, often consisted of allowing her courtiers to bask in her presence or receive her at their estates during her summer progresses through her realm, which essentially made them bear part of the costs of her court themselves. Relatively few of such "thrivers" received more in financial benefit than they spent—hence their "pitiful" and "spent" condition.

In the context of the preceding praise and blame in the Fair Youth sonnets, it becomes clear that this sonnet rebuts an accusation against the speaker: that he has used the youth's love with an eye to his own advantage. In effect, the sonnet claims that the

speaker has not crossed the thin line separating merited praise of the youth from self-seeking flattery. One difficulty inherent in toeing this line is evident in the context of proportionate friendship described by Aristotle's sixteenth-century translator. The receipt of "winning" or gifts of value must never seem the cause of the relationship but the result; the economic aspect of the relationship is kept hidden. The danger is that considerations of commodity will contaminate the culture of gift-giving (an encroachment which was indeed occurring with the rapid expansion of market economies and the concomitant reduction in manorial traditions of hospitality). The "reverence" owed by Shakespeare's speaker to the youth is described two ways in sonnet 125: as duty or obsequies, and as a quasi-religious "oblation" or offering:

No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art
But mutual render, only me for thee. (125.9-12)

This quatrain suggests that the speaker is not obsequious in the sense of fawning, for either public view or gain; rather he is obsequious or pays his respects only to the inner man, the heart, of the youth. The speaker seeks the proportionate love and duty which equalizes unequals, so that the result is "mutual render" of heart and persons—a free, and freely given, gift of self. His stance here is heroic in its determination to keep faith, despite the accusations of the informer, who is ordered to depart in the couplet:

Hence, thou suborned informer! A true soul
When most impeached stands least in thy control. (125.13-14)

Like the "fools of time" in the preceding sonnet, the speaker claims that he remains a "true soul" and beyond the reach of his accuser.

Davies' response as a reader (and writer) to some of Shakespeare's sonnets thus

includes both characterizing the special love of two “unified” friends as heroic, and emulating in “loose lines” Shakespeare’s claims for perpetuating life by paying poetic tribute. Davies’ poem to Nicholas Deeble, read in the context of his defense of poets in *Microcosmos* and his dedicatory poem to Herbert and Hayes, can be added to other published works which have been cited as alluding to Shakespeare’s sonnets. An additional such work, which also appears to reference Shakespeare’s sonnets, is Davies’ epigram to Shakespeare in *The Scourge of Folly*, published two years after *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* (this epigram is cited in Chambers, 214). In his poem “To our English Terence, Mr. Will: Shake-speare,” Davies records two different views of Shakespeare. He opposes detractors “rayling” on the one hand, to praise that refers to a possible friendship with a “king” had Shakespeare not held the socially inferior position of theater actor (played “Kingly parts in sport”):

Some say (good *Will*) which I, in sport, do sing,
 Had’st thou not plaid some Kingly parts in sport,
 Thou hadst bin a companion for a *King*;
 And, beene a King among the meaner sort.

This part of the epigram has been read as pertaining to the Fair Youth sonnets by Leslie Hotson.²⁹

Hotson’s interpretation of Davies’ epigram has usually been either ignored or dismissed, for example with a claim that “companion for a king” simply described

²⁹ See Hotson’s *Master W. H.*, amplified by *Shakespeare by Hilliard*. Hotson’s attempt to date the completion of the sonnets to about 1589 or 1590 was quickly dismissed, a dismissal since justified by more recent work that dates the sonnets—either their composition or extensive revision—to the late 1590s and after (see Hieatt et al., 1991, and Foster). However, Hotson’s conjectures about contemporary references to a heroic poet in the works of Sir John Davies (a stanza in *Orchestra*, 1596, praising a “Companion” poet) and Spenser (in *Colin Clout’s Come Home Againe*, 1595), about a poet whose name and theme are both heroical, fit the “Friend” ideal explored by Alan Bray, and could be right after all, with the caveat that Shakespeare must have revised some (and perhaps composed others) of his Fair Youth sonnets during and after the late 1590s.

Shakespeare's writing as fit for the most discriminating ears—although this does not explain who might be referenced by the “meaner sort.” Davies surely does not refer to his lauded category of poets by labeling them as average Joes. Moreover, the situation is counterfactual; Shakespeare did not succeed in being “companion for a *King*” or “King among the meaner sort.” These lines therefore cannot be praise of Shakespeare as a playwright. Casting further doubt on the view that this description refers to Shakespeare's writing in any way is the fact that Davies' epigrams to other writers focus first on personal qualities, not qualities of authorship. The epigram to Ben Jonson (no. 156), for instance, characterizes him as having a soul ulcerated by envy, and John Donne (no. 97) is described as fastidious in his poetic tastes; only secondarily are their writings praised. The epigram to Samuel Daniel (no. 155) similarly mentions his patronage by the court (“I heare thy *Muse* in *Court* doth travell now”). When Davies wants to criticize someone more severely, he lightly veils the addressee under a Latin name.³⁰ In view of this focus on personal issues, Hotson's position that Davies' epigram refers to a story circulating (“some say”) about the “companion” relationship in the Fair Youth sonnets makes more sense than other interpretations.³¹

The second part of Davies' epigram to Shakespeare in *The Scourge of Folly* refers to criticism of Shakespeare, and opens with a view contrary to that expressed before:

³⁰ Thus when Davies airs his resentment at Joshua Sylvester for not reciprocating with a laudatory poem for the front matter of a publication (Davies wrote one for Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas's *Divine Weeks*), he addresses him as Silvarius (no. 12)

³¹ In Hotson's view, the kind of “King” Shakespeare might have been a “companion” to was a Christmas Revels mock prince, and he identifies one from Gray's Inn. What I pursue here is not Hotson's particular identification, but Davies' attitude toward the companion theme.

Some others raile; but, raile as they thinke fit;
Thou hast no rayling, but, a raigning Wit: (77)

Davies' conclusion defends Shakespeare by saying that he "sows honesty."

*And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reape;
So, to increase their Stocke, which they do keepe. (77)*

In *Microcosmos*, he glosses "honesty" as the highest of three causes of love. The "honest" cause rouses true love based on virtues of "*Justice and Prudence*" (68). The term "honesty" also commonly meant fidelity, especially sexual fidelity as applied to women. In its agricultural metaphors the closing couplet suggests sexual themes, and in particular echoes the procreation theme. These lines of the epigram may in part defend Shakespeare's work in the theater, which was often accused of fostering lewdness (although elsewhere Davies is a critic of theater), but it is not clear to what aspect of theater the metaphor of increase in stock would apply. Perhaps Davies is defending Shakespeare's theater work by claiming it fosters an increase in virtue among spectators. He expresses such a view in *The Civile Warres of Death and Fortune* (1605), but there he uses the traditional argument that witnessing the fall of those raised by Fortune provides "Mirrors . . . / Wherin men saw their faults, thogh ne'r so small" (Chambers 214). The breeding metaphor in Davies' epigram is considerably more apropos to Shakespeare's sonnets, with their themes of procreation and poetic propagation. The metaphor of sowing honesty is particularly apt as a defense of the Dark Mistress sonnets, for if the stage could show men's faults through negative exemplum, the Dark Mistress sonnets similarly display the bitter fruits of sexual infidelity. In the context of this set of sonnets, the concept of sowing honesty is appropriate as a metaphor for promoting virtuous living and thereby acquiring a good

reputation, and in a literal sense as encouraging marital procreation, which would “*increase their Stocke*” via legitimate children (both these senses may operate in Davies’ epitaph on his first wife, which says she had “the vertue/ of the worthiest Wife,” through which “she more acquir’d;/ So her bright stocke renown’d”; Grosart I xvi). For these reasons it seems more likely that Davies is defending some of Shakespeare’s non-dramatic poetry rather than his plays. *The Rape of Lucrece* deals with the dire consequences of illicit sex and could be included in Davies’ characterization (not *Venus and Adonis*, since Davies criticizes that poem later in the same volume as lines “attired in . . . bawdy Geare”).³² Both of Shakespeare’s narrative poems had been reprinted in the seventeenth century. The sonnets had been published more recently, however, and response to them would have been more timely. As to why Shakespeare’s non-dramatic poetry might need defending, all his published work was amatory in theme, and as I noted previously, love poetry was under continuous criticism. Davies would have been acutely aware of such criticism. Like many others, he made light of his own efforts in this vein. In an introductory poem to *Wittes Pilgrimage* titled “Of my selfe,” he employs many lines of verse to accuse himself of lightness and lewdness (A4^V-B1^I). Davies’ reference to two disparate views of Shakespeare in the 1611 epigram are certainly in keeping with Davies’ own conflicting expressions of the value of love poetry, which reflected and participated in a widespread controversy. I have already noted briefly Spenser’s defense of his romance themes in *The Faerie Queene* in the Proem to Book IV. Near the end of the 1596

³² In “Paper Complaint,” the final poem in *The Scourge of Folly* (Vickers 2007: 50).

edition of *The Faerie Queene*, he also defends himself from “a mighty Peres [Peer’s] displeasure” (VI.xii.41). Resistance to such criticism is evident also in Colin’s instructions to Sir Calidore (in the Mt. Acidale episode of Book VI, the Book of Courtesy) on how to interpret the naked ladies dancing to Colin’s music. Sir Calidore, prone to lewd interpretations, is informed that they are Venus’s attendant Graces, and that they are naked because they are “without guile/ Or false dissemblance.” Unlike Sir Calidore, who stares greedily from the “couert of the wood” (VI.x.11), the Graces are “Simple and true” and “from couert malice free” (VI.x.23).³³ Since Colin was Spenser’s pastoral persona, these instructions constitute a defense of amatory and pastoral themes and an attempt to protect his text from hostile interpretations. When read with a mind inclined toward focusing on lewd themes, as the “mighty Pere” seems to have done, the grace and beauty of love poetry vanishes. Spenser, in contrast, defends love as the root of “all honor and all vertue” (IV *Proem* 2.6).³⁴

Davies in his own fashion appears in his epigram to be defending Shakespeare against similar hostile interpretations. The language about increase and the theme of sexual “honesty” coincides with the concepts at the beginning and end of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets*, the positions holding the greatest rhetorical power. The Dark Mistress sonnets, addressed to a promiscuous woman by a lover who confesses himself

³³ Spenser’s representation fits a late fifteenth and sixteenth century iconographical tradition which employed naked female figures to depict the unsullied purity of allegorical figures associated with God’s plan and Christian virtues. Examples from Ripa’s *Iconologica* include *Felicità Eterna*, *Gratia*, *Predestinatione*, *Resurrectione*, and *Sapienza* (Park 62).

³⁴ The episode on Mt. Acidale has other ramifications as well, e.g. for poetry in the public or epic mode versus the private or amatory sphere. See e.g. the discussions of the Mount Acidale episode in Klein (190), Helgersen (89-96), and Neuse (350).

to have also broken his own bed-vow, are certainly about *unchastity* rather than chastity, and it is easy to imagine that they could have been viewed as *promoting* unchastity. Surely if someone with reading tastes like those of Spenser's "mighty Pere" perused the *Sonnets*, he would have found them more troubling than Books I-III of *The Faerie Queene*.

The sort of valuable message Davies' kind of reader might have reaped from the Dark Mistress sonnets can be gathered from his sections in *Microcosmos* on the senses, beauty, will, pleasures, and lust. A number of passages read as a virtual gloss on the Dark Mistress sonnets—almost as if he had Shakespeare's sonnets on his desk as he was writing (or perhaps vice versa). Davies describes the results of engaging in what he terms base pleasures:

. . . the more base and brutish *pleasures* bee,
The more's the paine in their accomplishment. (44)

He describes the effects of lust on the conscience:

No *Conscience* * sear'd with *Lust's* Soul-scorching fire,
But feels the *Lawes* sharpe-burning *Iron* to send
An hell of *paine*. (44)

The asterisk refers to the "Decalogue"; Davies seems to imagine the guilt arising from breaking the Ten Commandments as a branding iron or torture instrument. He takes the traditional Augustinian view that corporeal pleasures lead to excess, subverting "our All" (44), and the pun Booth in his sonnet commentary discusses for "all," "awl" or penis, is a possible reading here. Such pleasures, Davies seems to be saying, subvert the man by subverting manliness, the same lesson that Spenser teaches in his image of the lax youth Verdant drowsing in Acrasia's lap in the Bower of Bliss. For a reader

like Davies, the picture of self-loathing at the conclusion of the Dark Mistress sonnets would paint a vivid picture of behavior to be avoided. These sonnets demonstrate the “sorrow” that Davies thought remains as a “scourge” after sin, making the soul detest sin (43), and their author could certainly be credited with sowing honesty as a result.

Davies’ text includes wording which mirrors language and ideas in some of the Dark Mistress sonnets, as well as the Fair Youth sonnets. In a later section on love of God and the (neoplatonic) ladder of love, from things “corporall” through “fancie” and eventually to contemplation, Davies describes what *should* cause love, and then what happens if one substitutes love of lesser things.³⁵ “*Beauty*,” he says, is “an vrgent cause of *Loue*,” and

If so, wee should embrace the fairest *Faire*
With loue that should be farre all *loue* aboue,
Yea, die for loue, that *Loue* might *life* repaire,
And glorifie the same as *Beauties Heire*. (65)

These lines accord with the rationale for reproduction of beauty in sonnet 1 of the Fair Youth series, with its regard for beauty’s “tender heir” bearing the likeness of its parent. Davies’ call to “die for loue” seems to refer to the “little death” of orgasm with its expelling of “spirit.” Davies goes on to describe how such “sov’raigne *Beauty*” should get all the credit for any inferior, mortal beauty, because this true beauty imbues or “staines” mortal beauty with a “sparke” of itself (as the sun stains the moon). But his admonition that mortal beauty should not glory in itself links this inferior “hue” with disparagement of false or cosmetic beauty like that in sonnet 127,

³⁵ Davies’ comment on the downward reversal of the ladder of love applies to Sidney’s sonnet 25: “But to descend by the selfe same *gradation*,/ And there to rest, descendeth to *damnation*” (65).

the *totum* sonnet of the Dark Mistress series:

See wee an hue that mortall *beauty* stains
(As doth the Sunne the *Moone* by his repaire)
This sov'raigne *Beauty* all the glorie gaines,
Sith but a sparke thereof the same sustaines.

Then *Beauty* blush to glorie in thy *Blaze*,
And much more blush to blaze thy *glorie vaine*
With *coulors* fresh, to make fraile *eies* to gaze
.....
The *best* is too too *bad*, and bad's the *Best*,
That without * *coulor* [i.e. reason] do their *face* ingraine.³⁶ (65)

This result of cosmetic beauty, this reversal of *bad* and *best*, parallels the way cosmetic beauty in sonnet 127 fairs the foul. It is as if Shakespeare strained Davies' words on beauty and its shadows—heirs, hues, stains of true beauty and false cosmetic beauty—into two logical threads, one into the Fair Youth exordium and one into the Dark Mistress exordium. Succeeding stanzas mention that women's beauty, "Being often tempted, breedes suspition," then describe how fashionable courtship (of a married woman) can pass the time so pleasantly as to make the hours "chime":

Who would not stil to here [hear] the same stil sitt,
Although a *man* transformed were by it?
O tis a iolly matter to give eare,
Nay to give leaue to Musicke in her fitt: (66)

Davies foresees a man transformed into a beast by such "Musicke"; Shakespeare's speaker in sonnet 128 wishes to be turned into something even lower on the scale of nature—dead wood. Such incitement carries a man away with a "*Fury Amatoriall*":

Call we it *Love* or *Lust*, it is well known
It hath the *force* of both, the *Heart* to move: (66)

³⁶ Davies' asterisk refers to this marginal note: "Without coulour of Reason."

Davies lists a great number of examples from classical literature and lore to show that “strange are th’ effects of *Lust*” (66). After describing the more “humane” affects or emotions (love, on which depend favor, reverence, mercy, and compassion) he turns to the “inhumane” affects, headed by “Desire,” to which peace and prosperity make men vulnerable. The generality of desire’s temptations is reflected in Davies’ rhetorical question:

When *sinne* so sweetly doth *intreate* and *pray*,
And promise *Flesh*, *Heav’n* in *Incontinence*
(To which *prosperity* doth *Flesh* betray)
How can fraile *Flesh* and *Bloud* say sweete *sinne* nay? (70)

The “incontinence” is that of sonnet 129’s “waste of shame,” and the promised “*Heav’n*” is reminiscent of that in the sonnet’s closing couplet (“none knows well/ To shun the heav’n which leads men to this hell”).

If instead of pursuing heavenly beauty one turns aside to sensual pleasures, one loses one’s judgment, and then one’s mind. Sensory pleasures (Davies covers all five senses) entice the fancy, which then “procures” (carrying an undertone of pimp or pander) the consent of one’s misled judgment:

These *senses* thus bewitch’d, *Fancie* allures
To share the *sweetnesse* which they say they finde:
Fancie assents, and *Iudgement* soon procures
T’approve their *pleasure*, which betraies the *Minde*
Betrai’d and quite misled by *Iudgement* blind. (70)

This sequence applies to several of the earlier Dark Mistress sonnets, from the confounded man of sonnet 128 through sonnet 131, when the speaker is ready to swear that “thy black is fairest in my judgment’s place” while remaining strangely non-judgmental about his mistress’s black “deeds.” Although Shakespeare’s speaker denies

that his five senses draw him to love his dark mistress, he seems to be drawn by what Davies terms “the inferiorst interior sense,” which “conceiues more pleasure than all the outward senses can” (marginal note, p. 43). This lowly placed interior sense must refer to the “bliss” described in sonnet 129, so fleeting that it always seems either in the future or in the past.

If any doubts remain about how sonnet 146 fits into the Dark Mistress series, Davies’ text can banish them. One of the sections on the senses opposes bodily excess to misery and dwindling of the soul. “*Corp’rall pleasure* in extremitie/ The *center* is, of endlesse *miserie* (71). When one is enjoying worldly ease and prosperity, the mind binds both body and soul with “strong *cordes* of *Vanity*” (71). The soul is in a metaphoric “arm’d” conflict with sins of excess, and “peace and plenty” can hardly save themselves from the onslaught:

Aske *peace* and *plenty* what fell *fight*s they haue
With these three *Monsters*, *Pride*, *Strife*, and *Excesse*,
Hardly themselues, if they at all, do saue,
From their fell *force*, they eas’ly will confesse. (70)

The “emptie soul,” lacking the “evil *goods*” it desires (“*goods* evil by abuse” or excess), becomes flooded with “all *vexations*, and *annoies* of minde”; these, having entered the soul, “reduce” it “to their *obedience*, in rebellious kinde;/ For *Reason* they in *rage* do rudely binde” (71). This exactly matches the situation described in sonnet 146, when the soul is arrayed (i.e. surrounded and attacked) by “rebel powers,” which it feeds with “costly” expenditure for the “outer walls” of the body (146.2, 4). Such attention to the outer body constitutes the “*Vanity*” which in Davies’ terms binds both soul and body. A stanza on gradations of false pleasures arising from different sensory

organs names the “feeding powre” as preeminent:

The feeding *Powre*, in feeding powre imploies,
Which pleaseth *Nature*, but the *soule* annoies. (43)

Vendler observes that “feed” is a key term in sonnet 146 (611). Davies portrays immoderate “*Desire, Feare, Griefe, Ioy*” as “*perturbations*” which “*excruciate*” the soul (i.e. put it on a cross or torture it; 71).³⁷ The mind’s “ignorance” through loss of judgment “doth (fating) feede” those same perturbations. These disturbances of ill affections, which Davies identifies as the root cause of this situation, appear not in sonnet 146 but in those surrounding it. Shakespeare’s speaker suffers “torture” and is “cross’d” (sonnet 133), utters groans, the signs of miseries undergone by flesh and blood lured to lust³⁸ (sonnets 131, 133); and of course throughout the speaker is imprisoned by his own desires, hoping for that momentary “bliss” which Davies marks as the greatest pleasure of all. The effect upon reason, which Davies depicts as subservient to excessive desires, is fully demonstrated within the sonnet by the sophistic reasoning the speaker employs, discussed in the previous chapter (p. 187).

In fact the dwindling of the body by which the speaker hopes to reach divinity is described by Davies not as the cure for excess, but its eventual result. The body pines away, breathing out moans:

³⁷ From the Latin *excruciare*, to torment greatly, to torture (Lewis and Short).

³⁸ Davies’ stanza on the senses as “*Lures of lust*” which bring “the *world* to be a pray to *woe*” has these lines on groaning: The senses “make frail *flesh & Blood* the founts of *sinne*,/ From whence all mortall *miseries* doe floe,/ Which *flesh* and *blood* do groning vndergoe.” The stanza continues with some terms mirrored in sonnet 129: “In these are *Baites* for *Beggars*, as for *Kinges*:/ Which pleasures streames doe (swelling) overfloe,/ That they are caught vnwares; so that these thinges/ The *World* to *Hell*, and *Hell* to *horror* bringes” (43).

The *Body* (hereby *puling*) pines away
 (Like to a *Bladder* whose winde is outstrain'd)

 So, fares the *Body*, by the *Minde* constrain'd;
 Till she be breathles, she breathes out but *mone*, (71)

In sonnet 147, something like this consequence is seen: the speaker is sick and realizes “desire is death,” yet is unable to follow his reason’s prescriptions. In sonnet 149 he breathes out “present moan” when his mistress lours on him (149.8). Davies describes a state in which appetite ignores reason in a section on wit and will:

Witt ought *Wills* appetites to over-rule
 When they (to follow *sense*) from *Reason* go (36)

But “*Pleasure*,” that “*Eare*-charming *Siren*,” ensnares the heart, with the result that “bright *Voluptu'snesse* doth blinde our *Eyes*/ That we can nothing see” (36). With wit, the soul’s “*Guide* being blinde,” Davies explains it is “no mervel though [the soul] runne” “[d]irected by *Delight*” (36). This is the state of the speaker in sonnets 137 and 148. He is divided against himself, his reason advising one thing and his heart insisting on another. His heart “in despite of view is pleased to dote” (141.4). Doubting whether his judgment or eyes are at fault, he seems by sonnet 148 to credit judgment over vision since his “false eyes dote” on that which others judge to lack beauty (148.5). Davies says doting arises from a faulty kind of love:

But *Loue*, that hath respect to any *thing*
 Besides the *goodnes* of the *thing* belov'd,
 Is rather *doating*, which doth *loathing* bring. (64)

Yet this state of affairs is ordinary rather than extraordinary, as Davies’ stanza on self-knowledge makes clear:

For who so lookes with well-descerning *eies*
 (If he be mortal, be he what he wil)

Into him *selfe*, he wil him *selfe* despise;
For in him *selfe* he findeth nought but *ill*,
Corrupting *Soule* and *Body*, *Minde*, and *Will*: (77-78)

Davies describes a range of reactions to this introspection:

The *best* shall finde but matter too too *bad*
To humble them, and so to keepe them still;
The *worst* shal see ynough to make them mad,
Seeing themselues through *Ill*, so ill-bestad. (78)

Where along the spectrum from best to worst does the sonnet speaker lie? He is not the best, for he does not keep still but continues to woo his mistress. The *notatio* sonnet 129 says that lust's bait "make[s] the taker mad" (129.8), and in sonnet 140 the speaker threatens to go mad and defame the lady if he despairs of obtaining his desire. In sonnet 147 he is "frantic-mad" and speaks like a madman (147.11). Shakespeare's speaker "Will" seems to plumb the depths in the Dark Mistress sonnets, but emerges on the other side, able to speak in the past tense about "the distraction of this madding fever" (119.8) in the Fair Youth series.³⁹

For Better and for Worse: Reading the Two Sub-series Together

Davies sums up his section on "good *Affections*" and "ill *Affections*" by stating that (although he has analyzed them separately), "*Good* and *Ill* in *deede* or *sho*" are mixed together in all "that doth to *Earth* belong," and therefore one can draw both "*Weale* or *Woe*" depending on how one's wit (mind) and will (volition) take things (71). An earlier passage on good and ill affections also portrays the ease with which

³⁹ The links in vocabulary are frequent enough that it seems to me a possibility exists for intertextual influence between Davies' *Microcosmos* and the Dark Mistress sonnets. I summarize the evidence for this in Appendix C.

one can slip from good to ill. Because they wish to be happy, “al *men* al their *forces* bend/ T’iniroy that *Good*”; no matter “how base” it is, they still “aspire” to it. The good and ill affections are intermingled:

Yet they *were good*, & kindly lou’d their like;
But they *are Ill*, and loue *Ill* seeming good;
Yet they by *Natures* instinct *Ill* dislike;
And yet by nature evil is their *moode*,
Basely obeying the *sinne*-soiled *Blood*. (29)

This is Davies’ description of the effects of original sin, the first line (in the past tense) describing a prelapsarian state in which the affections loved their maker as “like” (Davies explains that mankind was made in God’s image). But it is also a portrait of the mixed motivations enacted in the *Sonnets* taken as a whole. If the Dark Mistress sonnets portray those affections which “loue *Ill* seeming good” and enact a fevered desire which moves flesh to “rising . . . point out thee” (151.9), the Fair Youth sonnets portray those affections which “by *Natures* instinct *Ill* dislike.” The speaker who cautions against “shame” and “wantonness” in a number of sonnets, such as 95 and 96, engages in both with his dark mistress. The adulterer who confesses that he is “forsworn” in sonnet 152 defends himself in sonnet 121 against the imputation, made by “others’ false adulterous eyes,” that his offenses are worse than those “all men” commit (121.5, 14). One “better” love, the “man right fair,” brings out the speaker’s good will; the “worser” love tempts him to “speak ill” (144.3, 4, 140.10), and he does so repeatedly: He mentions the lady’s “defect” (149.11), describes her as “what others . . . abhor” (150.11), and defames her especially clearly in sonnets 147 (“thou art as black as hell”; 147.14) and 152 (“I have sworn thee fair; more perjured I”; 152.13).

In brief, one sub-series portrays good will, the other ill will; the former

cautions against ill and attempts to heal breaches, while the latter seeks what is harmful and threatens harm. The speaker's "ill will" in the Dark Mistress sonnets is sick both because the speaker is unable to act as he knows he should, and because as a result he expresses what Davies categorizes as the other "ill" affections: anger, and grief. Lacking what he desires, he engages in threatening and scolding behavior in an attempt achieve his misguided aim. In contrast, while the speaker manages to convey unhappiness and dissatisfaction in the Fair Youth sonnets, sometimes in fairly pointed terms, he does so with tact and without overt recrimination. He admits his own failings and his lack of merit.

Although Davies' homage to the Fair Youth sonnets in his poem to his friend Nicholas Deeble indicates that he read whatever poems of Shakespeare's he had access to as participating in a heroic mode of faithful friendship, in which the man of lower standing owes reverence to his higher status friend, Davies' *Microcosmos* provides a cautionary note. The "high *Raptures*" that Davies describes as deriving from unselfish true love cannot be said, in the end, to characterize the Fair Youth sonnets except as an ideal which fails to be fully realized. For Davies, such true love cleaves to "*simple good, or good scarce toucht with ill,*" but ill repeatedly touches both youth and poet. Davies classifies fear as among the ill affections arising from excess, but fear of infidelity permeates the Fair Youth series rather than the Dark Mistress series. In fact the sonnet immediately after the Fair Youth exordium expresses the "fear of trust" which leads him to "forget to say/ The perfect ceremony of love's rite" (23.5-6). Fidelity is of course not an issue in the Dark Mistress series, and his chief fear there is

that he will not bed the lady.⁴⁰ Davies emphasizes that the affections are subject to “*Nature*,” however, and his description of the kinds of good which draw love makes clear in what way the poet’s love for the youth falls short. He does not love him because of his “*Wit and Vnderstanding*” or “*Knowledge bright*,” but is drawn by the two lower kinds of beauty: that which “in *seede* preserv[es] *mortall thinges*,” and especially by “the last” kind of beauty, which resides “in *corp’rall things* that *sense* delight” (68). While in neoplatonic philosophy beauty is a sign of virtue, in Shakespeare’s interrogation of that tradition such correspondence breaks down.

Yet, however Shakespeare’s speaker stumbles in his desires, it seems that Davies regarded Shakespeare himself as distinct from his poetic persona. Both before the *Sonnets* were published and after, Davies identified Shakespeare as “Good Will,” unfortunate only in being tainted by his scorned profession of theater actor.

⁴⁰ The speaker sums up his efforts in sonnet 119 as “Applying fears to hopes and hopes to fears” (119.3).

Chapter 5. Reflections: Modern Critical Responses to *Shakespeare's Sonnets*

In the previous chapter, I examined the response of one contemporary of Shakespeare's to his poetry, and to Shakespeare as a person. To conclude this study, I reflect on what my inferences from the three exordia, read as guides to the sonnets and informed by Davies' response to the theme of heroic friendship and his analysis of desire, can offer in the way of commentary on some recent critical interpretations of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*.

Many of the more ambitious critical interpretations have privileged one sub-series over another. Most of these have foreground the Fair Youth sonnets, and those who do usually end up considering the sexuality issue—heterosexual or homosexual? A few, notably Fineman, foreground the Dark Mistress sonnets as crucially instructive about Shakespeare's methods of making poetry. A number of critics have wanted to see in Shakespeare's sonnets something originary: the fount of literary expression of modern subjectivity (Joel Fineman), a new frankness about physically consummated homosexuality (Bruce Smith), an attempt to manage a crisis in patriarchy via containment of the feminine subject (Paul Innes) which was part of a Calvinist-imbued English response to the "spiritual illicitness of Petrarchan eroticism" (Alistair Fox 1997: 64), and a novel post-Luther rejection of traditional Christian allegory (Lisa Freinkel 1999, 2002). Barrell and Herman see the sonnets as participating in crises of the aristocracy induced via displacement of the traditional feudal economy by rapid growth of a market economy. Those who examine gender politics in terms of the sonnets (e.g. Sedgwick, Innes, Traub) seem to want to read into the vilification of the

dark mistress a characterization of the whole of female subjectivity, and sometimes interpret the “lust” of sonnet 129 as responding to female sexuality generally (rather than a specific sort of relatively available “waist of shame”).

These lines of criticism draw the sonnets into an accounting of major cultural shifts, and seek to define a quality that sets Shakespeare’s sonnets apart from the many lyric sequences of his contemporaries and predecessors. In this respect the widespread critical and popular response to Shakespeare’s seeming exceptionality (a response I quickly acknowledge that I share) has worked its way into specific critical claims about the sonnets. The scarcity of responses to Shakespeare’s sonnets from his contemporaries that go beyond general statement has offered a very nearly blank slate for critics to write their own claims upon. Often, these attempts put too great an interpretive strain on a set of sonnets which, like others of that time, worked both within and against a set of expectations concerning courtly love and its failures. Some recent ambitious claims of cultural significance have been critiqued by others. The results of my own study enable me to comment on a few of these critical efforts, in particular those by Traub, Innes, and Bruce Smith, which focus on kinds of desire represented in the *Sonnets*.

In the case of the Dark Mistress sonnets, the misogynist discourse of the speaker has been interpreted as a repudiation of female sexuality in general by the *Sonnets*. Innes, for example, says that the “Dark Lady” sonnets “articulate the woman’s sexuality as morally corrupt” as part of an “attempt to manage femininity” (189-90, 191). Discussing sonnet 129 as the primary exemplar of this strategy, Innes refers to “the excoriation of female sexuality in the person of the dark lady, characterised in the

poem as 'lust'" (190). Traub recognizes that the "lust" of the Dark Mistress sonnets is not female sexuality itself but an affect within the speaker which he "feels for and projects onto women," but her language here indicates that like Innes she generalizes this "lust" to represent any and all heterosexual male desire conceivable within the context of the sonnets (438). Valerie Traub sees this denigration of heterosexual desire as a necessary correlate of the sonnets' alignment of poetic creation with homoerotic desire for the young man. She asserts that by "appropriating reproduction for a male homoerotic poetics," Shakespeare's sonnets necessarily "drain heteroeroticism of all procreative promise" (445). The "waist of shame" in sonnet 129 Traub identifies not as the receiving body cavity of an already promiscuous woman, but as the female pudenda in general (pudenda deriving from the Latin word for shame), which the implicit ideological commitments of the sonnet supposedly characterize as "always already shameful" (437). Like Innes, Traub aligns Shakespeare's sonnets with enforcing patriarchal ideologies when she writes that the sonnets confront (and endorse) "the necessity of insuring that women's desires accord with those of men, thus harnessing women to patriarchal reproduction" (435). Inferring from her analysis the motives of Shakespeare as writer, she further identifies these paired strategies as "Shakespeare's attempt to reserve sodomy [i.e. sex without a reproductive mandate] as a signifier of heteroeroticism" (447) while simultaneously attempting to protect male homoeroticism from becoming identified with sodomy, a process as yet in its early stages. Shakespeare's appropriation of "the dominant discourse by which carnal desire was legitimized-reproduction" for poetic creation "brilliantly" placed male homoerotic desire "outside the confines increasingly being imposed by legal

discourses” against male-male sexual acts (436).

Fox interprets the sexual domains of the two sub-series in a similar vein, although through the prism of a psychological interpretation which sees the *Sonnets* as Shakespeare’s attempt to reconcile the eroticism of a Petrarchan sonnet sequence with a “Protestant conscience” (85). He posits that Shakespeare sublimated homosexual desire in the Fair Youth sonnets in an attempt to “isolate a form of love” not subject to “the corrupting influence of carnal lust” (84); and he supposes that the sexual revulsion within the Dark Mistress sonnets were Shakespeare’s own, strongly influenced by the “Calvinist conviction that sexual desire was depraved” (83).¹ These arguments identify Shakespeare with his poetic persona and leave little room for the writer’s conscious control over the postures of his speaker, in spite of Fox’s recognition of Sidney’s use of his poetic persona Astrophil to critique the concupiscence of the Petrarchan lover.

Analyses such as those of Fox, Traub, and Innes identify the kinds of desire explored in the *Sonnets* as covering the whole universe of heteroeroticism and homoeroticism available within the conceptual world of the sonnets. Traub cites Judith Butler’s work on the way that concepts of gender are mutually constitutive to support her characterization of the gender universe in these sonnets. Traub’s analysis also postulates that the limitations of the speaker’s desires and experience closely reflect Shakespeare’s own ideological orientation. More generally, analyses such as those of Innes and Traub conflate what *does* exist in the conceptual world of the sonnets with what *must* exist within the ideological commitments that these sonnets allegedly reflect

¹ An earlier version of Fox’s characterization of Shakespeare’s two sub-series is posed, as a question, by Spender (97).

and promote. These views leave little room for reader critique and response *within* the parameters of the *Sonnets* (though acknowledging the strong possibility of reader resistance *to* those parameters).

The kinds of desire portrayed within the *Sonnets* should not be taken as exhausting the universe of possibilities that the sonnets themselves allow. The procreation sonnets specifically set up a social world in which the outcomes could have been different; most obviously, the young man could have married and had children, enabling different kinds of male and female sexual behavior. Certainly, the sonnets we have could not have followed from such a circumstance, but that obvious fact does not justify treating the procreation set primarily as a device designed to authorize homoeroticism and de-legitimize heteroeroticism. Nor should the procreation sonnets be treated as a mere rhetorical device designed as an entrance to the sonnets of real interest to both their author and readers, as do Crosman and Bruce Smith (1991), among others. The currently popular treatment of the procreation sonnets as probably commissioned (see e.g. Greenblatt 2004: 237) and hollow in feeling diminishes the ways in which they contextualize the bulk of the sonnets. This diminished role for the procreation sonnets also precludes any sense of tragedy or irony in the speaker's situation at the close of the *Sonnets*, when the promulgation of life with which the *Sonnets* opened has resulted in literal sterility despite literary plenitude.

Restricting the possibility of female sexuality to that depicted in the Dark Mistress sonnets and the speaker's brand of desire for her also shuts down the reader's room for ethical assessment. Little leeway is left for viewing the speaker's predicaments with a judicious eye in order to evaluate his mistakes, and such evaluation

was a standard part of Renaissance reading practices. Such reader critique might take the form of imagining other possibilities for kinds of desire and kinds of outcomes that do not come to pass within the implied narrative of the sonnets themselves, in part due to the speaker's flaws and own failures. How such evaluation might work can be illustrated by examining the two *iudicium* sonnets in the shorter exordia, 22 and 131. These sonnets both illuminate errors in judgment on the part of the speaker. As I discussed in Chapter 3, a note of narcissism and covetousness appears in sonnet 22, while in 131 the speaker abdicates ethical judgment concerning the mistress's "black" deeds. Stephen Booth interprets this latter silence in 131 as a ploy: its non-judgmental tone seems to offer comforting reassurance while the words "cut apart" the woman's own mistakenly mild assessment of her actions with "a single graceful razor stroke" (457). Booth's view supposes this mild assessment to belong to the woman rather the speaker, an assignment with no basis that I can see. Booth's analysis rests, I believe, on an unwillingness to grant the speaker less judgment than the writer of the sonnet. Other phrases of the sonnet suggest it is the speaker who is at fault: he implicitly admits that he may be in error when he is too timid to declare openly that others err ("To say they err I dare not be so bold,/ Although I swear it to myself alone"; 131.7-8). Much of the sonnet uses phrasing of legal sworn statement and witnessing in ways which should alert the reader to possible false statements. "A thousand groans" are the witnesses which reassure the speaker that what he swears "is not false"; but the statement he swears to, that "Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place," belies his own claim of her beauty (131.10, 9, 12). As Booth himself states, the phrase "my judgment's place" suggests not only the place where his judgment resides (his

intellect), but that “which has displaced my judgment and now acts in its stead” (456). This self-delusion (rather than “self-mocking” as suggested by Booth, 456) is highlighted by the parenthetical comment in the final line, “as I think,” when the speaker attempts to identify the origin of the “slander” of her beauty.

Evaluating these sonnets and their speaker in such an ethical light opens up some distance between the speaker and the writer and organizer of the *Sonnets*, similar to the widely recognized distance between Philip Sidney and his poetic persona Astrophil in *Astrophil and Stella*. This distance allows for more attention to the speaker’s strategies, faults, and inclinations. For example, to the extent that the speaker blames the mistress’s black deeds for his predicament, he is using a strategy employed by *Cymbeline*’s Posthumus in his vilification of the “woman’s part”: what he vilifies as deriving from femaleness actually resides within himself; and it is Posthumus, not Imogen, the target of his anger, who exemplifies these supposedly female failings.² My study suggests that the rhetorical signposts of the three exordia index in the “lust” of sonnet 129 the compulsive desires of the speaker for a deep interior pleasure of his own. Even in his confusion and distress the sonnet’s speaker in part recognizes his own complicity in his admission that “I am perjured most” (152.6).

Innes and Traub both subscribe to the view that the Dark Mistress sonnets embrace an ideological attempt to contain independent female sexual prerogative for the sake of patriarchal control, particularly over female reproductive capacity. They identify the speaker’s vilification of his dark mistress with Shakespeare’s vilification of

² I discuss Posthumus’s speech in Chapter 3, p. 148.

uncontrolled female sexual desire and actions, and they see in this latter vilification an attempt to control and inhibit such female sexual agency. What I see, in contrast, is a recognition of female sexual agency which is, and will inevitably remain, beyond not only the speaker's control but any male control. In my reading, these sonnets work to encourage not female subjugation but male self-control, which will inevitably be an ongoing challenge. We see this issue in the Fair Youth sonnets as well (witness Schoenfeldt's analysis focusing on sonnet 94). Cultural and political critics may translate such female agency and power, with its corresponding male abjection, into a larger-scale attempt to limit female prerogative. Any misogynist discourse could be said to contribute to such a cultural agenda, whether intentionally or not, but I question whether the Dark Mistress sonnets consciously field such an attempt. None of us can get inside Shakespeare's mind to verify his ideological commitments one way or the other, but the rhetorical signposts about desire I have traced in the three exordia suggest that Shakespeare's sonnets were more local both in intended import and in potential cultural effect.

My analysis entails similar kinds of resistance to recent characterizations of the homosexuality of the Fair Youth sonnets. Identifying the erotic component of these sonnets as a homosexual passion, either implicit or explicit, functions to limit conceptually the kind of desire expressed to the young man. Davies of Hereford appears to have read the Fair Youth sonnets as both imbued with eroticism *and* as about a loving friendship—as combining *philia* with *eros*. Eroticism, “loose lines,” did not necessarily translate to an explicitly sexual kind of desire, or to physical consummation. In sharp contrast to the kind of view expressed by Davies, Bruce Smith

argues in *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England* that like Horace's *Carmina*, the Fair Youth sonnets, from sonnet 21 through 126, offer an unconstrained discourse about a consummated homosexual relationship. Smith's analysis combines this alleged correspondence to Horace's homosexual amatory verse with a supposed similarity to Joseph Conrad's story about an intimately shared, secret experience between two male shipmates (in "The Secret Sharer," a narrative infused with homoeroticism but without Horace's openly homosexual content). Smith proposes that in these sonnets Shakespeare, virtually alone and in an "act of rebellion" (1991: 268), created a new discourse unconstrained by either "spiritual metaphor" (229) or a turn to law or moral philosophy (256); he further argues that in so doing the 1609 sonnets stand alone within their cultural moment. They constitute an "invention of a new mode of discourse about homosexual desire" that "seems distinctively modern," but thirty years later was no longer being understood (267-68). Smith's interpretation depends on a mode of reading in which readers plumb puns for "secrets that are specifically sexual" (254). His thesis has its attractions, not least among them the parallel he expresses in closing his study: that his own book might accomplish "in a small way what Shakespeare's sonnets did so much more expansively in the sixteenth [sic] century: out of already familiar characters and plots, ideas and feelings [create] a more liberally imagined world for one of the many modes of human sexual desire" (270).

Because his thesis presumes that the *Sonnets* were solitary in this achievement of a new discourse, Smith's conclusion is difficult to criticize; moreover in view of his present-day aims it seems curmudgeonly to do so. It can always be argued that some readers used this mode of searching for sexual secrets and interpreted the sonnets to

signify a consummated sexual relationship. Certainly we can never know that *none* of Shakespeare's contemporaries read them in this way. But I think Smith claims more than a limited, special readership; he claims that Shakespeare's intent was primarily directed toward this mode of reading—that sonnets 21-126 “are focused on what love is like after sexual consummation, not before” (229).³

The difficulties with this stronger claim lie in the weakness of Smith's argument. In contrast to most of the carefully drawn parallels between ancient and early modern texts Smith studies in the rest of his book, the parallel he proposes between the Fair Youth sonnets and Horace's *Carmina* receives relatively little analysis. In making his case, Smith points to three similarities: the speaker's stance as a “jaded man of the world,” matter-of-fact discourse on homoerotic desire, and an intensity and intimacy of erotic passion (228). All these features, however, take for granted what Smith seeks to demonstrate, and are deeply dependent on arguable interpretations in tone. To say that the sonnets between 20 and 126 are matter-of-fact about the “physical realities” of being in bed in the vein of Horace's *Carmina* (252), and to say that they do so through puns to be read in a secretive vein, are two quite different and incompatible claims. Smith regards this new discourse as matter-of-fact because he alleges it contains no references to any standard moralizing or censorious views about male-male sexual relationships, or to any presumption that such relationships must give way to heterosexual or marital ones (in contrast to the other categories of discourse Smith analyzes in his book). But the need for such a moralizing

³ Smith categorizes sonnet 20 as courtship, then says that “Shakespeare goes on to write about what happens when emotional desire becomes physical act” (152).

turn presumes the presence of homosexual subject matter; the discourse of passionate friendship needed no such containment.

To support his claim about the “jaded” stance of the speaker, Smith quotes lines from Horace’s first ode in Book 4 beginning “Me neither woman now, nor boy doth move.” But the alleged parallel, as it turns out, appears only in poem 126. Part of what makes 126 seem a sneer to Smith is his interpretation of the phrase “O Thou, my lovely boy” as a “fall back on a cant term,” by which presumably he means that Shakespeare is using “lovely boy” here as Gascoigne uses “loving boye” and “little Robyn” in his “Lullabie of a lover” (i.e. to mean penis), despite the lack of any associated language in this particular sonnet pointing to such usage.⁴ This lack of associated language stands in sharp contrast to Gascoigne’s stanza from “Lullabie,” in which he uses the notion of sex as coining, spending one’s content, and two puns on the Latin term *penis* (not then in English usage, according to the *OED*, which gives the earliest use as 1676): “Lette others pay which hath mo pence,/ Thou art to pore for such expence” (45). It is this posited usage of “boy” that prompts Smith to see this sonnet as a farewell gesture in which the persona looks “at sodomy from the outside and see[s] it as an act of aggression.” The only other language in sonnet 126 remotely suggesting such a cant term is the line containing “minion,” but as Davies’ use of this term in relation to both God and King shows, minion is not necessarily a term of disparagement. In sonnet 126 Nature’s “minion,” meaning both beloved darling and paramour, refer back to the myth of sonnet 20 in which Nature, as she wrought the

⁴ Smith (1999: 422) confirms that “boy” and “minion” are two words that he interprets as derogatory and sneering, although he does not discuss the cant sense of “boy” in this later essay.

youth, “fell a-doting.” Nowhere in the Fair Youth sonnets does there appear a sustained example of the kind of cant phrasing employed in Gascoigne’s “Lullabie of a lover.” The same cannot be said of the Dark Mistress sonnets; several sonnets have sustained sexual punning, including the two “Will” sonnets (135 and 136) and especially sonnet 151, and it is in this other sub-series, which Smith inexplicably dismisses as “affable” in tone, that cant terms together with a vocabulary that references moral discourse appear.⁵

In support of his claim that the “new mode of discourse about homosexual desire” in the Fair Youth sonnets was no longer being understood thirty years later, Smith cites the rearrangements Benson made in his 1641 edition, which organized sets of sonnets thematically and changed some male pronouns to female and added some titles, giving some sonnets from the Fair Youth series a more conventional gender orientation (267-68, 270). The change of pronouns is in fact limited to only one sonnet, however (sonnet 101, plus one alteration of “boy” to “love” in sonnet 108), and Benson’s disguise of the sonnets’ homoeroticism turns out to be a myth propagated by Hyder Rollins in his 1944 *Variorum* edition (De Grazia 1994: 35-36).⁶ Benson’s edition caters to mid-century popular taste for longer poems as well as to the more conventional address to a female addressee, but his editorial hand is no heavier than Tottel’s, who put as many poems as he reasonably could into the category of love poem. The supposed puzzlement of a reader of Benson’s edition, who wrote “The M^{ris}

⁵ Innes (148-53) also critiques inconsistencies in Smith’s thesis and evidence.

⁶ Cady (24, 26) follows Rollins (20) and Pequigney (75-76) in assuming Benson’s editorial alterations were designed to limit the homoerotic references in Shakespeare’s sonnets.

Masculine” below Benson’s title “The Exchange” for sonnet 20, is probably Smith’s own misunderstanding, since a common meaning of the adjective “masculine” in the seventeenth century was simply “male” (*OED*, definition A1).

In sum, the supposedly groundbreaking new discourse which Smith identifies simply vanishes upon closer inspection. While I do concur that Shakespeare’s Fair Youth sonnets construct an erotic discourse of intimate sharing in the sense of a love that is “intire” and to “but to one alone,”⁷ as in Conrad’s short story “The Secret Sharer” (from which Smith gets his chapter title), I argue that their primary focus is not on sex but on devotion and sacrifice (the same could be said of Conrad’s story). Eroticism, which Davies terms “loose lines,” did not necessarily translate to physical consummation like that alluded to in Horace’s *Carmina*. Such a physical relationship between men Davies, typically for his day, categorizes as lust, akin to bestiality, “a *Sinne* not to be toucht/ So much as with the *Tongue*, much lesse with *Pen*” (167), though the *pro forma* nature of his protest is evident in the fact that he goes on to touch such “sins” with the pen for several stanzas with many examples from classic texts, down to Aristomachus and a bee (!). Davies’ claim is there to demonstrate an attitude, the speaker’s *ethos*. However conventional his remarks, they give no indication that Davies would have emulated Shakespeare’s Fair Youth sonnets if he thought that they constituted a new discourse concerning a physically consummated sexual relationship.

Davies’ treatment of erotic friendship does not mean, of course, that there were no such readers as Smith imagines, but it does suggest that such a mode of reading was

⁷ The phrasing, quoted in Chapter 3, is from Aristotle’s 1547 translator of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

not the primary one. What we *can* infer from Davies' interpretation is that in Renaissance England desire between men did not receive the distancing treatment it would receive from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth, even if homoerotic sexual acts were usually regarded in philosophical and most other discourses with biblical animadversion. A modest exception to such a moralizing tone about sexual acts occurs in a passage from one of Davies' philosophical sources (whether direct or indirect), Ficino's *Commentarium in convivium Platonis de amore*, or "Commentary on Plato's *Symposium*," published in Ficino's Latin *Opera* of Plato in 1484 and in various succeeding editions, including one at Basel in 1561 and another at Lyons in 1590 (Ficino 13-14). In the sixth speech, which constitutes the commentary on Socrates' speech in Plato's text, the urge to reproduce is described as pertaining both to body and to soul. Moreover, the bodily urge "has no power of cognition," and hence "it makes no discrimination between the sexes" but is "aroused for generation whenever we see any beautiful object." Whether intercourse occurs with males or females depends simply on whom one associates with: "it consequently happens that those who associate with males have intercourse with them [*se misceant*] in order to satisfy the urge of their genital parts" (Ficino 207).⁸ In Shakespeare's sonnets, the speaker who is aroused by the beauty of the Fair Youth in sonnet 20 seems to obey this indiscriminate genital force, but this speaker is also stimulated to poetic procreation, wishing to reproduce the beauty he sees through products of the mind, as well as have that beauty reproduced in

⁸ Elsewhere the *Commentary* makes more pointed and standard statements about such love-making. In Chapter VII of the second speech, for example, Ficino's text points to boundaries sanctioned by natural law and civil laws; and in the Italian version, which Ficino translated from his Latin version and sent to certain friends, Ficino (in the seventh speech) adds that the yearning to join produced by earthly love leads some "to do many wicked things between themselves" (Ficino 225).

bodily form through procreation. The same speaker, however, also encompasses what Ficino's text describes as the more common kind of man, who pursues earthly love and the pleasures of the body, and who therefore loves women (more than men, according to Ficino's taxonomy) because he cares less about the "mental keenness" found in greater quantity in adult men than in women or children, but desires instead "the sensuous effect of bodily generation" (207). At its most blind, such sensual passion in fact desires not beauty, but ugliness, and is not in fact love, but its opposite, lust. As described in the first speech of Ficino's commentary, such a

mad lasciviousness [*rabies veneria*] drags a man down to intemperance and disharmony, and hence seems to attract him to ugliness, whereas love attracts to beauty. Ugliness and beauty are opposites. The impulses, therefore, which attract to these two, seem to be mutually opposites. It follows that love and the desire for physical union are not only not identical impulses, but are proved to be opposite ones. (130)

To some degree this characterization of "mad lasciviousness" accords with the kind of desire depicted in the Dark Mistress series. The desire for a paradoxical black beauty, aroused by the poet's "perjured eye" (sonnet 152), is a love not "of comfort," but "of despair" (sonnet 144), as *notatio* sonnet 129 tells us—a "*rabies veneria*." Yet, the kinds of desire depicted in the *Sonnets* do not fall into the easy opposites of mind versus body, beauty versus ugliness, love versus lust, which appear in Ficino's commentary on Plato's *Symposium*. Shakespeare's speaker clearly values his love for the youth over his love for the dark mistress, rather than reverse. On the other hand, as I noted in the preceding chapter, the poet's love for the youth in the Fair Youth sonnets is inspired more by bodily beauty than by beauty of mind, although he does praise the youth as "kind" and "true," as well as "fair" (sonnet 105, to give just one

example among a number which could be cited).

Smith's claim that the Fair Youth sonnets invoke no discourse of moral constraint also needs reexamination. Since the primary kind of desire expressed, while imbued with eroticism, cannot be reduced to specifically sexual desire, any moral discourse would not need to invoke the turn toward heterosexual norms that Smith found in the other examples of sexually imbued homoeroticism he studied. Instead, a careful reading of the Fair Youth sonnets reveals a gradually increasing vein of narcissism and faults, as I discussed in the previous chapter, which is available for ethical interpretation by readers. Like Davies' "loose lines," the bawdy puns exhaustively identified by Booth, and invoked in Smith's argument of a new and unconstrained discourse of homosexuality, need not have intimated a sexual relationship. Davies' usage of eroticism in his discussions of friendship and his allusion to orgasm in his description of desire for union with the deity suggest that in the eroticism of the Fair Youth sonnets, sexual suggestiveness drawn from amatory discourse is deployed within the relatively safe context of friendship. Any refusal to engage in sustained allegory, a mode employed by the other writers Smith studies, seems to me a part of the fact that in the sonnets, as elsewhere, Shakespeare's writing remaining at a remove from authoritative discourses and didacticism. I would not suggest that the eroticism of the Fair Youth sonnets is limited wholly to metaphor; in their deployment of erotic passion and anxieties, these sonnets put pressure on the boundaries of standard categories, as Shakespeare's sonnets as a whole do in so many other respects as well.

One final note missing from many critical discussions of desire in Shakespeare's

sonnets is humor. A number of critics have put a great deal of interpretive weight on the language of desire and sex in sonnet 20, but as Alan Bray asks in *The Friend* concerning this sonnet, “Were Shakespeare’s verbal pyrotechnics designed neither to produce a declaration of love nor a purse of gold—but laughter, at the sheer audacity of the feat?” (139). The invitation to laugh brings to mind Richard Lanham’s *The Motives of Eloquence*, in which he identifies Shakespeare as unique in combining the two rhetorical stances of *homo serius* and *homo ludus* within a single set of sonnets, yet another breaching of standard categories.⁹

The speaker of Shakespeare’s sonnets thus encompasses most of the spectrum of love and desire described in contemporary philosophical texts, even ones that seem contradictory when located in a single individual.¹⁰ But attempts to read these sonnets, at least from Malone’s time on, have based their interpretations on taxonomies of desire different from those of the early modern period. Modern theories dating from the late nineteenth century claim that kinds of sexuality are intrinsic characteristics (whether acquired through heredity or environment), and similar theories still predominate although queer theory has challenged these categories. Such theories deny the fluidity of desire described in the *Sonnets*. With these theories as paradigms, modern readers have wanted to analyze Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* according to modern categories, usually viewed as fundamental, timeless, cross-cultural descriptors of human dispositions. But

⁹ See “Superposed Poetics” in *Motives of Eloquence*.

¹⁰ In this characterization I find myself approaching Northrop Frye’s assessment that Shakespeare’s sonnets “are a poetic realization of the whole range of love in the Western world,” although marital love and divine love are absent (53). Focused more specifically on sexual desire, Bredbeck says that the sonnets to the youth punningly “intermingle virtually every sexual subjectivity” (61).

the contention over kinds of sexuality depicted in the sonnets is, like the term itself, a modern issue, and these ways of reading are modern rather than early modern.¹¹ The three exordia in the *Sonnets* invite a more complicated understanding of desire. From the procreation set which describes the desire “we” feel for “increase” of beautiful creatures, to the Fair Youth exordium, which describes the poet’s desire to procreate in verse, to the desire of the same poet for a paradoxical black beauty, these exordia acknowledge not only the interrelation between different categories of desire, but the metamorphosis of one kind into another, and the permeability of all categories.

Since the critical recognition of two sub-series in Shakespeare’s sonnets that began with Malone’s editing of the 1609 quarto, the major distinction separating the two sub-series has been regarded as gender–desire for a man versus desire for a woman. De Grazia (1994) argues that the major distinction should instead be class, with the dark woman’s indiscriminate womb threatening the very class distinctions that the Fair Youth sonnets promote. I have discussed a distinction between “true love” and “false love”–the first understood by contemporaries in the context of heroic companions like those in Spenser’s Temple of Venus, the second “false” because it is engaged in by vow-breakers, and because it is not really love but a physical compulsion that has drawn the speaker to describe black as fair, falsity as truth–in short, to “swear against the truth so foul a lie” (152.14). Other binary categories include love oriented toward mind or soul–the “marriage of true minds”–versus love oriented toward the

¹¹ Cady finds evidence of early modern recognition of male-male sexual attraction that represents not just a passing act but an inclination, with probable repeated sexual acts, of some duration. The term he identifies to describe this affect is “masculine love,” and he also finds versions in French (“l’amour viril”) and Italian (“amor virile”).

body, which makes the speaker “rise and fall”; this is the distinction the glossator E.K. in *The Shepheardes Calender* draws between pederastic love of one man for another’s “soule, . . . which is his owne selfe” and the gynerastic love which is “lust toward woman kind” (Spenser, *Yale Edition*, 34).

Yet none of these categories is satisfactory, and not only because each is partial. Each identifies boundaries that the *Sonnets* explicitly breach. The gender boundary is crossed by the beauty of the young man, who has a “woman’s face” and looks as much like Helen as Adonis (sonnet 53); the dark woman has the masculine qualities of “powerful might” and “strength” (sonnet 150). The usual gender boundaries of sonnet sequences are of course violated simply by having numerous sonnets addressed to a young man, and other sonnets which woo a promiscuous, rather than a chaste, mistress. Further, many of the Fair Youth sonnets have no explicit gender identification. Class distinctions are blurred by the sexual triangle of the youth, lady, and speaker; moreover the speaker repeatedly injects his bourgeois values of thrift and commercial exchange into his discourse (we see an example of this in the buying and selling metaphors of the “sinful earth” sonnet, which seems to seek a kind of spiritual thrift by avoiding “so large cost” and attempting to bargain for lengthy “terms divine” with brief “hours”).¹²

Most importantly, the boundary between a platonic love of soul and a physically based love of body discussed by Spenser’s glossator E.K., by which a host of

¹² See Greene, “Pitiful Thrivers.” Peter C. Herman, discussing the bourgeois values in the first twenty sonnets, argues that the economic language is “entirely inappropriate (and would have been recognized as such by Shakespeare’s readers)” (278), but this conclusion is too strong. Herman devotes much of the article to the concept of usury, but usury is denigrated, not promoted, in the procreation sonnets. He argues that the term “creatures” in sonnet 1 slights and objectifies people (266), but fails to notice that the term as used in this sonnet is general and applies to all living things, not just people.

traditional critics attempted to distinguish the two sub-series, is thoroughly and completely breached. It is the youth's beautiful body which inspires the speaker to love, and sonnet 20 says that a woman's "nothing" would have been more to the speaker's (sexual) "purpose" than the boy's "one thing." Nor are the categories of "true" versus "false" love sustained over the course of either sub-series. In sonnet 51 the youth breaks "a twofold truth," and repeatedly he is suspected of falsehood (e.g. sonnets 92, 93); while the speaker, though at one point denying he has been "false of heart" (109.1), admits to trying out new friends and slighting his lover (sonnets 110, 117). In Chapter 3, I showed that the speaker's prudential love exhibited in the procreation sonnets takes on qualities of the youth's narcissism later in the sub-series. The speaker's heroic defiance of time on behalf of the youth, depicted especially in sonnet 19, becomes self-involved as well. His apostrophe to Time in sonnet 123—"No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change"—pertains not to his effort on behalf of the youth but to his own claims of steadfastness and his attempt to resist the implication that his love for the youth may have waned. In some respects the *Sonnets* also challenge traditional genre boundaries; Marotti notes that in some of their relatively plain speaking, especially those sonnets engaged in blame rather than praise, many of Shakespeare's sonnets approach the epigram in style (1982: 413). The Fair Youth sonnets also take the theme of heroic love, traditionally located in the genres of epic or romance, and transfer that theme into the lyric mode.

In sum, while the structure and content of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* offer various ways to categorize the kinds of love they portray, no set of categories is sufficient, and no boundaries can contain the shifting complexities of the speaker's desires.

APPENDICES

the three branches of rhetoric (deliberative, judicial, and demonstrative or epideictic), general versus specific questions (termed theses versus hypotheses in the Greek tradition), four types of legal issues, and the parts of an oration, so that the whole book forms, in the words of the Introduction to the Loeb edition, a “miniature treatise on Invention” (378). Although not well known now even by scholars interested in classical rhetoric (unlike Cicero’s *De inventione* and the pseudo-Ciceronian *Ad Herennium*), this text was put forward as part of an ideal grammar school curriculum by the sixteenth century scholars Juan Luis Vives, Johann Sturm, and Thomas Elyot (Baldwin II 27, I 289, 101). Baldwin conjectured that both a dialectic text and a text on tropes and figures must have been used in the upper levels of grammar school, with Cicero’s *Topica* and Joannes Susenbrotus’s *Epitome troporum ac schematum* serving those functions, but Peter Mack (2002: 46) finds that *Topica* was not part of the standard curriculum. As a relatively advanced treatment, *Topica* was more often a university text. It was one of two alternative textbooks on dialectic prescribed at Cambridge in the 1570 statutes (the other was Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations*; Mack 2002: 55). Oxford prescribed two years of dialectic, though the emphasis was on Aristotle and Cicero’s *Topica* is not mentioned in the statutes.

Other texts were available that covered some of the same kind of material. Elyot, in the ideal curriculum he describes for noblemen in *The Governour*, mentions Agricola’s treatment as a possible alternative for Cicero’s *Topica* in grammar school education (Baldwin I 101–102); but Mack, in his study of Valla and Agricola (1993: 280–98), finds that Agricola’s text was difficult to insert into the standard syllabi even at the university level, and simpler texts were more commonly used. Because Cicero’s

Appendix A. Ciceronian Rhetorical Texts

As shown by John Ward (1978), Cicero's *De inventione* was the most widely known and used rhetorical text for most of the period from the twelfth through the fifteenth centuries and remained so through the sixteenth century despite the proliferation of competing texts.¹ Less thorough in its treatment of invention but similar in its approach to rhetoric, the pseudo-Ciceronian *Ad Herennium* was known as "Tully's Rhetoric" through the Renaissance and beyond. It was more complete than *De inventione*, containing sections the other four parts of rhetoric: arrangement (the part of rhetoric termed *dispositio*), style, including schemes and tropes (*elocutio*), aspects of presentation including carriage of the body and modulation of the voice (*pronuntiatio*), and a section on memory techniques (*memoria*).

Cicero's *Topica* is a short work written in his middle years.² In its exordium addressed to his friend, the noted jurisconsult Gaius Trebatius Testa, Cicero states he is writing the treatise from memory during a voyage and that his aim is to provide a condensed categorization of topics that would be more useful to the practicing lawyer than Aristotle's *Topica* (which treats more than 200 topics) (i.1-5). The modern Loeb editor explains that in fact Cicero draws to some extent on Aristotle's *Topica*, but also on his *Rhetoric* and on the Stoic tradition of topics (377). Cicero provides a brief summary of his seventeen topics, then goes through them again in greater detail and with fairly detailed examples of their use in law courts. The treatise also covers briefly

¹ In the thirteenth century, the logical approach pursued in Boethius' fourth book of *De differentiis topicis* seems to have replaced the Ciceronian texts in university classrooms (Ward 54).

² A new critical edition of Cicero's *Topica* was published in 2003 (ed. Tobias Reinhardt).

treatment, aimed at the practicing lawyer, was illustrated solely with recondite examples from Roman law, Erasmus and Melanchthon both produced educational texts employing examples from literature and the Bible. Erasmus's *De copia* and his letter writing manual, *De conscribendis epistolis*, along with Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata* with its sixteenth century commentary by Lorichius, all common grammar school texts, treated topical invention in the context of various writing exercises. Cicero's *De officiis*, a text always in the syllabus, treated an important aspect of invention, the honorable versus the expedient approach to deliberative questions (Mack 2002: 39-40). The cultivation of classical latinity that is so much a part of what we think of as the Renaissance held up Cicero as an ideal rhetorician, and this admiration and emulation of Ciceronian style may have motivated the use of his *Topica* for advanced instruction in argumentation despite its legalistic bent.

It should be noted that most schoolbooks used in England were not published there but on the continent until late in the sixteenth century, and even then many may have continued to be imported. The English Short Title Catalogue lists one printing during the sixteenth century of a volume of Ciceronian rhetorical works which included *Topica*; it was printed in London in 1585 as part of a planned set of nine volumes including all of Cicero. *Topica* took up only a few pages in the first volume; it was the penultimate work among *Ad Herennium*, *De inventione*, *De oratore*, *Brutus*, *Orator*, and *De partitiones oratoria* (STC 2nd ed. 5266.4). *Ad Herennium* was published in England an additional two times, in Cambridge in 1574 (STC 2nd ed. 5323.5), and in London in 1579 (2nd ed. 5323.7). The latter edition also includes *De inventione*.

Appendix B. The 1609 Publication of *Shake-speares Sonnets*

The orderliness of the three exordia I have examined—the procreation sonnets, and the two shorter sets 18-22 and 127-131—provide internal textual evidence for the authority of the 1609 publication of Shakespeare’s sonnets, whether or not the publication itself was authorized. Nothing in these three exordia indicates that *Shake-speares Sonnets, Neuer before Imprinted*³ came to their printer in a disordered fashion. Rather the contrary; these introductory sections are ordered according to well known rhetorical principles of the period and function to introduce the speaker and his *ethos*, to define and characterize the desires treated in the ensuing series, and to alert the reader to notable qualities of the speaker and the subjects he treats. The orderliness of the three exordia does not speak directly to the order of the remaining sonnets, but the exordia do provide guides to the course of the speaker’s desires, including a “true” love for the youth and a “false” love for the promiscuous dark woman. Although sonnets 21 and 22 indicate the youth has given the poet his heart, in much of the rest of the Fair Youth series the declarations of admiration and fidelity on the speaker’s part alternate with responses to a variety of obstacles that threaten to sunder the two lovers. While some critics have seen thematic disorder in this fluctuation between challenge and reaffirmation of the relationship, such oscillations can also be read as enriching the complexity and sense of lived experience these sonnets convey as a collection, and in particular as a sequential set. Moreover, it was a commonplace that love induced variability in thought and affections. In that respect some minor rearranging would not

³ I include the hyphen because it appeared frequently in the printings between 1598 and 1616 which credit Shakespeare’s name, and because it accords with the heroic theme discussed in Chapter 4.

violate the sequence. However, it should be noted that the many pairs and small clusters that *do* need to be read in sequence are all in their correct order.

Additionally, the larger arcs within both sub-series make sense internally, and they also match across sub-series. The love triangle relationships match in relative placement within both: the youth with the dark mistress early in both sub-series (perhaps 33-35 and certainly 40-42 in the Fair Youth sonnets and 133-34 in the Dark Mistress sonnets); the poet with the mistress late in each series (119-20 in the Fair Youth sonnets and 151-52 in the Dark Mistress series). Other indicators of directionality in the relationships portrayed, such as the admissions of neglect by the speaker followed by greater insistence upon his fidelity to the youth, and the greater intensity of the sonnets that follow the *Vanitas* sonnet 146, have been discussed in Chapter 4. To these considerations should be added the numerical and other patterns observed by Fowler, Gratziani, Neely, and Roche. Anacreontic poems were one available model for ending a set of sonnets (examples include Daniel, Lodge, and Spenser), so that the two myth-making sonnets at the end of Shakespeare's sonnets are appropriately situated. There is no reason to look at one as a trial run for the other, since rhetorical plenitude, as signified in the procreation sonnets, is a hallmark of *Shakespeare's Sonnets*.⁴

Critics have discussed rearranging the published order so that poems linked thematically are put together, and a summary of rearrangements up to 1944 is provided by Hyder Rollins in the *Sonnets* volume of the *New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare*.

⁴ See e.g. Marotti (1990: 171) for the view that one was written as a replacement for the other.

The most extensive such reordering is that of Brents Stirling, who in 1968 proposed a revised order based on principles of “coherence” and continuity. Like many in the New Critical tradition, he assumes that series of sonnets form, or should form, larger “poems” or at least coherent “groups.” Hence he argues, for instance, that all sonnets about the love triangle in each sub-series should be positioned together (he does accept the usual Fair Youth and Dark Mistress groupings), as should all the sonnets dealing with the Rival Poet. This expectation of thematic coherence is a twentieth-century critical assumption imposed on texts from a period which looked to other modes of ordering. I reject this effort as ill-founded.

Beyond the ways that the exordia provide guides to reading the ensuing sonnets, there are other reasons to regard the 1609 publication as legitimate rather than pirated. As noted by Duncan-Jones (1983: 162), 1608 and 1609 were plague years in which the theaters were closed for extended periods, as they had been in 1593 and 1594 when Shakespeare published his two Ovidian poems. Although the circumstances are slightly different—the sonnets lack any dedication to a noble patron—there seems no reason why the sonnets and its *envoi* might not have been published in a like manner to provide income to compensate for the closed theaters, even if Shakespeare was considerably more prosperous than he had been the previous decade. Duncan-Jones (1983) provides information on Thorpe’s publishing, including his association with authorized editions of several plays by Jonson and the lack of clear evidence that he published pirated or otherwise unauthorized editions. To this one can add a relationship between the printer, George Eld, and publication of plays performed by the King’s Men, some by Shakespeare and some not, in the years preceding and following

1609. Among these are Jonson's *Sejanus* in 1605 (STC 2nd ed., 14782) and *Volpone* in 1607 (both for Thorpe), *The Revenger's Tragedy* by Tourneur (1607 and 1608), Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter* (two editions in 1607), *Troilus and Cressida* (two editions in 1609), and a 1611 edition of *Hamlet*.⁵

On the contrary side of the argument concerning legitimacy of the 1609 Quarto, Vickers (2007) has marshaled evidence that "A Lover's Complaint" was written by John Davies of Hereford rather than Shakespeare, and he renews the argument that Thorpe was unscrupulous and the 1609 publication unauthorized. Even if he is right about the attribution to Davies and Thorpe is responsible for appending and misattributing "A Lover's Complaint" to Shakespeare, that circumstance is not decisive about how Thorpe obtained the sonnets. Moreover, the internal textual evidence provided by the three exordia make the issue of Thorpe's precise role in the Quarto publication of little import. No matter how the sonnets came to be published, the three exordia support the authority of the 1609 order.

There is, however, a bit of contemporary testimony suggesting that the 1609 edition was authorized. We hear in 1612 from Thomas Heywood that Shakespeare objected to William Jaggard making "so bold with his name" by republishing *The Passionate Pilgrim* with Shakespeare named as author (Chambers 218), but we hear of no such objections about publication of the *Sonnets*. In fact it may even be that Heywood refers to the printing of the sonnets by "the Author" when he says that "hee

⁵ All of these except *Volpone* announce that they were acted by the King's Men on the title-page. Early eighteenth century editions of *Volpone* state this on the title-page; see also Fraser and Rabkin (55).

to doe himselfe right, hath since published them in his owne name.”⁶ Heywood’s syntax is such that the referents of “hee” and “them” are not altogether clear and he may be referring to the altered title-page, with Jaggard named as printer but without Shakespeare’s name as author, that Jaggard included in some printings of the 1612 *Passionate Pilgrim*.⁷ On the other hand his tone seems less likely to refer to the derelict Jaggard than the eminent “Author” whom Heywood describes in the next several lines as worthier than himself. It therefore seems possible that Heywood means that Shakespeare has published under “his owne name” what Jaggard stole, which is more likely to mean the *Sonnets* than any other work. Further, in about 1614 William Drummond commented on several English authors who had written “the Subject of Love.” Among these are “Sir *William Alexander* and *Shakespear*, who have lately published their works” about love (Chambers 220-21). Alexander’s work about love is his sonnet sequence *Aurora*, which Richard Field printed in 1604 along with Alexander’s *Paraenesis to the Prince* (the only sonnet sequence Field ever printed other than Henry Lok’s 1593 *Sundrie Christian Passions*). The only work of Shakespeare’s which fits Drummond’s genre category is *Shake-speare’s Sonnets*.

⁶ Heywood’s epistle to the printer of his *An Apology for Actors* praises his new printer, Nicholas Okes, while berating William Jaggard, who had printed Heywood’s 1609 *Troia Britannica* and refused to print a sheet of errata to correct the printer’s “infinite faults.” In part Heywood was making clear that he did not steal from Shakespeare the two verse epistles that Jaggard lifted from *Troia Britannica* and added to the 1612 edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. Chambers (218) (and other commentators in his wake) assumes Heywood is referring to the 1612 edition of *The Passionate Pilgrim*, but since this is labelled the third edition, there must have been one between the original in 1599 and the third in 1612. If the second edition came out between the time Heywood gave him *Troia Britannica* to set and *An Apology for Actors* in 1612, Heywood could have been referring to this second edition, of which no known copies are extant.

⁷ The copy once owned by Malone includes both title-pages; see the microfilm 1334:18 of STC (2nd ed.) 22343. The digital reproduction of this microfilm by Early English Books Online omits the original title-page with Shakespeare’s name on it.

The fact that Field printed Shakespeare's two narrative poems but not his sonnets has sometimes been taken of further evidence that the 1609 printing was unauthorized, but Shakespeare's two Ovidian poems fit Field's booklist of ancient and modern classics (the latter including Spenser's 1596 *Faerie Queene*, Harington's 1591 translation of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Chapman's translations of Homer in 1614 and 1616), while Field printed no light verse at all, other than Alexander's *Aurora*—and since Alexander was a Scotsman come to London in the train of James I, this text was very likely part of Field's semi-official publications that year.⁸ Field's other areas of specialty include relatively technical texts on foreign language, mathematics, medicine, rhetoric, military science, and the occasional political or state-sponsored text. He also printed a wide range of religious texts. In 1609 his booklist consisted of only six volumes, according to the records in the *English Short Title Catalogue*, almost all of which were religious: two polemical works by Thomas Morton, a work on "divine meditation" by Joseph Hall, a Latin version of the oath of allegiance and an examination taken by George Blackwell, who was appointed Catholic archbishop of England by Pope Clement in 1607, a printing of the book of Psalms (for the Company of Stationers), and a book by Hollyband on learning the French language that Field inherited from Vautrollier and printed six times between 1591 and 1609. A secular sonnet sequence, even by his Stratford acquaintance Shakespeare, was simply not the kind of work that Field was in business to print.⁹

⁸ He also printed *Basilikon doron* and the Latin version of *Lepanto*, both by James I, in 1604. *Aurora* ends sedately by overthrowing Venus for Juno, in her role as guardian of marriage.

⁹ Marotti, e.g. (1990: 171) expresses the view that Field would have been the preferred printer.

These few external indicators, scanty though they be, provide no support for the common assumption that the sonnets were pirated by an unscrupulous printer. And evidence of the sonnets themselves, from the carefully structured exordia to the way the concerns in the two smaller exordia are played out in the subsequent sonnets, suggests the organizational hand of the writer. Although reading them in the context of these sub-series is certainly not required by either early modern reading practices or by our own, a collection of 126 sonnets dedicated to “true love” and its discontents, the number of two climacterics or lifetimes, seems a fitting “monument” to the speaker’s trials in what was conceived as a relationship that lasted a lifetime or longer.¹⁰ A few other numerical features have been identified that similarly provide some evidence of organizational structure in Shakespeare’s sonnets. The shorter series concerning the speaker’s relationship to a fickle mistress fittingly constitutes 28 sonnets, the number of days in a lunar month, traditionally associated with things female.¹¹ And without the seventeen procreation sonnets, those in the Fair Youth series concerning a loving friendship number 109, another significant number in the post-Sidney English sonnet tradition. That number signifies the winning suitor in the Penelope game, which Astrophil misses by one; Greville’s lyric sequence, like Shakespeare’s minus the

¹⁰ The number 63 is the lesser climacteric (Fowler 176). The sonnet sequences of Constable (*Diana*, in its manuscript version, in which Constable himself identifies 63 as the climacteric) and Drayton (1619 *Idea*) both have consist of 63 sonnets (Roche 323; Fowler 176). The finer points of some of Fowler’s and Roche’s numerical analyses conflict, particularly their ways of accounting for Shakespeare’s having exceeded the number of the miraculous draft of fishes in John xii by one sonnet; see fn 31 in Chapter 3, above (p. 181).

¹¹ These numerical observations are from Gratziani. Fowler observes that 28 was not only the number of days in the lunar month (196), but also “a symbol of moral perfection” (186). The irony of the latter symbolism in the context of the Dark Mistress sonnets may be one more way in which structure ironizes content.

procreation sonnets, adds up to the winning number.¹² The short length of Shakespeare's poem 126 (12 lines rather than 14) gestures towards a loss or abbreviation of the relationship after the initial win. Greville's *Caelica* appears to hit that number by turning away from earthly love toward the divine (see Roche, 294 ff); the Fair Youth sonnets, as we have seen, record a relationship which wins very early on (at sonnet 21), but which is attacked, after many strains, by a "suborned informer" and eventually fails to be sustained.¹³

Over the past century and more, the homoeroticism of the Fair Youth sonnets have been deemed sufficient evidence against authorized publication. But Davies' views in *Microcosmos* on "loose lines" in poetry, extending from bawdiness to obscenity, shows that even for this often didactic writer of verse treatises, such erotic content was no necessary cause for moral alarm. The sonnet craze may have been over and scoffing epigrams more popular, but the homosocial orientation of the Fair Youth sonnets and the misogyny of those to the Dark Mistress suit the political and cultural climate shaped by the Jacobean court better than they would have fit the Petrarchan-imbued climate under the late queen. More recently, Joseph Pequigney and Bruce Smith have reversed the traditional evaluation by magnifying and then celebrating the same homoerotic qualities that had been viewed previously with embarrassment and chagrin. The line of demarcation remains virtually the same even though the valuation

¹² The Penelope game, dating from antiquity, was based on the 108 suitors of Penelope in Homer's *Odyssey*, and involved setting up 54 stones on either side of a 109th "Penelope stone," and he who hit the middle stone was the winner (Fowler 175).

¹³ This structure, discussed in some detail by Roche and others, can apply to Greville's sequence even if, as Marotti suggests, the religious and philosophical poems in the latter part of the sequence reflect composition during the Jacobean rather than the Elizabethan era (Marotti 1982: 420).

of content is reversed. But the homoeroticism of the Fair Youth sonnets simply does not warrant the presumption that they would have been considered scandalous. As Margreta de Grazia has argued, the supposed “scandal” of the Fair Youth sonnets is an anachronistic reading back of post-Enlightenment concepts of sexuality (1994: 46). We may infer from E.K.’s gloss to the January eclogue in *The Shepheardes Calender* that so long as homoeroticism did not cross over into actual sodomitic practices, “pederastice” or love for male youth was preferable to “gynerastice,” “the love than inflameth men with lust toward womankind” (qu. De Grazia 46). De Grazia argues that the scandalous sonnets are those to the dark woman, who threatens the “shocking social peril” of obliterated class distinctions by accepting so many into her “indiscriminate womb” (49). De Grazia overstates the case, however; class distinctions were not randomized by illegitimate offspring. By-blows of the upper classes (males, at least) generally were accepted into their father’s class, even if they did not have all the rights of inheritance of legitimate children, while children unclaimed by their fathers fell to the class of the mother. In addition, part of the point of the “waste of shame” of sonnet 129 is that methods for birth prevention and abortion, though unreliable, were available and could be used to mitigate against the production of such bastard children, and that sex without the aim of producing children was regarded in philosophical and theological terms as improper and sinful. Nor are the Dark Woman sonnets so scandalous, even granting that the sexual promiscuity they describe works against the perpetuation of the aristocratic class that the Fair Youth sonnets, especially the procreation series, so assiduously promote. Waists of shame, such as those in the many brothels around London, were simply too ordinary to be so

shocking. The violations of social and moral norms in the Dark Woman sonnets are insufficiently sensational to stigmatize their publication. Thus neither of the sub-series of Shakespeare's sonnets provides convincing grounds for assuming their publication was unauthorized.

Appendix C. Shared Vocabulary between Davies' *Microcosmos* and Shakespeare's Sonnets

I have drawn on John Davies of Hereford's philosophical poem *Microcosmos* in my discussion of Davies as a probable early reader of at least some of Shakespeare's sonnets prior to the accession of King James in 1603. (The dedicatory material to James fixes an earliest possible date of printing as subsequent to March 24 of that year.) The coincident language (and concepts) between Davies' stanzas on the will and some of Shakespeare's Dark Mistress sonnets is great enough to suggest intertextual influence. I cannot distinguish between the two directions of influence (perhaps both occurred). The most extensive coincidence in vocabulary and related ideas occurs in sonnet 146. I give the shared language for that sonnet first. Davies also shares vocabulary with Shakespeare words in other sonnets which are relatively common in the context of desire and errors of the will, such as blind (linked with eyes and love), heaven (with hell), angel, saint, devil, day, night, judgment, corruption, slave, conscience. I do not include these additional terms. Page number citations for *Microcosmos* are from the 1603 edition (available on Early English Books Online). I give line citations for sonnets 146 and 129.

Parallels Between Davies' Microcosmos and Sonnet 146 in Vocabulary and Concepts

Some of the words below appear multiple times in *Microcosmos*, but the bulk of them are concentrated in one section, focused on the will, with words related to "feed" in another section on pleasures of the senses (and the soul) and one passage from a section on the soul. The section on pleasures of the senses has many words which parallel language in sonnet 129 (see below).

DAVIES

soule (180, 181)
 center (181)
 in prosperitie sinne domineers (181)
 Earth (182)
 feede (180)
 fedd (100), feeding *Powre* (102)
 rebellious (181)
 pines (182)
 emptie soule (181)
 for their comfort *soule* and *bodie* both/
 With *Care* confusedly themselues doe
 cloth[e] (102); prosperity (180);
 Vanity (181); corporall pleasure (181)
 Excesse (180)
Gluttons Gorge (*Charibdis* of *Excesse*)
 (103)
 losse (181)
 The more the *Corpes* decaies, so much
 the more/ The *soule* is strengthened;
 which *sick-men* bewray,/ Who when
 their *Bodies* are most *weake* and *poore*,/
 Their *Minds* reveale most *strength*, and
riches store. (224)
 mortifie (180)

SONNET 146

soul (1, 9)
 center (1)
 sinful (1)
 earth (1)
 (feeding; Vendler's emendation) (2)
 fed (12), feed, feeds (13)
 rebel powers (2)
 pine (3)
 dearth (3)
 Painting thy outer walls so costly gay (4);
 body (8)

 excess (7)
 eat (8)

 loss (9)
 Within be fed, without be rich no more
 (12)

 death (13, 14)

Parallels Between Davies' Microcosmos and Other Sonnets

Davies and Shakespeare's sonnets 127 and 128 have only a few shared words but they also have marked conceptual similarities, which appear the similar context of adulterous courtship. Davies and Shakespeare's sonnet 129 share some vocabulary and conceptual parallels in the context of analyzing the characteristics and effects of lust. Other possible parallels in wording and concept exist as detailed below, though none as full as for sonnet 146.

DAVIES

fairest, Faire (163)
Beauties Heire (163)

in her eare (165); give eare (166)
wringing . . . by the hand (165)
Male, as male-content to stand (165)
hard by stands Patience the husband (165)
The *Howres* are made more pleasant
by this *Chime* (166)
Who would not stil to here the same stil
sitt,/ Although a *man* transformed were
by it?/ O tis a iolly matter to give eare,/
Nay to give leaue to *Musicke* in her fitt
(166)

To tell the *Mischiefes*, *Spoiles*, &
Masacres/ By *hate* effected though
through *loue* begun,/ Were but to tell
the *number* of the *Starrs*,/ For *Lust* and
Mischeife are ioynt-passengers. (168)

lures of *lust*; *Baite* (101)
But lewde *Lust* is so loose that shee
restraines/ Her will in nought, though it
bringes *all* to nought./ Shee pleasure
takes in *pleasure* causing *paines* (168)
world a pray [prey] to woe (101)
these thinges/ The *World* to *Hell*, and
Hell to *horror* bringes (101)
When *sinne* so sweetly doth *intreate* and
pray,/ And promise *Flesh*, *Heav'n* in
Incontinence, (To which *prosperity* doth
Flesh betray)/ How can fraile *Flesh* and
Bloud say sweet *sinne* nay? (180)

SONNETS

127 (and 1)
fair, fairing (127); fairest (1)
beauty's successive heir (127); tender
heir (1)

128 (and 140)
mine ear (128)
fingers; thy hand (128)
by thee blushing stand (128)
(my tongue-tied patience (140))
thou my music; concord (128)

change their state (128)

129
lust in action (2)
murderous, bloody, full of blame,/
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to
trust (3-4)
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight
(5)
Past reason hated as a swallowed bait (7)

A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe
(11)

All this the world well knows, yet none
knows well/ To shun the heav'n that
leads men to this hell. (13-14)

DAVIES

flesh and *blood* doe groning vndergoe
(101)
excruciate (180)
She [lust] will not let the *Thoughts* so
much as prie/ A *minutes* space, on
ought, but what shee loues,/ Shee
(*Tirant*) captivates the *Fantasy* (168)
the hate which too much loue doth buy
(169)
sensuall, vilest, feele, touch, tast,
smelling, hearing, pleasures . . . best
. . . most base appeare (101)
doating (161)
Nature . . . would reiect ioie sensuall
. . . / And not permit the same her to
betray,/ Which makes fraile sense the
strongest Reason sway (103)
Phisick-Potions (182)
Pleasure . . . eare-charming Siren (80)
sinnes sowre-sweetes (99)

Other sonnets

a thousand groans (131); my heart to
groan (133)
torture; torment; crossed (133)
Thou art as tyrannous (131)
Do I not think on thee, when I forgot/
Am of myself, all tyrant for thy sake?
(149)
too much disdain (140)

eyes; ears; feeling; base touches; taste;
smell; sensual feast (141)

dote (141, 148)
I do betray/ My nobler part to my gross
body's treason,/ Flesh stays no farther
reason (152)

What potions have I drunk of Siren's
tears (119)
that sweet thief that sourly robs (35)

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