The Still Moment:
A Study of the Relationship Between Time and Love in Shakespeare's Sonnets

Liza Marguerite Bell Henderson

Department of English Literature

McGill University, Montreal

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The Still Moment of Shakespeare's Sonnets

Abstract

Time infuses Shakespeare's Sonnets. In this love poetry the idea of time is the characterizing force of experience. There exists throughout the sequence a tense point and counterpoint. The vulnerable beauty of life which inspires love is set against the passage of time, the source of this vulnerability. The Sonnets explore the contrast between the ephemeral nature of the moment of love, and the eternal value of the emotion.

Résumé -

Le temps infuse les Sonnets de Shakespeare. Dans cette poésie d'amour l'idée du temps est la force caractérisante de l'expérience. Il existe à travers cet enchaînement une opposition tendue. La beauté vulnérable de la vie qui inspire l'amour est vue contre le passage du temps, la source de cette vulnérabilité. Les Sonnets cherchent à expliquer le contraste entre la nature éphémère du moment d'amour et la valeur éternelle de l'émotion.

With great gratitude to Paolo Vivante
for his poetic inspiration.

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Chapter One:

The Infinity of Time

Time infuses Shakespeare's Sonnets. It is impossible to call to mind the figure of the beloved without evoking a summer's day, the rose in full bloom, the sun at its height. The sensuous power of these images of time is one and all with the perception of love in the Sonnets. In this love poetry the idea of time is the characterizing force of experience. This distinguishes Shakespeare from his contemporaries, who generally focus on the physical attributes of the beloved, or on the poet's own passionate state of mind.[1,2]

There also exists throughout the sequence a tense point and counterpoint. The vulnerable beauty of life which inspires love is set against the passage of time, the source of this vulnerability. The Sonnets explore the contrast between the ephemeral nature of the moment of love, and the eternal value of the emotion:

> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> (Sonnet 116, ll.9-10)

The connection in Shakespeare's Sonnets between time and love is a natural and profound one. The emotion of love renders us most sensitive to and aware of the preciousness of life, its infinite beauty, and yet to the fleeting nature of this life and this beauty.

Thus, love brings to bear upon us the great issues of time and eternity. This awareness lends a crucial sense of urgency and intensity to the feeling of love. So the experience of love takes on a bittersweet quality in the Sonnets: an implicit sense of dramatic irony and pathos. Hence the dramatic ring which echoes throughout this poetry stems not from the scorn or inaccessibility of the beloved, as in the Petrarchan tradition, but rather from the universal condition imposed on life by time. This involves a fundamental truth, as it is time itself in a sense which makes life dramatic, which lends it its form, meaning and preciousness.

Shakespeare's Sonnets may in fact be seen as a dramatic sequence. The lyrics are detached from one another, yet there is a sense of development. Thoughts and concerns recur throughout the sequence in ever-expanding ripples: unfolding in an organic growth. There are peaks and chasms, contracted points of experience which are dramatically highlighted. There is a dramatic sense of intensity and immediacy. This is implicit in the strong realization that the moments depicted have an eternal transcendent value, and yet are ephemeral. There is pathos in the very joy of the present moment.

While there is no necessary chronological sequence, the recurring thoughts and their imagery recall one

another as if through a web of memory, which creates its own internal sense of time, transforming the measured strictures of the clock. Thus the "moments" of the Sonnets are linked together by their common relationship to time itself, rather than by any narrative relationship to each other.

The passage of time in the Sonnets thus finds its point of reference in the concentrated moments of experience which are created by the feeling of love and the perception of beauty. In such moments time seems to reach its zenith. The moment is distilled and eternalized. Thus a sense of an immanent value is portrayed through an immanent sense of stillness and suspended time. Henri Fluchère expresses this general concept:

> In any life, as in any play, there are moments of incredible richness, so completely satisfying that they sweep away all the dull, featureless moments between.[3]

Not only does the imagery of the Sonnets highlight these concentrated moments, but the Sonnets themselves -- as poems -- are imprinted by the urgency of the present. However much past and future are discussed in these poems, the primary purpose is to uphold and glorify the present moment at hand. It is this "ever-present now" which is the constant motivating concern of the Sonnets. The focus lies in that critical juncture between past and future which is the present moment of immediate experience, of essential vitality. Paolo

Vivante writes of Homer that: "Time is the quickening element", and of time which "touches" both man and landscape to life.[4] This essential function of time can be seen as the fruit of the ever-recurring moment, which constitutes a kind of eternal present. Ricardo Quinones also writes of this sense of universal contraction of time in the present:

> By analogy with eternity, the present is not merely the moment at hand, it is summary and all-embracing, compressing in the depth of its vision a completed and rounded-out picture of human existence.[5]

Coleridge suggests that time here becomes one with its transcendent significance:

> Whilst the poet registers what is past, he projects the future in a wonderful degree, and makes us feel, however slightly, and see, however dimly, the state of being in which there is neither past nor future, but all is permanent in the very energy of nature.[6]

Fluchère, speaking of tragedy in general, offers an explanation for this concept of the transcendent sense of the "stilling" of the fleeting moment:

> Our idea of time depends on our consciousness of it. We are accustomed to say that happy hours fly whereas suffering or annoyance lasts interminably. This is wrong, for completeness may touch eternity and boredom be forgotten as soon as its cause has disappeared, boredom being simply the waiting for the unpleasant to cease, whereas happiness distends time without stint.[7]

G.K. Hunter points out the natural connection between Shakespeare the playwright and Shakespeare the lyric poet.[8] He also emphasizes the tragic nature of

the Sonnets in its Aristotelian sense:

> We have here what we might expect: a dramatist describing a series of emotional situations between persons. The Petrarchan instruments turn in his hands into means of expressing and concentrating the great human emotions and of raising in the reader the dramatic reactions of pity and terror by his implication in the lives and fates of the persons depicted.[9]

This analysis isolates another fundamental dramatic aspect of the Sonnets: that they portray conflicting interactions between "characters," in that there is a sense of development of role and relationship in these poems. The three-fold relationship of Poet-Speaker, Young Man, and Dark Lady to which Hunter refers, however, can in fact be seen to represent only the microcosmic, individual level of conflict in these poems. There is beyond this a macrocosmic counterpart which brings us back to the issue of time. For in this Sonnet sequence individual biography is subsumed into a universal sense of time and of human life. Jan Kott identifies this greater sphere of dramatic tension, and the importance of time:

> The Sonnets can be interpreted as a drama . . . the fourth character of the drama is time. Time which destroys and devours everything. Time is the foremost actor in any tragedy.[10]

There is, however, a central element missing Kott's analysis. This is the sense of a transcendent value manifested in love. The dramatic scenario that then appears to emerge is one in which Poet, Youth, and

Dark Lady express the universal conflict of time with love. But this is also in fact an oversimplification. Time itself, as a character, is not immune from the dramatic development within the sequence. Turner assesses this process as developing

> from a vision of Time as the destroyer of order and beauty, through the concept of Time as the ruler of all external and material things, towards an ethic in which Time becomes the corrupter of the soul and the sense when human beings yield to the dominion of its determinism.[11]

This reading still falls short, however, in that it confines itself strictly to one aspect of time in the Sonnets: that of the destruction and tyranny of its unyielding chronology. Philip Martin, on the other hand, characterizes the development of imagery in the first seventeen Sonnets as one of fertile expansion, rather than of contraction and destruction:

> . . . the general imaginative movement in this first group is an expansive one . . . . The increasing exploration of the human theme in natural and seasonal terms is one sign that Shakespeare's imagery is broadening and deepening the range of meanings hinted at in the opening Sonnet.[12]

The above comment points to the fact that it is the natural and particularly the seasonal terms which convey this fertility of time which permeates the Sonnets. These images of particular seasons, months and times of day become recurring emblems of a transcendent state associated with a "captured" moment. G. Wilson Knight's observation on the Sonnets

suggests how this imagery expresses the basic paradox of love's relation to time:

> The comparison of human life to seasonal or diurnal change is emphatic throughout. However transcendent the experience, it is locked in nature.[13]

The Sonnets which most richly contain this natural imagery are those which most powerfully and poignantly express the tension between transience and transcendence. Here that which is ephemeral vividly throws into relief and delineates that which is of eternal value. Time has here a very intimate, imagistic function. It is portrayed both in terms of perceived moments and of transcending reality.

The development of the relationship of time and love begins with the most elemental, physical, literal sense of transcending time's limits: procreation. As the sequence progresses, this persuasion gives way to that of imparting a kind of immortality through poetic creation. These arguments both serve to express this transcendental longing, as if both procreation and poetry were metaphors of an immanent value. Ultimately however, these give way to another idea: the value of immanence or eternity is felt in time itself, in the preciousness of the fleeting moment.

Conventional wisdom on the issue of time in Shakespeare's Sonnets often acknowledges such a three-fold development, yet invariably focuses on time as an ultimately unassailable destructive force. As one

recent critic analyzes this complex relationship of past and future to the present moment, referring particularly to Sonnet 30:

> As he looks backward with regret, he may look forward with misgiving, and though the moment is sweet, the consciousness of time is a shadow on the grass.[14]

Certainly much of the rhetoric of this poetry bemoans time's ubiquitous ill-doings, particularly regarding human life. But what is it that impels this concern and motivates its poetic expression? What lends it its force and tragic intensity? Why is it, simply, that the concern with time's effects is here so dominant? Is the inevitable decay of the physical all that Shakespeare tells us about time? Sonnet 126 has been used by S. Viswanathan, for example, in support of this last claim:

> O thou, my lovely boy, who in thy power
> Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;
> Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st
> Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st;
> If Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack,
> As thou goest onwards, still will pluck thee back,
> She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill
> May Time disgrace and wretched minutes kill.
> Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
> She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure;
> Her audit, though delayed, answered must be,
> And her quietus is to render thee.
>
> (Sonnet 126)

The first image of this Sonnet is one of youthful beauty as somehow eternal. Soon this image is followed by one of inevitable decay. The sonnet seems to describe an unassailable universal law, and Viswanathan dwells upon it as the dominant theme of this and all the

previous Sonnets:

> But Time has only a pseudo-stop. This is at best only a short-lived conquest of Time by Nature. This "eternalization" cannot endure. For ultimately Nature will have to yield to Time. So that at the end of Sonnets 1-126, we come back to the opening situation in the series. For all the defiance hurled at Time, the enduring consciousness is one of the ineluctable, inexorable fact of mutability.[15]

Clearly the literal meaning of this Sonnet involves an acknowledgement of the boy's mortality, and the inevitability of decay. But this in itself is a perception of very limited and unexceptional nature. That man is mortal surely Shakespeare never sets out to dispute. And although this is the subject of the poem, what is the force which motivates its urgent warnings and creates its powerful imagery? What stands out most strongly in this Sonnet, its focus, is not "the ineluctable, inexorable fact of mutability" emphasized by Viswanathan above, but rather that which this fact sets into relief: that loveliness which is the original and dominant image of the Sonnet -- the lovely boy. For it is this perception of beauty which inspires the poem. Just as the warning is addressed to the boy, he is what gives meaning to time's effects. The condition of physical transience intensifies the sense of something of transcendent value.

The boy is first perceived in terms of the aura of the eternal which surrounds him: "O thou lovely boy,

who in thy power / Dost hold Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour;" (11.1-2). He is then described within the context of sequential time: "She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure; / Her audit, though delayed, answered must be" (11. 9-10). Here is the sense of a still moment, an embodiment of the beauty of the present, which is felt all the more intensely and starkly against the certainty of imminent decay. The boy's image is never really lost sight of, but rather it presides over the poem, prompting its dramatic tension and re-emerging in its concluding tragic note: "And her quietus is to render thee." (1. 11). It is the perception of the boy as the "treasure" (1. 9) of nature that is essential in this Sonnet. It is this thought of love as a zenith in time which gives the thought of death its force.

Several of the Sonnets preceding Sonnet 126 dwell on the same idea. Probably the most unmitigated sense of ruin is articulated in Sonnet 64:

> When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
> The rich, proud cost of outworn buried age,
> When sometime lofty towers I see down-rased
> And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
> When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
> Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
> And the firm soil win of the wat'ry main,
> Increasing store with loss and loss with store;
> When I have seen such interchange of state,
> Or state itself confounded to decay,
> Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
> That Time will come and take my love away.
> This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
> But weep to have that which it fears to lose.
> (Sonnet 64)

As in Sonnet 126, although most of the poem describes the sequential, destructive processes of time, what is it that inspires its powerful imagery? It is the great value of that which is loved in the present moment. The inevitability of loss and decay is only the literal meaning. The threat of destruction acquires its force and meaning as the foil to the delicate beauty of life. The constant process of political and geographical erosion, the decay and fall of empires, civilizations, the vanishing of whole continents, is so compelling a thought because of the fear of losing something of beauty. Thus beauty is in fact the supreme power, the redemptive element in the ruthless ravages of life.

The last four lines of the Sonnet suddenly reveal this sense of beauty inherent in the present moment as the inspiration for the previous invective:

> Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,
> That Time will come and take my love away
> This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
> But weep to have that which it fears to lose.
> (l. 11-14)

Thus ultimately, Sonnet 64 portrays an overriding sense of the value of that which is loved in the present. The direct and intimate simplicity of these four lines contrasts with the monumental, processional imagery of the previous twelve. This sets apart and emphasizes the supreme value of that which is loved. The power of this value is implicit in the fact that it is the source of all the previous invective. It is this love which gives meaning to this decay.

Both Sonnets 126 and 64 underscore the absolute, inevitable law of time: "So do our minutes hasten to their end" (Sonnet 60, line 2). While in Sonnet 126 this process of time is presented as the "journey" of human life, "Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st / Thy lovers withering as thy sweet self grow'st" (11.3-4), "She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure;" (1.10), in Sonnet 64 it is the course of erosion of the earth itself which is expressed (11.3-10). In both sonnets this aspect of time is personified, "Time's fickle glass, his sickle hour" (S. 126, l. 2), "Time's fell hand" (S. 64, l. 1), and in both it is sequential in nature.

The same aspect of time is depicted in the various other Sonnets which perceive time as the enemy, the destroyer of life.[16] Sonnet 123, for example, directly addresses this omnipotent force in an attitude of defiance:

> No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change:
> Thy pyramids built up with newer might
> To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
> They are but dressings of a former sight.
> Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
> What thou dost foist upon us that is old,
> And rather make them born to our desire
> Than think that we before have heard them told.
> Thy registers and thee I both defy,
> Not wond'ring at the present nor the past;
> For thy records and what we see doth lie,
> Made more or less by thy continual haste.
> This I do vow, and this shall ever be:
> I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.
> (Sonnet 123)

Once again time is personified, directly addressed as "thee," and seen in its sequential aspect: "Thy

registers" (l. 9), "Thy records" (l. 11). And finally, this sequential or chronological aspect is made more explicit: "Made more or less by thy continual haste" (l. 12). Here then, the sense of sequence is portrayed through images of recorded history (l. 2). But again this depiction of decay and flux acts as the counterpoint to the sense of something which transcends it. The authority of chronology, measurements and records is questioned and challenged. History itself is defied. The inadequacy of its quantitative, abstract nature is opposed to another kind of time which is a law unto itself: subjective time. This is set apart from the endless fluctuating aeons of objective sequence. In the final line of the Sonnet, the sense of something of lasting beauty and value is set into relief against the background of perpetual transience. The sense of something still or eternal is outlined against the vicissitudes of time's "continual haste" (l. 12). The means of upholding this truth, this value, is here mysterious; neither procreation nor poetry are put forth. What does emerge unequivocally, however, is the emphatically subjective, individual nature of that which is valued: "I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee." (l. 14).

Thus in the bleakest of all the Sonnets, the obliterating course of time is depicted as an absolute, dark yet petty tyrant. Yet even here there is the intimation of a moment of transcendence. However

implicit this intimation may be, however overwhelming the concern with time's destruction, the latter is invariably perceived in terms of contrast with the former, its foil. This sense of transcendent value is consistently what finally stands out. Destruction itself derives from it its high significance.

Frederick Turner, in his Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare, recognizes the need to distinguish between different "kinds" of time in the Sonnets. Turner categorizes and describes nine aspects of time here.[17] This detailed analysis is perhaps most valuable in emphasizing both the scope and the subtlety of the "character" time in the Sonnets. Turner himself warns that "it is perhaps dangerous to ascribe a philosophical or a conceptual view of time to the Sonnets."[18] Ultimately, however, all of these various "categories" of time fall under the broader distinction between "objective time:" the macrocosmic law of life, and "subjective time," the immediate, individual experience of it. This distinction, as discussed above, is clearly the fundamental one; and it determines the attitude towards time taken in different Sonnets.

Turner also recognizes the value of love and beauty in the Sonnets, but he does not consider the paradox of the organic relationship of these to time:

> The tragedy of beauty and love is that they demand of us imperatively a recognition and belief in their ultimate purpose, but that they exist within the world of time, seemingly ruled over by an unalterable determinism.19

Here the destructive omnipotence of time is unrelentingly emphasized, but why is this so pressing, so haunting? The reason is not explored: "Time the corrupter of the flesh is also the corrupter of the soul" if one "succumbs to its tyranny," Turner continues.[20] Surely the poet challenges this tyranny in the name of moments experienced in time which are precious to him. Subjective time is set against the determinism of sequential time.

As in the present study, and other past, prominent ones, Turner perceives a three-fold development in the Sonnets' search for some form of transcendence of time's determinism. The first two, clearly argued for in the text of the poems, and universally agreed on, are those of procreation and poetic creation. The third and final "answer" Turner suggests to be the realization "that true beauty is internal" and "generated by a kind of love to which time is irrelevant."[21]

That true beauty and love are in a sense internal and so somehow transcendent, is no doubt central to the Sonnets' meaning. This is the transcendence asserted by Sonnet 55 : "'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity / Shall you pace forth;" (11.9-10). And it is likewise embodied by the conviction of Sonnet 116, particularly in

the image of love as an "ever-fixed mark" (S. 116, l. 5):

> Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips
> and cheeks
> Within his bending sickle's compass come;
> Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
> But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
> (Sonnet 116, ll.9-12)

Or again: "To me, fair friend, you never can be old," (S. 104, l. 1). This conviction is the foundation of many important Sonnets (97, 98, 106, 123, etc.). That this transcendence is depicted through the very idea of time is here ignored, however. Thus the "irrelevance" of time to love can be seen as a misleading over-simplification which strikingly begs the question of time's complexity in a study which initially seems to recognize it. Thus again in this interpretation, the actual connection between transience and transcendence is not posited or pursued. Far from being irrelevant to time, love is itself an essential aspect of time. J.B. Leishman conveys the spirit of this interpretation in his claim that Shakespeare's Sonnets affirm: " the existence of something unchangeable in a world of change and eternal in transient mortality." But although he finds this in the essential value of love itself, again time is seen as the adversary to this value: " it is <u>because</u> his love is for love's sake that it can defy Time."[22]

G. Wilson Knight also proposes a tripartite development of the issue of time's destruction in the Sonnets. Here again the first two responses are

those of offspring and art. Knight's perception of the third departs from Turner's in that he describes it as a kind of "religious" realization of a mysterious, transcendent nature.[23] But most significantly for this study, Knight's interpretation involves a recognition of the importance of another aspect of time than that of destruction:

> The poet plays on every variation known to him on time and its antagonists. Time may be ruthless and villainous, but it may also hold an aura of almost religious grandeur and mystery, as aeons, past or future, swing into our view . . .[24]

This sense of a "greater reality" (Knight, p. 60) is somewhat ambiguous, and its implications are never developed to describe the relationship between the fleeting nature of life, and that which is of lasting value. But it is significant in that it opens the perception of time beyond the partial and superficial confines of the wholly negative and destructive, and suggests rather the essential creativity, and moreover the infinity of time.

L.C. Knights, on the other hand, refutes the frequent claim of critics such as Frederick Turner (see above, p. 19-21) that love in any way does in fact triumph over time in the Sonnets. He argues that this transcendence over time is merely empty assertion, lacking the conviction of true experience.[25] In the conclusion of his discussion however, Knights makes a very valuable point. First he states that:

"It is the contemplation of change, not the boasting and defiance that produces the finest poetry."[26] Moreover, of these Sonnets promising immortality he mentions that: "They draw their value entirely from the evocation of that which is to be triumphed over."[27] In other words, the value of these Sonnets derives from time itself. This is exactly the essential point, although Knights' essay never explicitly states this paradoxical realization, nor in any way develops the implications of this momentous conclusion. Knights does, however, here clearly point the way to the purpose of this study, to show how the pattern of the Sonnets' search for immortality begins with the logical assertions of procreation and poetic creation, and finally arrives at the actual experience of time itself. What becomes central is the fact that transience itself intensifies the sense of an immanent value. Here, as in life, the general themes of reflection yield to the stronger impact of concrete experience.

In the "third" kind of Sonnet, time is everywhere evoked rather than invoked. It is accepted and appreciated implicitly, rather than defied explicitly. Here rhetoric gives way to the incontestable truth of experience, in what Knights referred to as the "finest poetry".[28] Here time is one and all with the value of life, perceived through love. These sonnets are imbued

with and deeply rooted in the world of time. They are themselves portraits of time: portrayed in the colors and forms which give it life. Time indeed becomes a force which gives everything its substance and value, quickening it into life. It is in this group of sonnets that the sense of transcendence evolves to its full poetic power. Here all other ideas of time -- sequential, destructive, historical, mythical -- give way to the infinite sensuous richness of time, of which chronology is merely the formal pattern. Thus the common critical emphasis on time's destruction, in looking only at the literal meaning, neglects the passion which inspires the words, the motivating force of emotion behind the rhetoric. The dramatic elements of tragedy and pathos which pervade the Sonnets can stem only from a passionate sense of what is of intrinsic value within the continual flux of time. Hence, when discussing the idea of time in the Sonnets, it is only misleading to attempt to separately address the issue of transience and of transcendence. Time and love, the destructive sequence of time and the creative perfection of the moment, draw from one another in this poetry, as in experience. It is from their taut counterpoint that the meaning of the Sonnets derives.

Chapter Two:

Procreation

The argument for procreation as a means of transcending the confines of time is the most narrowly literal, the most purely physical of all the three suggested in the Sonnets.[1] Here as elsewhere the power of the poetry and particularly its imagery springs from an overriding desire to express the sense of an ultimate value over and above the flux of time. In these "procreation sonnets" the sphere of time most strongly and urgently felt is not the ambiguous future and its lurking threat, but rather the beauty and vitality of the present moment which makes this future decay so threatening. It is "the glistering of this present" and "the freshest things now reigning" of The Winter's Tale[2] which are the subject of concern. Procreation does not symbolize the inevitable sacrifice of the present to the future, nor preparation for the possibility of progress. Rather it is upheld as a means of continuing and glorifying the perfection of the present moment, a supreme point in time. Thus the concept of the future -- seemingly so central to the idea of procreation -- has

significance only in its relation to the inherent value of the present in this poetry.

In the first three Sonnets of the sequence, for example, the present moment is clearly envisaged as one of perfection. This moment is embodied by the beloved youth, whose beauty is symbolized by the image of the rose in the first Sonnet. The rose is strongly suggestive of a fleeting moment of perfection: of a vulnerable, ephemeral blossoming:

> From fairest creatures we desire increase,
> That thereby beauty's rose may never die,
> But as the riper should by time decease,
> His tender heir might bear his memory;
> But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
> Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
> Making a famine where abundance lies,
> Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
> Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
> And only herald to the gaudy spring,
> Within thine own bud buriest thy content
> And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
> Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
> To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.
> (Sonnet 1)

The rose of line 2 embodies that which "holds in perfection but a brief moment" (Sonnet 15, l. 2), when it is in that momentary full-blown state, and presents no trace of the decay that is imminent. This moment is the poem's focus: "But as the riper should by time decease" (Sonnet 1, l. 3). This sense of time is expressed through the imagery of natural fertility and growth. Here the natural and the human spheres are intimately entwined; youth and spring are one and the same, two manifestations of the same principle of

beauty: "Within thine own bud buriest thy content" (S. 1, l. 11).

The first two lines of the Sonnet express the essential connection between procreation and beauty. Beauty, the object of love, gives us the sense of a transcendent value. For it is the perception of beauty which inspires the longing for eternity. Procreation acts as a metaphor for the attempt to capture this eternity: "From fairest creatures we desire increase, / That thereby beauty's rose may never die" (ll.1-2). The sense of this transcending value is what imbues the process of procreation with its poetic meaning here. Procreation signifies not only the continuation of life itself, but the continuing appreciation of life's perfection. It becomes an emblem of beauty itself. It embodies the essential fertility and expansiveness of life: the vital force which is most manifest in the peaks of beauty, and which creates a sense of stillness in the flux of time. Thus procreation highlights the idea of beauty in the entire natural world. Procreation is a way of exalting that beauty which is the general theme of all the Sonnets. For what is beauty but that which is treasured in life?

Thus beauty, though so strong a focus of the Sonnets, is never described. The attributes or features of the beloved are never indicated. Nor is landscape delineated. Beauty is rather depicted in images of time, and particularly its moments of

perfection, the peaks of experience. Thus in Sonnet 1, the sense of an eternal value is conveyed as "beauty's rose" (l. 2), and the beloved as: "Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament / And only herald to the gaudy spring" (ll.9-10).

The expression of beauty through the imagery of the seasons is echoed strongly in the opening metaphor of Sonnet 2:

> 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:
> Then being asked where all thy beauty lies,
> Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
> (Sonnet 2, ll. 1-6)

The "tottered weed" of line four here signifies a fallen state not only regarding clothing, but also regarding natural growth. This weed mockingly echoes the perfect rose of the previous Sonnet: a plant stripped of its cultivated beauty and the harmony of its growth. Here again the idea of procreation expresses metaphorically the desire to extend that which is precious in the present moment indefinitely. The beauty of the beloved is expressed as "the treasure of thy lusty days" (l. 6), the embodiment of cumulative precious moments. Again the wrack of time is the foil to the glowing image of the treasured days.

Just as Sonnet 2 looks forward to the wintry future of a barren present, so the next one refers back in images of fertility to a past time of perfection which is echoed in the present:

> Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
> Calls back the lovely April of her prime;
> So thou through windows of thine age shall see,
> Despite of wrinkles, this thy golden time.
> (Sonnet 3, l. 9-12)

Here again, past and future draw their significance from their relation to the present time and its inherent value. The present moment of perfection, "this thy golden time" (l. 12) is seen as an echo of another, "the lovely April of her prime" (l. 10). The season of spring, and the golden, sunny days it ushers in, again express this fleeting perfection and its luminousness. A season in time becomes a season in man.

In words strongly reminiscent of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Thomas Hardy speaks of "that ephemeral precious essence youth, which is itself beauty"[3] and further describes the same sense of the echoing of a natural season and a time of life, and their continuation through procreation:

> While life's middle summer had set its hardening mark on the mother's face, her former spring-like specialties were transferred so dexterously by Time to the second figure, her child, that the absence of certain facts within her mother's knowledge from the girl's mind would have served for the moment, to one reflecting on those facts, to be a curious imperfection in Nature's powers of continuity.[4]

As in Shakespeare, a sense of stillness within the great flux of time is depicted, embodied by beauty and conveyed through procreation. This passage from Hardy presents a striking echo of Sonnet 3's "Thou art

thy mother's glass, and she in thee calls back / The lovely April of her prime" (11.9-10). Here is the fulfillment of the plea: "That thereby beauty's rose may never die" (S. 1, l. 2). A sense of eternity is also suggested in the observation that even an internal discrepancy "would have served for the moment, to one reflecting on these facts, to be a curious imperfection in Nature's powers of continuity."[5] For time seems here to make up for what the circumstances of nature do not allow.

There is also in the illusion described by these last words a poignancy, a tragic tone reminiscent of the Sonnets. In both cases this springs from a recognition of the complexity of time, and the limits of procreation in conveying continuity. Again then, the knowledge of transience heightens the luminousness of life's supreme moments, as the mother's hardening "middle summer" heightens the fresh spring of the child.

In Sonnet 13, the value of procreation is expressed through the imagery of husbandry. The play on husbandry suggests both human and natural fecundity, as here, in another echoing of the human and the natural spheres, husbandry involves a household rather than the fields of Sonnet 2. But the strong underlying sense of the seasons remains:

> 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?
> (Sonnet 13, ll.9-12)

Beauty here merges the idea of transcending moments both of human life and of nature:

> Against this coming end you should prepare,
> And your sweet semblance to some other give.
> So should that beauty which you hold in lease
> Find no determination;
> (Sonnet 13, ll. 3-6)

Here also then procreation takes on a strong figurative aspect as an expression of essential value in life. The concluding couplet resolves the metaphor into elemental facts of existence:

> Dear my love, you know
> You had a father -- let your son say so.
> (Sonnet 13, ll.13-14)

Beyond the literal meaning of reproduction is the sense of procreation representing a kind of distilled essence of time's "fruits." Thus the supreme high moments of golden youth, of the rose in full bloom, and all the season's attendant perfection, are suggested in the idea of reproduction. Thus the quintessence of the creativity of nature, the fertility of time, are conveyed through the idea of reproduction.

The specific imagery of distillation occurs in various procreation Sonnets. While suggesting reproduction,[6] distillation in its turn becomes emblematic of that sense of eternity within the very passage of time, embodying a supreme value. In Sonnet 5, for example, this distillation is clearly of

transcendent significance:

> Those hours that with gentle work did frame
> The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
> Will play the tyrants to the very same
> And that unfair which fairly doth excel;
> For never-resting time leads summer on
> To hideous winter and confounds him there
> Sap checked with frost and lusty leaves quite gone,
> Beauty o'ersnowed and bareness everywhere.
> 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.
>
> (Sonnet 5)

Here sterile winter is pictured in the first two quatrains, only to be triumphantly blotted out in the third. Through the opening imagery of the poem, time itself has created this moment of perfection in the youth: "Those hours that with gentle work did frame / The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell" (ll.1-2). The irrevocably fleeting nature of this loveliness is immediately set forth as its condition: "Will play the tyrants to the very same" (l. 3). Yet this transience is finally of no matter. The verb "to frame" has another significance in this respect. Here time, while framing or isolating experience, sets it into relief, and intensifies it. It is as if time had created a supreme work of art, however fleeting its nature. Thus there is the sense of time lending to form a vital stillness. This form is reinforced by everyone's gaze dwelling upon it, and gives the sense

of a suspended moment. The restless upheavals of winter are seen as the inevitable condition of beauty. It is as if in a painting, the lovely youth was delineated against a stormy, dark background. Thus the momentary perfection of the present is set against the ongoing process of decay which is its backdrop. The ultimate resurgence and triumph of beauty as an essence emerges unexpectedly in the image of distillation: "Then, were not summer's distillation left / A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass" (Sonnet 5, ll. 9-10). Here the precise process referred to is the "distilling" of summer's blooms into perfume. The idea of the "copy" then previously suggested in the procreation sonnets, the physical "duplication" of individual beauty, is expanded. Rather than an exact external reproduction, we have an image of something extracted from the object of beauty. The suggestion is of a kind of vital force which somehow transcends the ravages of time. Here is the intimation of an essence of beauty's perfected moment, of which every generation, every season, is a new embodiment.

Sonnet 6 contains a similar image of distillation:

> 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.
> (Sonnet 6, ll. 1-4)

Here what stands out is the intrinsic connection between the eternizing of the moment and the beloved. The distillation of summer becomes the distillation of the

lovely youth himself, through the idea of procreation. The sense of eternity in the season thus becomes a sense of eternity within man. Hence the "internalization" of time: "In thee thy summer" (l. 2). Here the meaning of the word summer transcends itself and conveys a sublime value both in human life and in nature. The perfection of youthful beauty is symbolized by the season; and the phrase develops the image of the youth as rose in Sonnet 1. The same sense is conveyed in the opening words of the Sonnet: "Then let not winter's hand deface" (l. 1). In both the personification of time, and the "internalization" of time, the life of nature and the life of the individual are inextricably intertwined.

In the seventh Sonnet, the sense of the beloved embodying, however momentarily, a distilled essence of time is suggested in another different instance. Rather than time of year, we have the time of day:

> Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
> Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
> Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
> Serving with looks his sacred majesty;
> And having climbed the steep-up heavenly hill,
> Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
> Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
> Attending on his golden pilgrimage;
> But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,
> Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,
> The eyes, fore duteous, now converted are
> From his low tract and look another way:
> So thou, thyself outgoing in thy noon,
> Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.
> (Sonnet 7)

The connection between the individual human life and the natural life of the day is central here. Again

the Sonnet is prompted by an overriding sense of the value of the supreme moments of life: its high noons, its summers, against their implicit condition, imminent decay. The moment of perfection is reached at the acme of ascending growth, but its glory is perched on the extreme edge of destruction at its very height: "But when from highmost pitch, with weary car, / Like feeble age he reeleth from the day," (11.9-10). Long before the analogy is made explicit in the concluding couplet, the beloved and the course of the day are strongly intertwined. That which in other Sonnets glorifies the youth, here glorifies the day. The luminous images of beauty which predominate are again both human and natural, interchangeably. The golden pilgrimage of the sun is one with the course of human life: "Resembling strong youth in his middle age, / Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still, / Attending on his golden pilgrimage;" (11.6-8). The sacred, sublime language[7] which describes this material phenomenon depicts a world within time that is both objective and transcendent.

Sonnet 12 can be seen in many ways to exemplify the idea of procreation in the Sonnets. Here the imagery of time is paramount:

> 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;
> Then of thy beauty do I question make
> That thou among the wastes of time must go,
> Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
> And die as fast as they see others grow;
> And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can
> make defense
> Save breed, to brave him when he takes
> thee hence.
>
> (Sonnet 12)

It is the color, the light and the dark, which here are central, in the description of both "creative" and "destructive" seasons: the "violet," "sable," "silver," "white" and "green." Here the sensuous perceptions of time, depicted by color, present a visual point and counterpoint, which creates a balanced tension in the poem. The two seasons of winter and summer are set off against each other, both visually and structurally. Thus the meaning of each derives from its contrast with the other. Although winter and death are the seeming subject of the poem, they are again but the foil to summer and life. Just as the memory of summer is what gives death its sting, so the acknowledgement of death affords the value of "summer's green" its fullest recognition: "Then of thy beauty do I question make / That thou among the wastes of time must go" (ll.9-10). It is the very fact that "brave day" is sunk in "hideous night" which makes night so hideous.

The natural drama of this sonnet culminates in the harvest. The tragic note with which the poem resonates reaches its climax in the depiction of the harvest in funereal terms, subsiding in the sad but resigned note

of line 11: "Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake." The suggestion of a funeral in the second stanza develops the strong intimacy between the human and the natural worlds first hinted at in line 4: "sable curls all silvered o'er with white," and again continued to line 8, in which "summer's green" is "Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard." The processions, the rituals of human life, are one with the processes of nature.

This Sonnet too dwells on essences in the macrocosmic image of day "sunk" in night. The idea of distillation in the Sonnets involves the sense of a vital force, a "sap" which is a frequent idea in poetry. Donne, for example, presents an image reminiscent of Shakespeare's quoted above:

> The world's whole sap is sunke:
> The general balm th' hydroptique earth hath drunk,[8]

Dylan Thomas also conveys a similar sense of a fluctuating vital force which is somehow the barometer of all the natural world:

> The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
> Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
> Is my destroyer.[9]

In both these instances, however, the sense of a vital force is far more general than we find in Shakespeare's Sonnets. What distinguishes the idea of essence in the Sonnets is its profoundly intimate, subjective focus on

the sensuous perception and value of beauty.

In the final line of Sonnet 12's third quatrain, the inevitability of regeneration countering that of death re-emerges. Thus the procreative pattern of instilling one's life and "beauty" in one's progeny is reaffirmed: "And die as fast as they see others grow" (l. 12).

The couplet makes emphatic the connection between the seasons and human generations. The expansion of "brave" from descriptor of the day in line 2 to a full transcending act in the final line, completes the perception of this essential affinity:

> And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense
> Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.
> (Sonnet 12, ll. 13-14)

The visual nature of this Sonnet is also strong (ll.1-2, 5, 12). Here a specific time, a moment of vision precipitates a perception of universal nature. There is a suspense in time, as in a painting. There is, however, no landscape, no description of composition, no suggested narrative as is characteristic of Shakespeare's Sonnets. Rather the moment is portrayed impressionistically, through individual strokes of color and form, all of which convey time. Thus the setting itself is dramatic. Place and time merge together to form a moment, inspired by a feeling of urgency imposed by transience.

Chapter Three:

Poetry

Poetry soon succeeds procreation in the Sonnets as an image of a sublime value in the world of time. Here it is the power of art rather than that of nature which is upheld. Still the "immortalizing" effect of poetry is prompted by the same sense of something of ultimate value in the natural world of human experience. Poetry thus becomes another metaphor for the same idea. Like procreation, poetry here conveys the sense of something eternal, distilled from the riches of time.

The idea of poetry has thus an eternizing effect which is not limited to the conventional sense of word living on after death. It is this value, this "worth" (see Sonnets 60, 74), which persists in spite of all encroachment. Poetry is its expression. This is the crux of the immortalizing role of poetry in the Sonnets. Poetry is here immortal only because the value of love is, rather than the reverse. This love emerges in the poems as the final "mover," the enduring inspiration, the still moment in the midst of incessant change and the "crooked eclipses" (Sonnet 60, l. 7) of time's reversals. Certainly

here the conventional sense of the immortal nature of poetry is greatly surpassed.[1] The "reification" of the beloved in pen and paper, just as in monuments of stone, is ultimately subject to the same inexorable erosion. It is not poetry itself, but the sense of love, which conveys eternity.

In these Sonnets, the traditional idea of poetry as a record of achievements, and as an "abode," a "container" conveying eternity is also greatly surpassed.[2] We find instead a more intimate sense which leads back to the imagery of distillation. The poem, like the youth,[3] is envisaged as a kind of vial, the alchemical crucible containing the perfume, the gold extract. This distilled extract consistently suggests a kind of essence which expresses that which is most intimate, typical and permanent in any object.

Sonnet 54, for example, echoes the imagery of distillation of numbers 5 and 6, here in terms of poetry rather than procreation:

> O, how much more doth beauty beauteous seem
> By that sweet ornament which truth doth give:
> The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
> For that sweet odor which doth in it live.
> The canker blooms have full as deep a dye
> As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
> Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
> When summer's breath their masked buds discloses;
> But, for their virtue only is their show,
> They live unwooed and unrespected fade,
> Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so:
> Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made.
> And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
> When that shall vade, my verse distills
> your truth.
>
> (Sonnet 54)

Here what stands out is the sense of an essential,

intrinsic value in summer's beauty which is vindicated despite winter and death. It is the perfume, the essence of the rose which is of surpassing beauty and value, rather than its external attributes. And it is this sense of worth which gives meaning to the idea of beauty: "But, for their virtue only is their show, / They live unwooed and unrespected fade," (11.9-10). Here again, the momentary perfection of the rose, and the creative zenith of summer, lead naturally to a sense of transcendent value in the individual life: "Sweet roses do not so: / Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odors made" (11.11-12). In the final couplet poetry is put forth as if as the human equivalent of the perfume of the rose: "my verse distills your truth" (l. 14).

In Sonnet 55 a similar image of the poem as vial emerges with unequivocal simplicity:

> Not marble nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive this pow'rful rime,
> But you shall shine more bright in these contents
> Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time,
> When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
> And broils root out the work of masonry,
> Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
> The living record of your memory.
> 'Gainst death and all oblivious enmity
> Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
> Even in the eyes of all posterity
> That wear this world out to the ending doom.
> So, till the judgement that yourself arise,
> You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.
> (Sonnet 55)

Here the sense of the poem as a container is constant throughout: ". . . you shall shine more bright in these

contents" (l. 3), the punning "your praise shall still find room" (l. 10), and finally, simply, "You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes" (l. 14). The essence of something of transcendent value is captured in poetic thought, as in the perception of love. Again this precious distillation is set against the ravaging flux of time. Here, rather than the natural course of erosion, the dissolution is wrought by man himself. Yet despite the chaotic wreckage of human warfare, in its very midst there exists a kind of saving grace. This thing of beauty is impervious to all human as well as natural violence. Ultimately there is only the assurance of an eternal moment of radiant beauty embedded in these poems, which "shall shine more bright." The final couplet of Sonnet 74 echoes this declaration: "The worth of that is that which it contains, / And that is this, and this with thee remains" (S. 74, ll. 13-14).

In Sonnet 15[4] the idea of the distillation of beauty's high moments in poetry is expressed in its most organic terms, and is most closely connected with the nature of procreation:[5]

> When I consider everything that grows
> Holds in perfection but a little moment,
> That this huge stage presenteth naught but shows
> Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
> When I perceive that men as plants increase,
> Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky,
> Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
> And wear their brave state out of memory:
> Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
> Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
> Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay

> To change your day of youth to sullied night;
> And, all in war with Time for love of you,
> As he takes from you, I ingraft you new.
> (Sonnet 15)

Here it is explicitly not the fleeting nature of life which inspires the poem, but rather specifically the fleeting nature of life's perfection: "When I consider everything that grows / Holds in perfection but a little moment," (ll.1-2). The dynamic tension between this transience and the overriding value of this "perfection" is the essential perception of the Sonnet: "Then the conceit of this inconstant stay / Sets you most rich in youth before my sight" (ll.9-10). There is a tone of cherishing appreciation which stems from the recognition of life's delicate balance and its inextricable fusion of transience and transcendence. This counterpoise is echoed in the strong ebb and flow described by the natural imagery: "Cheered and checked even by the selfsame sky, / Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease" (ll.6-7), "Time" and "Decay" debating and exchanging day and night (ll.11-12), and finally this natural and human counterpoint is echoed in the poet's love itself: "And, all in war with Time for love of you, / As he takes from you, I ingraft you new" (ll.13-14). Both transience and transcendence are aspects of the same phenomenon. We feel their kinship in looking at individual human life, as at a tree or flower. The "sap of life," that which causes everything

to grow, the essential life-force, has its high moment before it wanes. Here is a supreme point. Like the perfume of the rose, it may be seen as an essence, inextricable from life, and yet somehow beyond its limits. Poetry here captures this essence in thought and imagination. Through poetry, the very vulnerability of beauty becomes a positive quality. The effect is very similar to that of procreation. The expression: "I ingraft you new"(l. 14) presents the function of poetry in the generative terms of nature.[6] This suggests far more than immortality achieved through simple "reification" in stone or words. This immortality is instead found within the very flux of life: within the subjective experience of time rather than in objects themselves.

The strong link between human and natural time is again expressed in Sonnet 18. Here the individual human life is compared to the life of a single day:

> Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
> Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
> Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May
> And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
> Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
> And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
> And every fair from fair sometime declines,
> By chance, or nature's changing course,
> untrimmed:
> But thy eternal summer shall not fade
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
> Nor shall Death brag that thou wand'rest in
> his shade
> When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.
> (Sonnet 18)

Here what begins as a tentative suggestion: "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" (l. 1), then develops into a full-blown metaphor -- another image of internal time: "thy eternal summer shall not fade." This conclusion springs from the central contrast between the transience of the external, natural season, and the transcendence of the internal, individual season: ". . . summer's lease hath all too short a date" (l. 4), "But thy eternal summer shall not fade" (l. 9). Summer then is again emblematic of the glorious peak both of time and of love.

This Sonnet, like those previously discussed, is concerned with perfection perceived through love, and the sense of transcendence inherent it it. Thus the beloved embodies the golden height of natural growth, and yet something more. Again it is as if he embodied a kind of still moment in nature which is both an integral part of nature, and yet somehow apart from it. What stands out here are the poignant images of summer which express vulnerability and so intensify the preciousness of what is so vulnerable, exposed as it is: the rough winds shaking the tender buds, the withering heat of the sun, or other threatening phenomena of nature. From natural time, the poet extracts a sense of eternity: "But thy eternal summer shall not fade" (l. 9). Set off by all these uncertainties and reversals, there is the sense of a transcendent value, embodied by the momentary perfection of a rose, a day or a life.

Just as "eternal lines" echoes the "eternal summer" of the same quatrain, so the image of poetry here conveys the idea of a perfection which is saved and upheld from the encroachments of circumstance.

Sonnets 19, 60 and 65 all describe decay in terms of the sequential course of time. In all subjective time is set against it. Sonnet 19 most unequivocally vindicates the value of subjective time as a crowning moment of experience contrasted to the time of myth, history, decay and fall:

> 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;
> Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
> And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
> To the wide world and all her fading sweets,
> But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
> O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
> Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen;
> Him in thy course untainted do allow
> For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
> Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,
> My love shall in my verse ever live young.
> (Sonnet 19)

The tone of defiance is commensurate with the proportions of that which is defied. Yet the gargantuan, apocalyptic acts of unnatural destruction lose all force and meaning in the face of the poet's own love. The figure of the beloved alone incorporates all that is of value that time can offer the speaker.

The immortalizing power of love is ultimately vindicated through poetry: "Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong,/ My love shall in my verse ever live young" (ll.13-14). This love emerges as

the ultimate hero: that which achieves eternal youth where even mythic powers fail, and achieves it through the spell of poetry.

The element of sequence is central to Sonnet 60:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
> Nativity, once in the main of light,
> Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
> Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
> And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.
> Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
> And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
> Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
> And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
> And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
> Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.
> (Sonnet 60)

Again a dynamic waxing and waning predominates: a taut reciprocity which governs the Sonnet, as it governs time itself. The natural and the human worlds typically provide the basis for this poetic tension: "the waves" echo "our minutes." The sequential course of both involves both forward motion, and then a doubling back on this, paradoxical as the seasons: "And Time that gave doth now his gift confound / Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth" (11.9-10).

Here then there is a crucial awareness of the constant ticking of the second hand on the clock emphasized by Quinones:[7] "So do our minutes hasten to their end;" (1. 2). This awareness, however, is merely a backdrop, a foil to the experience of time. It simply serves to intensify the perception of what is most precious in time, which ultimately emerges in

the final couplet of the poem: "Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand." (l. 14).

Sonnet 65 summarizes the transience of earthly life expressed in the two preceding Sonnets of the chapter:

> Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
> But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
> How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
> Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
> O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
> Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
> When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
> Nor gates of steel so strong but Time decays?
> O fearful meditation: where, alack,
> Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
> Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
> Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
> O, none, unless this miracle have might,
> That in black ink my love may still shine bright.
> (Sonnet 65)

Thus the monuments, the statues, and the land erode and come to sink into what erodes them: the boundless sea. The paradoxical tension of time implicit in this process emerges in the question: ". . . where, alack, / Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?" (ll.9-10). Time is in fact both the sieger and the besieged; both the threat and the value. This is the essential pattern that the Sonnets' treatment of time explores.

In the image of the jewel in the chest, there is again the suggestion of something buried, enclosed, invisibly contained within. This is reminiscent of Sonnet 1's: "Within thine own bud buriest thy content" (l. 11). Again an image of art echoes an image of nature, as the idea of poetry echoes that of procreation.

In the couplet of Sonnet 65, the recurring imagery

of contrasting colors, particularly strong in Sonnet 12, recurs. Here the paltry nature of poetry as mere physical ink and paper is emphasized in contrast to the luminous splendor of what it captures: "That in black ink my love may still shine bright" (l. 14). No, it is not the words themselves which convey immortality, but rather the love which inspires them.

Chapter Four:

The Value of the Moment

Sonnets 97 and 98 portray love in terms of a paradoxical contrast between the external season and the sense of a surpassing internal one. In both poems this discord is produced by the absence of the beloved. In Sonnet 98 the central image of the rose is echoed:

> From you have I been absent in the spring,
> When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,
> Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
> That heavy Saturn laughed and wept with him;
> Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
> Of different flowers in odor and in hue,
> Could make me any summer's story tell,
> Or from their proud lap, pluck them where they grew:
> Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
> Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
> They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
> Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
> Yet seemed it winter still, and you away,
> As with your shadow I with these did play.
> (Sonnet 98)

Again the internal perception of time is suggested as a kind of distillation of natural time. Thus beauty becomes emblematic of the value of time, in natural as well as human terms: "the lily's white" and "the deep vermilion of the rose" (11.9-10). In the course of this sonnet, these images of natural perfection become symbols of a transcendent state, inspired by love: "They were but sweet, but figures of delight, / Drawn

after you, you pattern of all those" (11.11-12). Here then elements of beauty are found to be quite insufficient, unless infused with the essential value conveyed by love. There is an overriding sense of the glorious beauty of summer as being inseparable from that which is loved and valued in life. Despite the fact that the poet is so far removed from the spirit of summer itself, yet the imagery of summer stands out in the poem with all the rich, commanding power of an impassioned invocation (11.1-10). The golden season is not distinct and apart from the beauty of the beloved. It is rather an echo, a shadow of it, form without animation, vial without essence: "Yet seemed it winter still, and you away, / As with your shadow I with these did play" (11.13-14).

The beloved as rose in the procreation sonnets, and as summer's day in the poetry sonnets, has here expanded to encompass an entire season, embracing the whole extent of time's fertility. At the same time this image of "beauty's rose" has developed from a literal metaphor to a symbol of an internal, transcendent state of being. Whereas time was to be transcended through the explicit, purely physical process of procreation and the only somewhat less physical process of poetry, here it is love itself that recreates the world of time, transcending all chronological limitations.[1] The image itself has grown and expanded from the individual, embryonic emblem of

the rosebud (S. 1, ll. 9-11), to a portrait of a wide, seasonal landscape. The depiction of beauty throughout these sonnets remains constant, however, in its stress on time itself, rather than the actual figure of the beloved. In this instance, April, and all its attendant splendor, embodies a kind of eternal potential for beauty, which exists only insofar as it is intimately perceived. Thus, "proud-pied April" does not personify actual, physical youth, but rather "a spirit of youth" (l. 3). The "lovely April of her prime" which is reflected in the child in Sonnet 3 (l. 10), has in Sonnet 98 expanded to represent a vital essence of life.

Sonnet 97 also presents a strong picture of subjective time:

> How like a winter hath my absence been
> From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year!
> What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen!
> What old December's bareness everywhere!
> And yet this time removed was summer's time,
> The teeming autumn, big with rich increase,
> Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
> Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease:
> Yet this abundant issue seemed to me
> But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit;
> For summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
> And thou away, the very birds are mute;
> Or, if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer
> That leaves look pale, dreading the winter's near.
>
> (Sonnet 97)

The beloved here is the "pleasure of the fleeting year," the distillation of summer, of the eternal moments of beauty in the ongoing flux. The poem contrasts images of summer's fruits and winter, as the poet's focus shifts between his suffering and the benevolence of his natural

surroundings. The imagery of both winter and summer is vivid and powerful. It embodies both internal and external states, presenting a portrait of opposites in unison: all things combined in one perception. Time is at its height, and yet it appears sterile if not infused with sympathetic experience and passion: even its magnificence is "But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit;" (l. 10).

This sonnet is among those which most fully express the luxuriant fertility and abundance of high summer's issue. Here the sexual and the vegetative intermingle in their common essential sensuousness: "The teeming autumn, big with rich increase, / Bearing the wanton burden of the prime, / Like widowed wombs . . ." (ll.6-8). This teeming profusion of natural fecundity is rendered all the more striking in its contrast with the absence of the beloved. It is as if there was a universal yearning for his presence which would engender a kind of consummation of the season's high moment: "Yet this abundant issue seemed to me / But hope of orphans and unfathered fruit; / For summer and his pleasures wait on thee," (ll. 9-11). The very thought of the beloved, however, in itself conveys a high ideal which is reached imaginatively, spiritually, rather than in a literal, physical sense.

Thus the subjectivity of time is underscored. Its fullest meaning is contingent on internal perceptions of beauty and love. These are the very seeds of nature's

glory.

The idea of absence creating an internal winter is also presented in Sonnet 56:

> Let this sad int'rim like the ocean be
> Which parts the shore where two contracted new
> Come daily to the banks, that, when they see
> Return of love, more blest may be the view;
> Or call it winter, which being full of care,
> Makes summer's welcome thrice more wished,
> more rare.
>
> (Sonnet 56, l. 9-14)

Here the ocean embodies a human condition, as in Sonnet 64.[2] But here, although signifying the vast expanse and flux of time, this image is quite explicitly the foil to something of transcendent value. There is a strong blending of opposed meanings: the ocean separates and yet intimates reunion. Both separation and reunion are but external aspects of one internal state. The couplet tells us of love intensified through the limits imposed by time. By contrast, life is dull, empty, unless infused by time's fullness: ". . . and do not kill / The spirit of love with a perpatual dulness." (11.7-8) Again time echoes the world of human values, as they both metaphorically convey each other.

In Sonnet 102, summer once again symbolizes a sublime moment in love, the zenith of life. It is here compared to the first promising stirrings of spring, and these in their turn suggest the creative processes of poetry, through the image of song:

> Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
> When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
> As Philomel in summer's front doth sing
> And stops her pipe in growth of riper days;
> Not that the summer is less pleasant now
> Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
> But that wild music burdens every bough,
> And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
> (Sonnet 102, ll. 5-12)

Here there is harmony between the seasons and the experience of love. As in Sonnets 97 and 98, in this poem all is infused with a heady sense of profound fertility and inviolable vitality. The days themselves are seen to "grow" and "ripen" as the blossoms and fruits which they come to bear (l. 8). As the bud-like spring reaches its full blossoming in summer's maturity, so does the poet's love. The poetic expression of this love, its outward show, diminishes as the season and love expand. Here again is an echo of the sense of poetry's ultimate inadequacy to convey the beauty of love and time: "Not that the summer is less pleasant now / Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night," (ll. 9-10). Rather what was explicit becomes implicit. Thus an essence of spring's creative energy is continued in the full summer. Action and becoming are absorbed into being. The vital power of the preceding spring is implicit in the full-blown expansion of the present. There is a stillness implicit in the great flux of time, just as the bud is implicit in the flower, the child in the parent. The sense of value is underscored by the physical transience of that which is valued. Thus this sweetness never cloys: "And sweets grown common

lose their dear delight." (l. 12).

The infinite richness of this love and the intimate self-containment of its poetic expression reflect the season's pattern: "Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue, / Because I would not dull you with my song" (ll.13-14). There is the suggestion of something mysteriously self-contained, as if it were eternally present.

The subjectivity of time is vividly brought out yet again in Sonnet 104. Here it is the perception of beauty which conveys this relationship between the seasons and love:

> To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
> For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
> Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
> Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
> Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned
> In process of the seasons have I seen,
> Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,
> Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
> Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
> Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived;
> So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
> Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived;
> For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred:
> Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.
> (Sonnet 104)

Here the sense of eternity in that which is loved is decidedly not put forth in defiance and challenge of some seemingly greater force. Rather it is stated with the calm serenity of a given, natural certainty. Here is the recognition of a sublime value in life which is beyond doubt. Yet at the same time, there is a strong counterpoint to this subjective sense of eternal beauty

which is both actual and ideal. This is the underlying knowledge that the physical manifestation of this beauty is inseparable from its transience: "Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial hand, / Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived." (11.9-10). This acknowledgment then leads back to the overriding significance of the subjective. To the poet the beloved is the embodiment, however momentary, of human and natural beauty throughout all time. "Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead." (l. 14).

The subjectivity of time is echoed in the play on eye: "when first your eye I eyed" (l. 2), with its emphasis on individual perception. The individual perception of beauty is inseparable from that beauty. This continues in the observation: "Such seems your beauty still ". Although some reality separate from individual perception is acknowledged in line 12 (". . . and mine eye may be deceived"), yet it is this perception which is the overriding concern of the sonnet. Again a play, here on the word "still," emphasizes this aspect. This beauty seems to be not just unchanged, but unchangeable. There is a sense of stillness implicit in the natural world, which is the backdrop of the season's constant processional. Thus some essence of time's green perfection remains impenetrable to the unceasing flux, although it can only be perceived against this flux. Love and beauty are inseparable from the experience of time. It is

the heady beauty of the seasons, the rich fertility of time, from which this perfection, this value is extracted, and against which it is appreciated. The beauty of the "fair friend" is one with that of the recurring spring: "Three winters cold / Have from the forests shook three summers' pride, / Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned / In process of the seasons have I seen, / Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned, / Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green" (11.3-8).

The physical reality of transience is not acknowledged in the poem until lines 11-12: "So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand, / Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived ". Again this counterpoint serves only to underscore a value passionately realized, and the conviction that despite all appearances of decay, it is somehow transcendent: "For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred: / Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead" (11.13-14).

The strong sense of the youth as the embodiment of some eternal essence of beauty expressed in the couplet of this sonnet is developed in Sonnet 106:

> When in the chronicle of wasted time
> I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
> And beauty making beautiful old rime
> In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;
> Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
> Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
> I see their antique pen would have expressed
> Even such a beauty as you master now.
> So all their praises are but prophecies
> Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
> And, for they looked but with divining eyes,
> They had not skill enough your worth to sing:

> For we, which now behold these present days,
> Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.
> (Sonnet 106)

Again the strongest sense of time is the subjective one, and its focus is the present moment: "I see their antique pen would have expressed / Even such a beauty as you master now./ So all their praises are but prophecies / Of this our time, all you prefiguring;" (1107-10). Whereas Sonnet 104 spoke of the future as subsumed by the present, here it is the past which is outshone by the present. In both poems, either future or past is important only insofar as it serves to delineate the present. This present time is seen like the center of the sun from which all other times radiate in ever-dimmer, echoing circles.

Sonnet 53 speaks similarly of the more distant, mythical past, inspired by awe of the present:

> What is your substance, whereof are you made,
> That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
> Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
> And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
> Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
> Is poorly imitated after you.
> On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
> And you in Grecian tires are painted new.
> Speak of the spring and foison of the year:
> The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
> The other as your bounty doth appear,
> And you in every blessed shape we know.
> In all external grace you have some part,
> But you like none, none you, for constant heart.
> (Sonnet 53)

The first two lines powerfully intimate the presence of a mysteriously shimmering beauty, and question its nature. Both the beauties of antique myth and those of nature are reflections of it. It is something

universal, eternal -- now embodied in the beloved figure: "In all external grace you have some part,"[3] (l. 13). The beloved thus particularly embodies the general fecundity of the natural year and the crests of its seasons: "Speak of the spring and foison of the year: / The one doth shadow of your beauty show, / The other as your bounty doth appear " (ll.9-11). Again, what distinguishes the depiction of the beloved's beauty is that this beauty is so intimately intertwined with that of nature's cycles, and yet, perceived through love, it also transcends them: "But you like none, none you, for constant heart." (l. 14).

In Sonnet 33, the glory of the supreme moment of love is recalled in this way:

> Full many a glorious morning have I seen
> Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
> Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
> Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
> . . . Even so my sun one early morn did shine
> With all-triumphant splendor on my brow;
> But, out alack, he was but one hour mine;
> The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
> (Sonnet 33, 1-4, 9-12)

What past and future ages are to the glorious moment of the present, such are the other parts of the day to the sun's zenith. Although this poem seems to depict the beloved in a negative light, the strength and spirit of the sonnet derive from the comparison between the youth and the sun as the zenith of beauty. It is this sense of the attaining of a summit which is paramount in the sonnet, rather than the circumstances of misgiving which surround it. Thus the moment of glory

has a quickening effect; it is not threatened by decay: the apprehension of it transcends itself. Despite the regret of brevity, the initial picture of golden perfection is only clouded over: "masked," but not destroyed. The supreme image of the sun is essentially undimmed, as is the memory of the "glorious morning" it creates. Again nature is internalized, and the sun becomes the very light of beauty, one with the spirit of love: "Even so my sun one early morn did shine" (l. 9).

The sun itself in its lustrous career is touched with human, animate senses, as in Sonnet 7.[4] Here these express love which is both erotic and ethereal: "Flatter the mountain tops," "Kissing with golden face," "Gilding pale streams." The sonnet concludes with an implicit acceptance of transience as an essential condition of the natural world:

> Yet for this my love no whit disdaineth;
> Suns of the world may stain when heaven's
> sun staineth. (11.13-14)

Sonnet 73 perhaps most fully expresses the quintessence of a season, a still moment of arrested time:[5]

> That time of year thou mayst in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds
> sang.
> In me thou seest the twilight of such day
> As after sunset fadeth in the west,
> Which by and by black night doth take away,
> Death's second self that seals up all in rest.
> In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
> That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

> As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
> Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
> This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
> To love that well which thou must leave ere long.
>
> (Sonnet 73)

Time is here not referred to in its broadest, metaphysical sense, but rather as the essence of a season. Time further is internalized: the moment of a season is perceived as an intimate human moment. "That time of year thou mayst in me behold." That "mayst" evokes the choice of the beholder rather than any mere fact. We thus have a quintessentially subjective aspect of time, a delicate state of being, as much a frame of mind as an actual time of life.

In the following line, three varying images are presented: "When yellow leaves, or none, or few,". The phrase is filled with manifold suggestion.[6] The question of whether many leaves remain or not seems irrelevant. What matters, rather, is the delicate attachment to life and the feeling of suspense -- a condition of mortality. We have no description of leaves staying and falling, but the sense of a general state of suspense. Here is existence in all its brittleness, its impending fall and decay: an extreme point of life. What again stands out is the moment as a juncture. We are reminded once more of the sun of Sonnet 7: "when from highmost pitch with weary car / Like feeble age he reeleth from the day." Both leaves and sun appear suspended: the moment imperceptibly

gives way, but its powerful impact remains. The resulting picture is one stripped down to its most simple, stark, elemental state: the odd dessicated leaf trembling on a bare bough in a chill wind.

The first suggestion of actual movement in the sonnet is introduced by "shake." That "shaking," however, again is not at all descriptive. It simply enhances the barest sense of existence: a movement to and fro, caught in its permanent balance. This then is not mere spectacle, mere setting of the scene. It is a vision of the utmost pathos. Here is the extreme edge of glory that is past. The very barrenness contains some essence of this golden height, in its very brittle, skeletal nature, so inseparable from the haunting implication of preceding living flesh and teeming blood.[7]

In the second quatrain the same kind of perception is applied to the day. We feel here the glory of the sunset, not described, but all the more powerful through the barest sensuous outline, the most intimate and at the same time, the most universal evocations: "In me thou seest the twilight of such day / As after sunset fadeth in the west" (11.5-6). Here the glory of the day is in its last dying embers, on the verge of its extinction. The source of this extinction, the darkness, is linked first to sleep, and then in quatrain 3 to death: again among the most universal and yet intimate aspects of human life.

Why does this imagery of the dying year and the dying day so suggest an eternal moment? It is here as throughout the sonnets rendered by poetic expression. The moment in each case is caught in its utmost simplicity and richness, and thus becomes an essence. A pure point of experience is captured which is both individual and universal. Its expression in sensuous, visual terms fuses nature and poetry, the natural moment, and the human one. Thus the transition to the poet's love follows naturally. Love too, like the season or the day, has reached its zenith:

> This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
> To love that well which thou must leave ere long.
>
> (l. 13-14)

Notes

Chapter One:

*This and all subsequent quotations of The Sonnets are taken from: William Shakespeare, The Sonnets, eds. Douglas Bush and Alfred Harbage. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970).

[1] A. The Physical Description of the Beloved

There are two main approaches to the description of love in the Elizabethan sonnet tradition. The first focuses predominantly on the physical attributes of the beloved. The second emphasizes rather the poet-lover's own passionate state of mind. Both these approaches then are directly descriptive, whether physically or psychologically. A frequent characteristic of both these is the personification of love.

The physical description of the beloved is directly descended from the Petrarchan "blazon" convention which catalogued the lady's features in a formulaic, linear sequence. This convention was much liberated and manipulated by the Elizabethan sonneteers. In the fifteenth sonnet of Spenser's "Amoretti" sequence, for instance, this description of the external attributes of the beloved progresses to the internal ones of mind and soul:

> For loe my love doth in her selfe containe
> All this world's riches that may farre be found,
> If Saphyres, loe her eies be Saphyres plaine,
> If Rubies, loe hir lips be Rubies sound: . . .
> But that which fairest is, but few behold,
> Her mind adorned with vertues manifold.
> (XV, 5-8, 13-14)

Another example is found in the sixty-fourth sonnet of the same sequence. Here the concluding couplet suggests the inadequacy of physical description to convey the beauty of the beloved. And again a progression from external to internal qualities is suggested in the focus on the scent of the flowers rather than their visual impact:

> Her lips did smell lyke unto Gillyflowers,
> her ruddy cheekes lyke unto Roses red: . . .
> Such fragrant flowres doe give most odorous smell,
> but her sweet odour did them all excell.
> (LXIV, 5-6, 13-14)

One notable sonnet in Shakespeare's sequence also uses this Petrarchan convention, finds it unsatisfying, and transcends it. This transcendence however does not come in a final reversing couplet, but is rather the explicit subject of the poem from the first line:

> My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
> Coral is far more red than her lips' red; . . .
> And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
> As any she belied with false compare.
> (130, 1-2, 13-14)

This sonnet is only descriptive in the sense of asserting what the lover is <u>not</u> physically. Critical approaches to this sonnet have generally interpreted its primary meaning as that of offering an alternative, unflattering description of the lady in question, or that of parodying specific conventions. The underlying implication can rather be argued as being that physical description is wholly inadequate and inevitably frustrating in the attempt to capture love in thought or word. Thus the concluding couplet makes explicit

the transcendent nature of beauty.

This is the only Shakespearean sonnet which is concerned specifically with physical description of the beloved, and it is surrounded by poems whose central theme is explicitly that of the deception of physical beauty. In Sonnet 127, for example, only one physically descriptive detail is mentioned: ". . . my Mistress' brows are raven black" (127, 9). Here, through the image of "darkness," conventional beauty is inverted and serves as a metaphor for a far greater moral and spiritual inversion which is central to this sonnet:

> Sweet beauty hath no name, no holy bower,
> But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
> (127, 7-8)

This inversion is embodied by the play on the triple meaning of the word "fair." The beloved is paradoxically fair as in beautiful, but not fair as in light in coloring, nor as in virtuous and good: ". . . such who, not born fair, no beauty lack," (127, 11).

The dangerous deception which this discrepancy between seeming and being can lead to is frequently expressed in the bitter recognition of many surrounding sonnets, echoing the dichotomy of foul and fair:

> For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
> Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.
> (147, 13-14)

> For I have sworn thee fair: more perjured eye,
> To swear against the truth so foul a lie.
> (152, 13-14)

> Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
> In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
> And thence this slander, as I think, proceeds.
> (131, 12-14)

> Then will I swear beauty herself is black
> And all they foul that thy complexion lack.
> (132, 13-14)

The method of evoking and explaining love through physical description is clearly wholly inadequate in the light of this profound sense of self-deception and its subsequent moral outrage.[1]

B. The Psychological Description of the Poet-Lover

The psychologically descriptive approach to love amongst Elizabethan sonneteers shifts the focus from the beloved to the lover, the poet himself. This introspection involves a degree of egocentrism and psychological realism which distinguishes it markedly from its Italian ancestry. The psychological crux here tends to be that of conflict. Eventually this develops into the frequently recurring theme of an opposition between the chaste, abstract ideal of love, symbolized by the statue-like figure of the "Petrarchan lady," and its counterpart: the flesh and blood reality. So physical sensuousness gradually infers itself into the sonnet tradition. A central focus of this conflict in the English tradition is on the coexistence of pleasure and pain, of elation and despair. This theme is a direct descendant of the Petrarchan paradox of the

[1] See Sonnets 24, 43, 46, 47, 54, 61, 69, 70, 93, 95, 104, 137, 141, 148, 149, 150.

"freezing" and "burning" of love. Often it is metaphorically embodied by the Elizabethans in terms of actual physical human conflict and/or dangerous uncertainty, such as battle, siege or voyage.

Sir Thomas Wyatt, the "father" of the English sonnet writers, focuses frequently on love as paradox and conflict:

> I find no peace and all my war is done;
> I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice.
> . . . And my delight is causer of this strife.
> ("I Find No Peace," 1-2,14)

In a somewhat more gentle, subtle description of this state, Wyatt uses the metaphor of the hunt:

> Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
> But for me alas, I may no more --
> The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
> I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
> ("Whoso List To Hunt," 1-4)

The voyage metaphor is also typical of Wyatt's imagery:

> Through sharp seas, in winter night doth pass
> Tween rock and rock; and eke mine enemy, alas,
> That is my lord steereth with cruelness.
> . . . Drowned is reason that should me consort,
> And I remain despairing of the port.
> ("My Galley Charged with Forgetfulness," 2-4, 13-14)

In the Earl of Surrey's sonnets, this psychologically descriptive mode is also strong. Again paradox is the central trope in, for example, "Alas, So All Things Now Do Hold Their Peace":

> Calm is the sea: the waves work less and less;
> So am not I, whom love, alas, doth wring,
> . . . whereat I weep and sing
> In joy and woe as in a doubtful ease;
> ("Alas, So All Things Now Do Hold Their Peace," 5-6, 8-9)

Spenser's "Amoretti" also present many examples of this state of paradox, in a far more complex and subtle poetic expression:

> All paines are nothing in respect of this,
> all sorrowes short that gaine eternall blisse.
> (LXIII, 13-14)

Echoes of this form and content are also strong in the "Astrophel and Stella" of Sidney:

> Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,
> That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,
> (I, 1-2)

> And then would not, or could not, see my bliss;
> Till now wrapped in a most infernal night,
> . . . How fair a day was near -- oh punished eyes,
> That I had been more foolish, or more wise!
> (XXXIII, 2-3, 13-14)

Shakespeare's sonnets are not descriptive in nature. Neither do they address a purely internal or external state. Rather the two are intimately intertwined, so that elements of one world become emblematic of the other. The focus is on images of nature: seasons, months and times of day. These portray the profound relationship of the perception of love to the natural world of time. John Hollander and Frank Kermode, eds., The Literature of Renaissance England (London: Oxford University Press, 1973). Re all poems quoted above.

[2] The general Renaissance concept of time is discussed by Ricardo Quinones in light of the history of the human consciousness. He asserts that in the fourteenth century: "a new awareness of time as a

pressure and as a destructive force became part of literature" and that here "the second hand was added to the clock" (Quinones, p. 25). Quinones contrasts this Renaissance concern with time with the general disinterest in secular life of the preceding Medieval feudal and scholastic institutions (Quinones, p. 26). This focus on time in the Renaissance arose from an increasing emphasis on sensuous, earthly life, and a recognition of its value. Simultaneously there developed a commensurate fear of losing this life. Here then is the crux: that time was at once treasured and feared. Here was an ultimate value of life, and yet a destructive power by virtue of its transience. The destructiveness was thus but one negative aspect of a supremely positive quality. This perception is certainly fundamental to the poetic vision of the Sonnets.

The general ideas of the Renaissance serve to give us the intellectual background of Shakespeare, but they can hardly explain the uniqueness of the Sonnets, and the infinite subtlety of their interpretation of love and time. Ricardo J. Quinones, The Renaissance Discovery of Time (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[3] Henri Fluchère, Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, Guy Hamilton, trans. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1984), p. 101.

[4] Paolo Vivante, "Rose-Fingered Dawn and the Idea of Time," Ramus, 8, No. 2 (1979), p. 125-6.

[5] Quinones, p. 27.

[6] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "On Shakespeare's Sonnets," from Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Barbara Herrnstein, ed. (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1964), p. 42.

[7] Fluchère, p. 100.

[8] It is interesting to note in this context that Geoffrey Bush describes a similar idea of a "still moment" in the plays of Shakespeare. Bush isolates, for example, a particular point in Hamlet when Hamlet says: ". . . if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all." (Act V, scene II, l. 235-236). Bush describes this as "the most mysterious moment in the play, a point of unexpected stillness and security and at the same time of strange unease . . ." (Bush, p. 5). Similarly, Bush points to the moment in King Lear when Lear awakes in the arms of Cordelia and says: "You are a spirit, I know;" (Act IV, scene VII, l. 49).

The sense of these moments being rooted firmly in natural time and yet being somehow transcendent is strongly implied in Bush's conclusion: "These are points in experience when natural life seems to belong both to time and to what is beyond time." (Bush, p. 51). He emphasizes that these characters somehow stand apart from their worlds and themselves at these instants, and that: "It is at these moments that their involvement in nature becomes most complicated and precious. For to belong to nature is to be involved in an arrangement that at its most distant points touches what is beyond

things in themselves." (Bush, p. 17). These points of time in Hamlet and King Lear represent, according to Bush, examples of "a moment when natural life is addressed by every voice, by things and by the meaning of things when the possibilities of natural life go beyond even the power of words, and when it is right and proper that the rest is silence (Bush, p. 19). Here, Bush concludes, is: "Shakespeare's poetic and dramatic settlement with nature in the deepest sense." (Bush, p. 19). Geoffrey Bush, Shakespeare and the Natural Condition (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

[9] G.K. Hunter, "The Dramatic Technique of Shakespeare's Sonnets," from A Casebook: Shakespeare's Sonnets, Peter Jones, ed. (London: MacMillan Press, 1974), p. 132.

[10] Jan Kott, "Shakespeare's Bitter Arcadia," from A Casebook: Shakespeare's Sonnets, Peter Jones, ed.. (London: MacMillan Press, 1974), p. 219.

[11] Frederick Turner, Shakespeare and the Nature of Time: Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 17-18.

[12] Philip Martin, Shakespeare's Sonnets: Self, Love and Art (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 27.

[13] G. Wilson Knight, "Symbolism," from A Casebook: Shakespeare's Sonnets, Peter Jones, ed. (London: MacMillan Press, 1974), p. 71.

[14] Rodney Poisson, "Unequal Friendship: Shakespeare's Sonnets 18-126," from New Essays on Shakespeare's Sonnets, Hilton Landry, ed. (New York: A.M.S. Press, Inc., 1976).

[15] S. Viswanathan, "Time's Fickle Glass in Shakespeare's Sonnet 126," from English Studies, Vol. 57. Nos. 1-6 (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger), p. 214.

[16] This connection between time as destroyer and time as sequence, process or chronology is also borne out in the far more numerous sonnets in which the admonishment of time is less strongly expressed. In the "procreation sonnets," for example, various berating epithets of time's destructive sequence are found. Sonnet 5, for instance, speaks of the ultimately tyrannical nature of the hours, and summarizes the process of time:

> For never-resting time leads summer on
> To hideous winter and confounds him there,
> (Sonnet 5, ll. 5-6)

Sonnet 12 echoes this sense of inevitable destruction in its opening lines:

> When I do count the clock that tells the time
> And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
> (Sonnet 12, ll 1-2)

Later this universal condition is summarized as "the wastes of time" (l. 10). Again in Sonnet 15 we find the same image of inevitable decay:

> Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay
> To change your day of youth to sullied night;
> (Sonnet 15, ll.11-12)

Sonnet 16 speaks of "this bloody tyrant, Time " (l. 2), and Sonnet 19 of "Devouring Time" (l. 1). And then

again the reiterated pattern is echoed:

> Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
> And do what e'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
> To the wide world and all her fading sweets,
> (Sonnet 19, ll. 5-7)

Likewise in the sonnets of "poetry's immortality," the connection between time the destroyer and time as macrocosmic process, as ongoing flux, is consistently strong. Sonnet 60, for example, presents yet another variation on the same theme:

> Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
> So do our minutes hasten to their end;
> Each changing place with that which goes before,
> In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
> (Sonnet 60, ll. 1-4)

[17] In his Moral and Philosophical Themes in Some Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare (1971), Frederick Turner attempts to examine what philosophical or scientific concepts of time Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century share. As the basis for his analysis, he isolates nine aspects of time: the historical objective; the personal, dynamic experience of time; time as an agent; time as realm or sphere; the cyclical, zodiacal aspect, which Turner here calls "natural time"; time as mediator of cause and effect; "occasion," meaning particular moments or periods of time; time as the revealer or unfolder of life; and finally, time as rhythm, in the sense of "timing" and "keeping time" in the context of music. Apart from underscoring the infinite complexity of time in Shakespeare, and the particular scientific and philosophical purposes of Turner's study, these myriad distinctions and their

heavily analytical nature only obscure and belie the deeper poetic perceptions which are their underpinnings.

[18] Turner, p. 7.

[19] Turner, p. 14.

[20] Turner, p. 15.

[21] Turner concludes regarding this "kind of love" a sort of landmark of human emotional evolution: "Shakespeare is one of the creators of the modern ideal of love. In him Platonic love, Courtly love, the Christian idea of Charity, that is, moral love, and a new aesthetic kind of love came together. It was a synthesis novel to the age, a unique product of the Renaissance." (Turner, p. 22).

[22] J.B. Leishman, Themes and Variations in Shakespeare's Sonnets (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1961), p. 107.

[23] G. Wilson Knight concludes that the biological "solution" of propagation is conventional and unsatisfactory, and "falls poetically flat" (p. 60), and that the artistic one of poetry also manifests a "hint" of "insincerity" (Knight, p. 60). The third and far more satisfying response to time's destruction, Knight speaks of as mysterious and poetic: defying logic. Here "a greater reality is adumbrated in contrast to time's triviality" (Knight, p. 64). He finds this particularly manifest in the concept of "doom" in, for example, Sonnet 116. Knight describes

this idea of doom as "the great act of God annihilating time." (Knight, p. 64). G. Wilson Knight, "Time and Eternity," from Discussions of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Barbara Herrnstein, ed. (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1964).

[24] Knight, p. 64.

[25] L.C. Knights refutes the claim commonly made by critics, such as Frederick Turner (see Notes, p. 75-76), that love in the sonnets in any way does in fact really triumph over time. He argues first that there are logical ambiguities in sonnets often used to support this claim, such as number 123. Here Knights finds unresolvable conflicting meaning in the ambiguity of the first two quatrains (see Knights, p. 296-297). He concludes: "The purpose of the sonnet is clear: to affirm the continuous identity of the self in spite of the passage of time. But though a remarkable achievement, its failure is indicated by the unresolved ambiguity." (Knights, p. 297). Beyond the prickly question of logic which is so dependent on textual reliability and the vagaries of grammar, spelling and punctuation, Knights bases his refutation more importantly on the argument that in the development of the assertion of transcendence of time's destruction: "There is an obvious advance in maturity, an increasing delicacy in exposition, but unless we are prepared to accept assertion as poetry (that is, bare statement deliberately willed, instead of the communication in all its depth, fullness, and complexity, of an experience that has been lived) we shall not find that

solution in the sonnets." (Knights, p. 295-296).

L.C.Knights, "Shakespeare's Sonnets," from Elizabethan Poetry, Paul Alpers, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)

[26] Knights, p. 297.

[27] Knights, p. 297.

[28] Knights, p. 297.

Chapter Two:

[1] This sense of achieving a measure of immortality through reproduction harks back to Plato's Symposium:

> . . . the mortal nature ever seeks, as best it can, to be immortal. In one way only can it succeed, and that is by generation; since so it can always leave behind it a new creature in place of the old . . . Through this device, Socrates, a mortal thing partakes of immortality, both in its body and in all other respects; by no other means can it be done. So do not wonder if everything naturally values its own offshoot; since all are beset by this eagerness and this love with a view to immortality.
>
> (Plato, p. 195-197)

This conveyance of immortality is then suggested through art, as we find similarly in Shakespeare's sonnets:

> Now those who are teeming in body betake them rather to women, and are amorous on this wise: by getting children they acquire an immortality, a memorial, and a state of bliss, which in their imagining they "for all succeeding time procure." But pregnancy of soul -- for there are persons, she declared, who in their souls still more than in their bodies conceive and bring forth and what are those things? Prudence and virtue in general; and of these the begetters are all the poets and those craftsmen who are styled inventors.
>
> (Plato, p. 199)

Plato, Lysis, Symposium, Gorgias, with an English translation by W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb Classical Library, Vol. V (London: William Heineman; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1925, eds. E. Capps, T.E. Page, W.H.D. Rouse).

[2] William Shakespeare, The Winter's Tale, Act IV, Scene 1, l. 14, l. 13, from The Complete Works of William Shakespeare, W.J. Craig, ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[3] Thomas Hardy, The Mayor of Casterbridge (New York: Boni and Liveright, Inc., 1917), p. 17.

[4] Hardy, p. 17-18.

[5] Hardy, p. 17-18.

[6] Edward Hubler notes the "erotic" nature of the image of distillation and how fundamental it is to the richness, variety and fecundity of life suggested in the idea of procreation in the sonnets. Edward Hubler, The Sense of Shakespeare's Sonnets (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co., 1964), p. 72.

[7] Language such as "homage" (l. 3), "sacred majesty" (l. 14), "heavenly hill" (l. 5), "golden pilgrimage" (l. 8).

[8] John Donne, "A Nocturnall upon St. Lucie's Day," l. 15-16, from John Donne: A Selection of His Poetry, John Hayward, ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1960), p. 50

[9] Dylan Thomas, "The Force That Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," ll.1-3, from Collected Poems, 1934-52 (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1957), p. 10.

Chapter Three:

[1] Anne Ferry's All in War With Time contrasts the first half of Sonnets 1-126 to the second. This latter poetry, she writes, rather than "claiming to transform its matter into a poetic ordering essentially different from temporal experience," instead "presents itself as a moment in time as well as a reflection on other such moments." (Ferry, p. 57). Ferry explains this development, however, as inspired by a kind of disillusionment rather than a sense of greater transcendence. She concludes in fact that frequently in these sonnets the speaker and the youth "live in a human society which is linked to the natural world chiefly in sharing with it vulgarity, corruption and deceit. The language of these poems is the language of such a depraved society." (Ferry, p. 58). Ferry isolates a theme: the parodying of the convention of eternizing verse throughout these poems. These sonnets, she claims: "assign to poetry a mission, to which the poet-lover seems dedicated with vindictive and not always controlled passion of denouncing the 'power' of that beauty and destroying the claims of eternizing poetry to match it by its own miraculous language. His role as poet is to expose the ugliness and inefficiency of unnatural forces of 'power' by truth-telling art." (Ferry, p. 63). The poet's role, Ferry concludes then is "to incorporate into poetry the processes of mutability, so that it may teach the aging 'Boy,' how he shares with the poet-lover the pain

of our inevitable defeat 'in war with Time.'" (Ferry, p. 63). Anne Ferry, All in War With Time: Love Poems of Shakespeare, Donne, and Jonson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975).

[2] Spenser's 75th sonnet of the "Amoretti" sequence for example strongly expresses the essential paradox of the argument for the eternizing effects of poetry:

> One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
> But came the waves and washed it away:
> Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,
> But came the tide and made my paynes his pray.
> "Vayne man," sayd she, "that doest in vaine assay,
> A mortall thing so to immortalize,
> For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,
> And eek my name bee wyped out lykewize."
> "Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devize
> To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:
> My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
> And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.
> Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
> Our love shall live, and later life renew."
> (Norton Anthology of Poetry, p. 61)

The image of a poem -- and particularly the short, regulated sonnet form -- as a kind of container or "stanza-room" is strong in the poetry of the English Renaissance. The fourth stanza of Donne's "Canonization" expresses the relationship between this image of containment and the eternizing power of poetry:

> We can die by it, if not live by love,
> And if unfit for tombs and hearse
> Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
> And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
> We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
> As well a well-wrought urn becomes
> The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs;
> And by these hymns, all shall approve
> Us canonized for love:
> (Norton Anthology of Poetry, p. 95)

Arthur M. Eastman, coor. ed., The Norton Anthology of Poetry, short ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1970).

[3] See Sonnet 13, lines 9-12: "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?"

[4] Anne Ferry uses this sonnet as an example of the opposition of ever-changing, vegetative life within the passage of time, with spiritual life, of which poetry is a part (Ferry, p. 7).

[5] Robert H. Ray writes in a similar vein of Sonnet 16. He argues that the general interpretation of "living flowers" (l. 7) as a metaphor for children is valid but "incomplete" (Ray, p. 24). Ray explains that: "Specifically, the emphasis placed on the children as 'living flowers' implies that there are other 'flowers' in contrast, that are lifeless. These are the 'flowers' of rhetoric in the speaker's poetry . . . Through wordplay, then, the phrase 'living flowers' epitomizes both the idea and the motif of the fruitlessness of poetry contrasted to the fruitfulness of children as a means of human perpetuation." (Ray, p. 24). The two-fold meaning of "flowers" as poetry as well as children is certainly convincing, the idea of a poem as a flower being a common Renaissance metaphor, as Ray goes on to document (Ray, p. 24-25). Rather than the "sterility" of poetry being contrasted to the "fertility" of procreation, though, it can be argued that the central meaning of this image is the inability of poetry to adequately convey the emotion inspired by the beloved's

beauty as seen throughout the sonnets which deal with the idea of poetic creation. Robert H. Ray, "Shakespeare's Sonnet 116," The Explicator, vol. 38, no. 1 (Fall 1979).

[6] Anne Ferry interprets this sonnet as supporting her argument which focuses on "the power of the poet at war with time." (Ferry, p. 6). (See Chapter 3, Notes 1 and 4.) Here Ferry emphasizes that the "speaker's control" over the argument is performed by his own "conceit" which "seems to operate according to philosophical or verbal laws rather than the cruel dictates of time." (Ferry, p. 7).

[7] See Chapter 1, Page 6. (Quinones, p. 25).

Chapter Four:

[1] Douglas L. Peterson argues rather that in Shakespeare's Romances the first solution of procreation is returned to as the ultimate solution to destructive time. Peterson explains the rejection of art's promise of eternity in favor of the "ultimate need for something higher" (Peterson, p. 35) expressed in procreation, and specifically in: "love grounded on trust" (Peterson, p. 35) which finally triumphs over destructive time. This Peterson calls the "procreative solution" and sees it embodied also by Sonnet 116. This sonnet, he claims, expresses a love which is "in time and yet inviolate to time." (Peterson, p. 35). Regarding the solution of art and poetry then, Peterson concludes: "It is clear then, that art's effectiveness as a means of furthering the generative process is real but limited." (Peterson, p. 35).

[2] See Chapter 1, p. 15.

[3] The entire compass of the flowers of spring and summer are often also perceived as reflections of the beauty of the beloved. In Sonnet 99, for example, violets, lilies, marjoram and roses each have a beauty which is captured in the beloved:

> More flowers I noted, yet I none could see
> But sweet or color it had stol'n from thee.
> (Sonnet 99, ll. 13-14)

[4] See Chapter 2, p. 34.

[5] Stephen Booth speaks of line 2 of Sonnet 73 as presenting a fusion of two metaphors in one rather than a sum of them. That is, through a compound metaphor, many simultaneous, interwoven meanings and images are presented. The description of yellow leaves does not follow a logical sequence of nature, but rather depicts a moment of beholding. Booth asserts: "At a given moment in autumn an actual beholder of a tree shifts his eyes, turns his head, looks around, and sees some trees with full yellowed foliage, some bare, and some with leaves." (Booth, p. 122). Booth concludes that: "Reading this line is like looking at nature unmethodised." (Booth, p. 122). Stephen Booth, An Essay on Shakespeare's Sonnets (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

[6] Jackson Barry similarly emphasizes the concentration of meaning in Shakespeare's Sonnets. In particular he analyzes this regarding the strong use of verbs in these poems. Using Sonnet 129 as an

example, Barry speaks of the use of polyptoton in line 10: "Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme". This verbal use he claims: "concatenates the stages of lust into a moment of poetic contemplation" (Barry, p. 9). Barry also points to a similar effect created by the use of verbs in Macbeth. Here the rhetorical figure used is antanaclasis, involving, for example, the verb "to do." This, Barry states, can be seen as an index of Macbeth's temporal sense.

Barry goes on to make the comparison between Shakespeare and the more recent poetry of T.S. Eliot: "The involvement in time of Sonnet 129 and Macbeth becomes, in Eliot, a bittersweet regret for the moment in the rose garden, and temporality becomes deceptive, real only in thought. For Shakespeare, however, time was experienced sensually in action, and the verbs which set out this action displayed their resources with prodigal vigor." (Barry, p. 11). This is particularly relevant to the present study in that it underscores the essential inseparability of time from the fertility of creation in Shakespeare's Sonnets.

Barry furthermore speaks of a concentrated unity of time in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. Barry writes that Eliot expresses: "the whirligig of desire's time, but from a position at the still point of the turning world, a convergence of past, present and future which affords the inner freedom from practical desire, the release from action and suffering." Barry does not

actually connect the sense of a "still moment" in both poets, but in pointing out the essential contrast between the two poetic senses of time, he highlights the intimate and deep involvement in natural time of Shakespeare's Sonnets as opposed to Eliot's poetry. Transcendence of time here involves an intense concentration of life's sensuality and fecundity, rather than a rejection of it. Jackson G. Barry, "'Had, Having, and in Quest to Have, Extreme,' Shakespeare's Rhetoric of Time in Sonnet 129," Language and Style, vol. XIV, no. 1 (New York City: Queens College Press, winter 1981).

[7] Ann Taylor Bradford explores the ambiguity of Sonnet 73's eleventh line. This revolves around the question of whether "with" is meant to mean "by," or "simultaneously with." Bradford speaks of the former meaning as the "orthodox" one, and the latter, which she supports, as the "heterodox" one. (Bradford, p. 48). Bradford's argument in support of this interpretation is that: "the Shakespearean irony lies not in a mere reversal of roles -- 'the consumer consumed' -- but rather in the recognition that all nutrition involves consumption, that mortality is inherent in the very processes of life." (Bradford, p. 49).

This conclusion, like that of Jackson Barry (see Notes, p. 85-87) is of especial interest to the present study in that it recognizes the significance of the tendency of the Sonnets to echo the natural world

of time, and by implication the inseparable nature of transcendence and transience, and of love and time.

Ann Taylor Bradford, "A Note on Sonnet 73, l. 2," Shakespeare Quarterly, vol. XXVI, no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Folger Shakespeare Library, winter 1975).

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