

ALTERNATIVE VERSIONS OF THE SONNETS 2, 106, 138 AND 144

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed, of small worth held.
Then being asked where all thy beauty lies, 5
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes
Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use
If thou couldst answer `This fair child of mine 10
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse',
Proving his beauty by succession thine.

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

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And trench deep furrows in that lovely field,
Thy youth's fair liv'ry, so accounted now,

Shall be like rotten weeds of no worth held.
 Then being asked where all thy beauty lies, 5
 Where all the lustre of thy youthful days,
 To say `Within these hollow sunken eyes'
 Were an all-eaten truth and worthless praise.
 O how much better were thy beauty's use
 If thou couldst say `This pretty child of mine 10
 Saves my account and makes my old excuse',
 Making his beauty by succession thine.
 This were to be new born when thou art old,
 And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

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106

When in the chronicle of wasted time
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;
 Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best, 5
 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, 10
 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.

On his Mistress' Beauty

When in the annals of all-wasting time
 I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
 And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
 In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;

Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best, 5
 Of face, of hand, of lip, of eye, or brow,
 I see their antique pen would have expressed
 E'en such a beauty as you master now.
 So all their praises were but prophecies
 Of these our days, all you prefiguring, 10
 And for they saw 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 no tongues to praise.

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138

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

138

When my love swears that she is made of truth
 I do believe her though I know she lies,
 That she might think me some untutored youth
 Unskillful in the world's false forgeries.
 Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young, 5

Although I know my years be past the best,
I, smiling, credit her false-speaking tongue,
Outfacing faults in love with love's ill rest.
But wherefore says my love that she is young,
And wherefore say not I that I am old? 10
O, love's best habit's in a soothing tongue,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I'll lie with love, and love with me,
Since that our faults in love thus smothered be.

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144

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

144

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
That like two spirits do suggest me still.
My better angel is a man right fair,
My worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
To win me soon to hell my female evil 5
Tempteth my better angel from my side,

And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her fair pride;
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell; 10
For being both to me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.

The truth I shall not know, but live in doubt
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

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