14 self-referential verses derived <u>anagrammatically</u>   from William

Shakespeare's "Shall I compare   thee

to a *S*ummer' day?"

By

Curtis Franks

WHY I LIKE IT: *Poetry Editor HEZEKIAH writes…'14 self-referential verses derived anagrammatically from William Shakespeare's "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?"' is awash with a wisdom all its own. Curtis Franks has an irresistibly self-deprecating genius that I could only begin to admire from afar. "Amateur lamely codes his metaphors, / a tortured rhyme atop a level metronome..."His treatment is a transcendent transposition of Shakespeare's most famous and treasured Sonnet 18. As he mirrors it, splintering it to shards and pieces it back together, not sure which one I prefer. Franks' verse is replete with astonishing language and imagery. I have no doubt that the fanatical aficionados of the anagram will stroke out each of the opposing letters line-by-line. But its meter, the echoing consonants and assonance sound eerily similar to the ear-- pretty heady stuff. Then again, what less might be expect of a Professor of Logic and Philosophy other than to have him turn his work into an assignment. It is truly an exercise in etymological acrobatics, derivation and divination colliding.*

Five Stars

THE POET SPEAKS: *The idea is to layer constraints to the point of asphyxiation, in this instance (1) the demand that each line be a perfect anagram of the corresponding line from Shakespeare's sonnet, (2) that it adhere to the original rhyme scheme, (3) that each verse be self-referential so that the poem is literally about its own attempt to satisfy these constraints, (4) that there result some dramatic tension between the old guard who considers this a sacrilegious mess and the nonchalant naif who ignores their scold and just plays around anyway, and that (5) the heathen somehow come out on top. There is always*

a risk that things will fall into place somewhat uneventfully, but the present case pushed the author into a seemingly impossible final couplet that could only be salvaged with the truly absurd device of a Roman numeral. Future generations need not turn to David Shulman for an example of an anagram sonnet. His got its own Wikipedia page, but he didn't rhyme "nonce" with "'don't's."

AUTHOR BIO: Curtis Franks is a writer living in Chicago, IL. He teaches logic and philosophy at the University of Notre Dame and is the editor of the Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic.