Making the Woman of Him: Shakespeare's Man Right Fair as Sonnet Lady

M. L. Stapleton

Hort. A will make the man mad to make the woman of him.
Kate. Yong budding Virgin, faire, and fresh, & sweet,
Whether away, or whether is thy aboade?
Happy the Parents of so faire a childe;
Happier the man whom fauourable stars
A lots thee for his louely bedfellow.
Petr. Why how now *Kate*, I hope thou art not mad,
This is a man old, wrickled, faded withered,
And not a Maiden as thou saist he is.
(*The Taming of the Shrew* 4.5.35–44; 2333–41)[1]

As part of his program of subordination, Petruchio assigns the exhausted Katherine yet another ridiculous task. He commands her to address the aged Vincentio as if he were a beautiful young woman fit for ecstatic poetical praise. She complies immediately, instantaneously constructing the feminine with the bland, cliché terms of address that sonneteers reserve for their subjects: "faire," "sweet," "lovely." Having skewed his bride's gender coordinates, Petruchio realigns them to their rightful places. Men are not women and should not be addressed in this fashion. To make a man into a woman will make him mad, as Hortensio, better than a chorus, declares. The passage suggests that male and female represented separate and discrete entities to Shakespeare's audience and to the boys and men playing women's roles. So Hic Mulier explains with some heat to Haec Vir (her epithet for him, "my dear Feminine-Masculine," no compliment): "even by the Laws of Nature, by the rules of Religion, and the Customs of all civil Nations, it is necessary that there be a distinct and special difference between Man and Woman."[2]

Yet as Catherine Belsey and countless others have noted over the last two decades, Shakespeare "disrupts" this sexual difference in his plays

Texas Studies in Literature and Language, Vol. 46, No. 3, Fall 2004

with an almost peevish insistence, again and again.[3] As these critics often remind us, his playhouse audience enjoyed comedies in which boys played girls who pretend to be boys because they secretly love other boys and want, quite desperately in some cases, to be loved as girls: Viola (*Twelfth Night*), Rosalind (*As You Like It*), Imogen (*Cymbeline*), and, to a lesser extent, Portia (*The Merchant of Venice*). This viewership may have been troubled by such spectacles and might have regarded the proceedings as a form of child abuse. Or, since such concepts have recently been judged anachronistic for analyzing same-sex relations in Shakespeare's time, one could also argue that this audience may not have read the dynamic as homoerotic or pedophilic, suspended its disbelief and accepted the boys as girls. Criticism on the topic will probably never exhaust itself. It will certainly never reach a consensus.[4]

The scrum of competing genders and sexualities in the playhouse has naturally spilled over into discussions of *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609). I cite the above passage from *The Taming of the Shrew* as a key for reading parts of his controversial lyric sequence, since it shares some of the play's dynamics, albeit in reversed form. In the *Sonnets*, a poet creates an older speaker, "Will," who repeats blandishments to a younger male person, the Man Right Fair (so described in Sonnet 144).[5] In *Shrew*, Petruchio is in effect a puppeteer who compels a younger female speaker, Katherine, to woo an older man. Her compulsory speech-act of linguistic seduction humiliates Vincentio because she "transgenders" him by misdescribing him as female. That Petruchio compels Katherine to exhibit this poetical behavior as part of his program of mind-control and spirit breaking suggests that such encomiastic exercises contain an element of masochism for the person who praises. That he so violently hypercorrects his bride after her compliance with his fatuous demand suggests just how wrongheaded such overt gender-bending might have seemed to early modern people. Perhaps these same people, on reading the Sonnets, reached similar conclusions when encountering the Man Right Fair. They may have thought that Shakespeare's Will humiliates his addressee with his same-sex blandishments, and that his slavish praise contains an element of masochism. They might also have noticed that Will's language encourages us to construe his male addressee as feminine, since it is identical to that of his predecessors and contemporaries addressed to avowedly female subjects. Perhaps all of this seemed as preposterous to Shakespeare's audience as Katherine's feminizing of Vincentio. It could accept boy actors playing girls, but it could not accept poets addressing boys as if they were girls.

If Shakespeare knew that his readers might balk at sonnets in which one man speaks romantically to another, why would he risk alienating them? Although his severe twisting of convention may well serve as a breakout exposition of man-on-man passion (a kind of manifesto, as some

imply), it constitutes generic lampoon, as well. Commentators have long recognized this tendency in Sonnets 127–54, those concerned with the Woman Colored Ill, especially 130 ("My Mistres eyes are nothing like the Sunne"). Like her, Shakespeare's Man Right Fair is a parody of a sonnet lady, even of what I call "sonnetladydom" in its entirety. I offer this as a possible explanation for the bizarre and insistent voice in this most controversial and critically fraught Shakespeare text. It may be madness to make a man into a woman, but it is also quite amusing.

I

> It is impossible to read this fulsome panegyrick, addressed to a male object, without an equal measure of disgust and indignation. (George Steevens, 1780)
>
> Some part of this indignation might perhaps have been abated if it had been considered that such addresses to men, however indelicate, were customary in our authour's time, and neither imported criminality, nor were esteemed indecorous. (Edmund Malone, 1790)[6]

Commentators do not often suggest satire as a reason for Shakespeare to construct a sonnet sequence in which one man composes fulsome panegyrics to another. Perhaps such a theory might seem trifling or ephemeral as a means of explaining such an important matter as our ever-living poet making addresses to men, some of these utterances so canonical that they constitute blueprints for lyric poetry in the English language.[7] Commentators from the eighteenth century to our own time have proffered a number of other explanations that ignore, avoid, or contextualize the underlying issue, homoeroticism. Katherine Duncan-Jones argues that the association of Oscar Wilde with an affinity for the Sonnets (i.e., his "The Portrait of Master W. H.") and his conviction for gross indecency in 1895 ensured that twentieth-century scholars would keep Shakespeare, sonnets, and homoeroticism as far from one another as possible. Sir Sidney Lee (1898) appears to have reemphasized the exculpatory "Platonic male friendship in the Renaissance" thesis first propounded by Richard Simpson (1868) for precisely this purpose, a theory that Wilde, ironically, had used to closet himself before his exposure.[8] The foregoing editorial conversation between Steevens and Malone concerning Sonnet 20 ("A Womans face with natures owne hand painted") may be said to be the first explicit statement of the controversy. Against this last real denizen of the old school, the first truly modern editor of Shakespeare positions himself, appearing to triumph over caprice and idiosyncrasy by sheer reason. Yet Malone also demonstrates great unease concerning the same issue that so vexes

Steevens, who at least squarely faces the homoeroticism that his successor evades.[9] Even further back in time, we have what has become the most notorious response to the problem, John Benson's reconfiguration of the sequence, *Poems: Written by Wil. Shake-speare, Gent.* (1640), as well as his brief preface that implicitly justifies his editorial intervention. He adds titles to individual poems, violates the order of the sequence, combines some sonnets into twenty-eight-line *canzone,* and changes some masculine pronouns to feminine:

> the lines of themselves will afford you a more authentick approbation than my assurance any way can . . . in your perusall you shall finde them Seren, cleere and eligantly plaine, such gentle straines as shall recreate and not perplexe your braine, no intricate or cloudy stuffe to puzzell intellect, but perfect eloquence.[10]

Benson's practice was by no means unusual for a seventeenth-century editor; to describe this activity as damage or desecration as Hyder Rollins does is anachronistic.[11] After all, Alessandro Vellutello's restructuring of Petrarch's *Rime sparse* anticipated Benson's editorial activity by over a century, and Michelangelo's great-nephew substituted feminine for masculine pronouns when he edited the artist's *sonetti* to Tommaso de' Cavalieri for the edition of 1623, almost two decades before the publication of the 1640 *Poems.*[12]

Parody is an elusive and subjective category, even in a genre as conducive to it as the Renaissance sonnet sequence. I resuscitate Benson to suggest how Shakespeare's contemporaries may have reacted to this curious response to sonnetladydom, one that appears to have perplexed many brains and puzzled several intellects from the beginning. A man described as a woman might have seemed quite strange to seventeenth-century readers.[13] Bruce Smith analyzes Shakespeare's choice of male object in Sonnets 1–126 and asserts: "Change the gender of the listener [i.e., addressee] from female to male, and all of the delicate alliances of feeling, ideology, and power are called into question."[14] Perhaps Benson attempted to avoid questioning delicate alliances in his pronoun exchange, intending to restore that familiar, feminine, heterosexual, Petrarchan subject, the expected thing, as Coleridge's famous comment implies: "the sonnets could only have come from a man deeply in love, and in love with a woman."[15] Besides, in feminizing his Man Right Fair, Shakespeare's Will had come so close to creating one, as he implies: "And for a woman wert thou first created" (20.9). A few substitutions of "she" for "he" might help clarify the matter. However, Benson fails to complete the pronoun transformation, which seems inconsistent to moderns obsessed with editorial consistency. Perhaps he reasoned that readers might

not notice an occasional "he" or "him." Early eighteenth-century editors certainly operated under this assumption. Bernard Lintott's reissue of the 1609 text (1711), the work of an anonymous editor, says of the Sonnets that Shakespeare intended "all of them in Praise of his Mistress." The Charles Gildon-Edmund Curll supplement to Rowe's edition of the works (1714) that reprints Benson makes the same claim, as does the George Sewell addition to the Pope edition (1726).[16] It might also be noted that many Sonnets simply do not clarify the gender of the addressee and would not require grammatical transposition, which suggests that the editor assumed his readership would construe the subject as feminine. It would have been difficult indeed to expunge all 190 uses of "he," "him," and "his" in Shakespeare's text.[17] As it is, Benson only excises a handful, none in the troublesome Sonnet 20, which he features prominently in the beginning of his edition and jauntily titles "The Exchange."

The issue of homoeroticism and the Man Right Fair has continued to exfoliate in criticism of the Sonnets, especially in the work of Smith, Margreta de Grazia, Heather Dubrow, Peter Stallybrass, and Joel Fineman.[18] I return with some of them to Benson and two of our Enlightenment editors to suggest that in spite of such exfoliations, the unease concerning Will's blandishments has never really changed. It seems to make virtually all readers uncomfortable. C. S. Lewis's fulminations typify the homophobic approach: "If [Shakespeare] had intended in these sonnets to be the poet of pederasty, I think he would have left us in no doubt; the lovely *paidika* [lit. "beloved boy"], attended by a whole train of mythological perversities, would have blazed across the pages."[19] Some slightly befuddled professors of English facing classrooms full of students who have been conditioned by the culture at large to be homophobic may identify with Will, and struggle to defend alternative sexualities against such distasteful pronouncements. Others, for polemical reasons, buttress their arguments with the ahistorical thesis that early moderns held unilaterally to the one-sex Galenic model of gender. If the distinctions that poets such as Shakespeare make between men and women are not really distinctions, perhaps sixteenth-century people did not distinguish between sexualities, either.[20] By this reasoning, the "addresses" that Malone discusses were not only customary but also deco-rous to early moderns. Hence the importance of the Sonnets for "queering" the Renaissance.[21] The earnestness of these explanations for Will's affection for the Man Right Fair would seem to preclude the idea of parody or make it in some ways an indecorous thing to bring up. In doing so, I do not wish to "ignore, avoid, or contextualize the underlying issue" or otherwise vio-late decorum, but simply to widen the discussion and register parody as a tendency in the 1–126 subsequence of the Sonnets, since it seems so clearly present therein. Again, it may be madness to make a man into a woman; however, it is hardly a fearful enterprise.[22]

II

> Ye could not say it was a perfect boy,
> Nor perfect wench: it seemed both and none of both to beene.
> (Arthur Golding, tr., *The XV Bookes of P Ouidius Naso, entytuled Metamorphosis*, 4.469–70)[23]

The foregoing may well have been Shakespeare's first encounter with literary androgyny, Golding's comic description of Hermaphroditus after his encounter with Salmacis in his translation of the *Metamorphoses* (1567). Jonathan Bate argues persuasively that Shakespeare reprocesses much of the matter of this book, his favorite, in some unlikely places in the canon for various reasons.[24] The hermaphroditic Man Right Fair provides a pertinent example of this thesis. Shakespeare's decision to define the subjectivity of a masculine addressee with "feminizing" language represents a truly original, subversive, and amusing attack on sonnet traditions.[25] Not only Petrarchism but also anti-Petrarchism had become quite dated by the first decade of the seventeenth century. Sir John Davies, Michael Drayton, and Alexander Craig were all writing satirical sonnets by 1609. Sir Philip Sidney and Sir Walter Raleigh had parodied sonnet conventions back in the 1580s, presumably those first appearing in the translations of Italian poets in Richard Tottel's *Songes and Sonettes* (1557), better known as his *Miscellany*. The Man Right Fair, along with his consort, the Woman Colored Ill, might be imagined as a kind of ultimate fire ship sent into the fleet of these competing discourses.[26] Making light of the sonnet world constitutes an important part of Shakespeare's literary practice in many instances, but some of the most notorious are Hamlet's bad poetry to Ophelia (*Hamlet* 2.2), Orlando's on behalf of Rosalind (*As You Like It* 3.2), and that of Biron and the King for the ladies they have sworn to avoid (*Love's Labour's Lost* 5.2). If satire is the tendency he exhibits on the subject elsewhere, perhaps we should look for it in the most obvious place, and not simply concerning the woman whose eyes are nothing like the sun. Women as the subjects of sonnet sequences represented the norm. As a means of parodying the genre, Shakespeare needed to establish the femininity of the Man Right Fair in the manner of his contemporaries toward their feminine subjects. Let us examine the linguistic evidence to determine how he accomplishes this masterstroke of deliberate incongruity.

Scholarship has devoted little to the feminizing language that Will uses to and about the Man Right Fair, nor to its relative conventionality when compared with the descriptions, attitudes, and modes of address that Daniel, Drayton, Sidney, and Spenser use in constructing their female subjects.[27] It is similar to the diction that Richard Barnfield appropriates in

the voice of his Daphnis in *The Affectionate Shepherd* (1594), whose "sugred" blandishments to Ganymede anticipate Shakespeare's equally "sugred sonets" to the Man Right Fair by fifteen years.[28] This similarity suggests that the "addresses" that Malone explains as "customary" are only thus in the sense that male poets define their subjects in the Renaissance in predictable ways. To Barnfield, Shakespeare, Sidney, or Daniel, to be a subject in a sonnet sequence is to be feminine. If one is not female, one must be feminized, be he Vincentio made so by Katherine at Petruchio's command or the boy actor himself playing Katherine in women's clothes at the behest of the acting company. To describe these creations—whether their makers call them Stella, Ganymede, Delia, or My Lovely Boy—as "sweet," "lovely," and "fair" underscores and confirms their feminine subjectivity.

Such saccharine subjectivity merits lampooning. Juliet implies as much when she lances Romeo's fatuous poetical attempts at lovemaking as their initial conversation, naturally, constitutes a sonnet in which Shakespeare simultaneously lampoons the form and shows how it ought to be done (*Romeo and Juliet* 1.5.93–106). To establish his parodic effect, Will incongruously feminizes his Man Right Fair with diction in the manner of other English Renaissance sonneteers: "sweet"/ "sweetest"/ "sweetly"/"sweetness"; "fair"/"fairest"; "lovely"; "beauty"/"beauty's"; and even the familiar (and intimate, romantic) form of address, "thou," "thy," "thine," "thee," which men in early modern literature almost never use with one another.[29] These terms recur in different combinations and formations. They represent a patina of verbal femininity. Thus Shakespeare makes a counterpoint to the actions of Dame Nature in Sonnet 20, in which she pricks out the Man Right Fair for women's pleasure. Although this etiology establishes him as male, it is only by the slimmest of margins. "Sweet," "beautiful," "lovely," and "fair" are English words for women, not men.

Will is even more fulsome with such verbiage for his young man than Daniel, Drayton, Sidney, and Spenser are with the same words for the women whom they make their poetical subjects. In this, Shakespeare outdoes his contemporaries and critiques them, as well as the genre itself.[30] "Sweet" and its variations occur in the Sonnets actually more often than in the sequences of the other authors, sixty-five times, on all but eight occasions in the first 126 poems for the boy who makes shame sweet. Will cannot match the Spenserian totals for "fair," but the Man Right Fair appears to be as fair as Delia and Stella in terms of diction (forty-four times, all but eight in Sonnets 1–126). Will adopts "beauty" for the youth with particular frequency; it occurs in Sonnets 1–126 more often than in any other contemporary sequence, on sixty-four occasions. He describes the man (never the woman) as "lovely," eight times. Will also outdistances even the Draytonian totals for the familiar, and much more often for the

man than for the woman. Drayton's combined total is 228, Shakespeare's a mind-numbing 712 ("you" surfaces 112 times), which rules out the likelihood of the Man Right Fair as aristocrat, "thou" constituting an extremely inappropriate form of address to one's superior in the social hierarchy. Will does not hesitate to possess, either; "my" is his third most commonly used word, almost 400 times (392, to be exact).[31] So, in spite of the evasions of Sonnet 20 featuring, just in time, Dame Nature, prick in hand, Will loves his boy because he can construct the feminine in him. One might claim that this is what he actually loves, in the manner of the men who adore Marlowe's Leander: "Some swore he was a maid in mans attire, / For in his lookes were all that men desire" (*Hero and Leander* 83–84).[32] One should not be so scornful of Coleridge after all, perhaps, given that Shakespeare uses his contemporaries' woman-defining words, not so "customary" for men as Malone would have had us believe. And a cynic might posit that Benson's desire to subtract from the total of 190 masculine pronouns seems almost sensible for a masculine subject who has been placed in the poetical feminine subject position by Shakespeare's subtle, satirical overuse of ultra-conventional, woman-defining diction.

How does diction so define the Man Right Fair? His beauty is feminine; he resembles his mother: "Thou art thy mothers glasse and shee in thee / Calls backe the louely Aprill of her prime" (3.9–10). This "louely Aprill" duplicates itself in the next two sonnets and layers the impression of the feminine: "Vnthrifty louelinesse" (4.1); "The louely gaze where euery eye doth dwell" (5.2). Will speaks to him in the way that men have to women in any number of poems before and since. Will invokes Time only to admonish him "carue not with thy howers my loues faire brow" (19.9); Pierre de Ronsard had been the praiser of *les sourcils* of Marie and Helene; Daniel exclaims over Delia's "lovely, arched, yvorie, pollish'd Brow" (*Delia* 8.5); Maurice Scève devotes an entire poem to this feature, "Sourcil tractif." Muses are not male except in these sonnets: "Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth / Then those old nine which rimers inuocate" (38.9–10); "oft haue I inuok'd thee for my Muse" (78.1). Men do not often become music by metonymy, but Will associates the man as well as the woman with it, equating them, feminizing him: "Musick to heare" (8.1); "thou my musike" (128.1). Sonnet 99 compares the Man Right Fair to a legion of flowers—roses, lilies, violets—and finds the flora wanting, just as the summer's day in Sonnet 18 cannot surpass him. Will argues that the young man's womanly beauty borders on the unbelievable. The future, "The age to come," certainly "would say this Poet lies, / Such heauenly touches nere toucht earthly faces" (17.7–8), he whose beautiful eyes cannot be told, he whose "graces" cannot be numbered. Why the insistence on hyperfemininity? There was simply no recognizable precedent for a masculine addressee to be utilized as a tool for the satire of

sonnet conventions—yet there were literally dozens of feminine precursors for this very purpose. Therefore, it was simply essential (and fiendishly clever) that Shakespeare overlay the masculine with the feminine. As a result, the Man Right Fair is an almost perfect vessel for generic parody, his unthrifty loveliness committing pretty wrongs.

III

> *esse in aliquo imitando diligentem omnino rationem adhibendam, neque enim id agendum ut idem simus qui sunt ii quos imitemur, sed eorum ita similes ut ipsa similitudo vix illa quidem neque nisi a doctis intelligatur.* (Cristoforo Landino, *Disputationes Camaldulenses*)
>
> [there ought to be a careful rationale applied in imitating a writer, and we should not try to become the same as those we are imitating, but rather to become similar in such a way that the similarity is scarcely perceived, and even then it should only be apparent to the learned.][33]

Shakespeare's skill in satirically recalibrating the conventions—all of sonnetdom—reflects the approved technique of the Renaissance artist skilled in *imitatio,* or its fraternal twin, *aemulatio.*[34] Landino (1424–98), a poet and scholar who undertook the curious enterprise of Latinizing Petrarchism in his *Xandra,* provides a standard definition of *imitatio,* one that could also encompass the emulative idea of parody. He explains how most Renaissance authors such as Shakespeare appropriate and transmute their contemporaries, reanimate and compete with their eminent (classical) predecessors. The Sonnets provide an excellent example of this process. It features dual addressees, one male, the other a dark-haired woman whose smoldering sexuality is constantly evoked; a speaker whose psychological agony answers the intellectual urbanity of Sidney, the bemusement of Spenser, the sugary plaintiveness of Daniel, and the dry and wry bitterness of Drayton; and overt eroticism, covertly masochistic and homoerotic. Granted, these apparent divergences from convention owe something to past sequences: Barnfield and Michelangelo address romantic poetry to men; Ronsard describes Marie and Helene in sexual terms; Daniel and others precede Shakespeare in "praising the brown beauty." As for angst, Petrarch suggests the obvious model. He confirms his guilt at a sexual passion that he desperately attempts to deny, which informs Will's attempts to consummate or to sublimate his feelings for the Man Right Fair. Further afield but no less important, one could also find Golding's fetishistic Pygmalion and Spenser's demonic False Florimell, both neuter or male objects transformed into the feminine, underneath Will's resolute attempts to make a

woman of the Man Right Fair.[35] Yet, at the same time, the Sonnets diverge from all these texts, and not simply by feminizing a male subject with encomiastic diction. In truly rewriting the idea of passion itself through parody, Shakespeare reinvests the sonnet genre with a fresh intensity as he comments on his predecessors. He subtly mocks his speaker's self-inflicted torment as well as his vacuous object of desire, a creature of savage and "genuine" sexual frustration for Will.

Shakespeare uses some of Will's most lavish praise of the Man Right Fair to emulate and parody sonnet conventions. Sonnet 53, ostensibly an exercise in almost servile flattery, subtly re-enacts the circular nature of *imitatio* itself, perhaps even the idea of the impossibility of saying anything new. The poem claims that its subject cannot be reproduced or excelled, even by the mythical paragons of masculine and feminine beauty:

> Describe *Adonis* and the counterfet,
> Is poorely immitated after you,
> On *Hellens* cheeke all art of beautie set,
> And you in *Grecian* tires are painted new. (53.5–9)

Granted, the Man Right Fair may own almost singular attractiveness, spectacular and androgynous. Yet Shakespeare well knew that the reader's sense of such dazzling good looks depends on the associated figures that Will evokes. Adonis and Helen actually help us visualize the figure who allegedly surpasses them, so he imitates them, after all. And, given the notion of art as mimesis, the Man Right Fair cannot be all that inimitable. If he is real (i.e., Pembroke, Southampton), the sonnet sequence itself reproduces him and gives him a life which he no longer possesses except for words on the page, as Will repeatedly asserts as he claims immortalizing power for his own poetry (begun in earnest in Sonnets 15–19). Or, if he is not real, Shakespeare's very notions of what constitutes a poetical subject depend absolutely on his predecessors, even if his ultimate purpose is parody. Such "art" creates the Man Right Fair "counterfet," "painted" by one who knows what "immitated" really means. In spite of Will's insistence on his subject's difference from other sonnet ladies, the Man Right Fair represents a paradigm of conventionality as well as of beauty, a sum of (and improvement on) sonnet parts. Sonnets 68 and 106 extend this motif, the poems that mock the chronicles of wasted time with their "discriptions of the fairest wights" and "praise of Ladies dead, and louely Knights," such praises merely "prophesies / Of this our time, all you prefiguring" (106.2, 4, 9–10), "those holy antique howers" in him "Without all ornament, it selfe and true" (68.9–10). But Will's claim that the Man Right Fair is "Making no summer of an others greene, / Robbing no ould to dresse his beauty new" (68.11–12), appears

quite false. Sonnet 106 emulates Daniel's "Let others sing of Knights and Palladines" (*Delia* 50) even as it claims to distance itself from the traditions that Daniel represents. The cynical might claim that the Sonnets are themselves a tribute to and parody of lovely knights and dead ladies, festooned with poetical ornaments, dependent absolutely on robbing the old and making summers of others' green, owing everything to the "trophies" not of lovers gone, but of cannibalized and reconfigured conventions from other poets, "Who all their parts of me to thee did giue, / That due of many, now is thine alone" (31.9–12). Those less judgmental might counter that such indeterminacy helps with the aforementioned phenomenon of generic revitalization. Besides, much humor lies in the possibility that the speaker takes himself far too seriously and invests more poetical capital in his subject than he is worth.

How is the Man Right Fair simultaneously a sonnet subject and a parody of one? Shakespeare's simple technique dictates that his speaker invest the object of his affection with conventional characteristics that can be distorted for satirical effect, if at times for no better reason than the generic incongruity of applying such language to a man. Besides the feminizing diction, sonnet "parts" from other poets—voicelessness, distance, beauty, cruelty, fickleness, chastity, helplessness, the blazon of sweet beauty's best—become increasingly easy to identify in the Man Right Fair as one begins the process of intertextual excavation. He is no aristocrat whom Will urges to marry—again, one would hardly address a peer in the familiar, and marriage is mentioned only once (Sonnet 9), and metaphorically, at that—but an object of physical desire, poetically preserved.

Virtually all sonneteers complain of their subjects' cruelty and fickleness, including Sidney and Drayton: "In all sweet stratagems sweete Arte can show" (*Astrophil and Stella* 36.11); "good wicked Spirit, sweet Angell Devill" (*Idea* 20.14). Sidney's Ovidian line describes not only Stella but his own art, and prefigures Shakespeare. A conventional idea such as Drayton's will remind some readers of the first quatrain of Shakespeare's Sonnet 144, the description of the two loves of comfort and despair. Yet in spite of the invocation of the Man Right Fair as the better spirit, Will excoriates him for changeability: "Most worthy comfort, now my greatest griefe" (48.7) "Thou maist be falce, and yet I know it not" (92.14). Changeability in sonnet ladies appears to be the byproduct of a naturally cruel nature, as in Daniel's complaint of "the sweet unkindest maid" (*Delia* 5.7), Spenser's "she doth laugh at me and makes my pain her sport" (*Amoretti* 10.14), and Sidney's plea, "deare Killer, spare not thy sweet cruell shot" (*Astrophil and Stella* 48.13). Shakespeare twists this convention to reflect Will's masochism, which dictates that he can never criticize the Man Right Fair without blaming himself first: "That you were once vnkind be-friends mee now"; "if you were by my vnkindnesse shaken / As I by yours, y'haue past a hell of Time" (120.1, 5).

The cruelty that produces fickleness results from pride, as most sonneteers have it. This constitutes what might be described as the most frequent complaint. Daniel's attempts at Delia are "all in vaine, her pride is so innated" (18.11); to him it becomes such an obstruction that he imagines it as a fortress, with Delia "Looking aloft from turret of her pride" (42.6), himself a ruined Troy. So Spenser on Elizabeth Boyle, a "Proud Daphne" (*Amoretti* 28.9) victimized by "her too portly pride" (5.2). Shakespeare's Will reconfigures this as the young man's narcissism as well as his own: "thou contracted to thine owne bright eyes, / Feed'st thy lights flame with selfe substantiall fewell" (1.4–5); "Sinne of selfe-loue possesseth all mine eie" (62.1), not just his own, but that of his subject.

Shakespeare invests heavily in his revision of the chastity convention for sonnet ladies in his Man Right Fair, only to distort and inflate it to mannerist proportions. For Delia, Stella, and Laura, inevitably their admirers' charges of pride, vanity, and narcissism emanate from the subject's maintenance of a chastity that the poet nervously invokes, praises, yet subtly undercuts in his desire to violate it, for example Daniel's wistful "If a sweet languish with a chast desire" (*Delia* 15.2), as well as Spenser's "pure affections bred in spotlesse brest" (*Amoretti* 84.5). In the Sonnets, the young man's reluctance to consummate is a version of this convention; Daniel precedes Shakespeare in the invocation of Narcissus for this rather convoluted purpose (*Delia* 32). Yet, as Will reveals that this reluctance only appears to be aimed at him and that the Man Right Fair actually spends most of his time in pursuit of game, the speaker shows no subtlety in criticizing his feminized subject, wilting his flowers before he will make them bloom again in the next few sonnets: "Lillies that fester, smell far worse then weeds" (94.14). Eventually, a certain ironic tendency may manifest itself to a reader continually revisiting the Sonnets in their printed order. Will, obsessively and even petulantly, urges the Man Right Fair over the first seventeen poems to arouse himself, find an uneared womb, till it, and impregnate it with a son that will certainly result from this expense of spirit, marriage and woman-as-individual be damned.[36] If Sonnets 40–43, 94, and 95 can be taken as evidence, the Man Right Fair certainly complies, or is at least sexually active, for which Will, again obsessively and petulantly, chides him. The Man Right Fair seems to be spectacularly unchaste, an object of "womens pleasure," his "loues vse their treasure" (20.13–14). Sarcastically admonished to "Take all my loues, my loue, yea take them all," he is "Lascivious grace" personified (40.1, 14), "false to me" (41.14) with the Woman Colored Ill so that "one angel" occupies "an others hel" (144.12). Statements such as "you like none, none you for constant heart" (53.14) become ironic, twisted, almost comic.

Recent criticism has noted the voicelessness of the female subject in Renaissance poetry perpetrated by the oppressive male creator. The same

argument has been made in classical studies with the *amans* and *puella* of Latin elegiac poetry. To such a subject-paradigm one could apply Judith Fetterley's concept of the "resisting reader," the woman who refuses to be circumscribed or controlled, to explain the recalcitrance of Laura and her sisters.[37] In the manner of all other sonnet ladies, the Man Right Fair is voiceless, simply because Will, like all other sonneteers, does all of the talking (excepting the Woman Colored Ill's "I hate . . . not you" in Sonnet 145). However, given Will's mounting sarcasm and pique, his subject's silence appears particularly oppressive to him. Perhaps such resistance to communication or commitment represents a subtle turn on conventional voicelessness only because such behavior is by legend typical of men in love. Or perhaps the Man Right Fair, like Michelangelo's Cavalieri, finds himself put off, not interested, puzzled by Will's feminizing blandishments and hoping that they will disappear along with their purveyor, recognizing them for the passive-aggressive attempts to possess him that they are. Silence and reluctance may also be a response to simple delusion, as if the Man Right Fair and Will were Bertram and Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well,* she who loves above her station and hopes to wed a bright particular star, he who would not be clogged with her. The obscure psychodrama of Sonnets 33–36 could be equally fantastical on Will's part. "Suns of the world may staine" (33.14), "Nor can thy shame giue phisicke to my griefe / Though thou repent" (34.9–10), and "thy sensuall fault" (35.9) may simply be a fabricated scenario, a downturn in the psychopathology of a stalker who must create the history of a relationship with an oblivious celebrity to validate his existence (although one hopes not). This is to emphasize that one cannot separate the created from the creator when discussing Renaissance sonnet sequences. It is a terrible revenge that Will must exact on the Man Right Fair for his failure to love him.

IV

> You are deceav'd, I am no woman I. (Marlowe, *Hero and Leander,* 676)

Even if the Man Right Fair, in attempting to repel his intrepid pursuer, had fittingly echoed Leander's reminder to his grasping Neptune, it is unlikely that Will would have listened. In this, Shakespeare resuscitates another important characteristic of a sonnet lady in his feminized (and fetishized) subject. The genre and form in which Will imprisons the Man Right Fair ensures that he must remain a projection of this speaker's desires rather than become an individual with a psychology in the manner of the speaker himself, who, in outlining the subtleties of his own consciousness, defines his own subjectivity and interests, which can include the nature of poetry (Sidney), philosophical subjects (Dante), the nature

of love (Petrarch, Spenser), and old business with other poets (virtually everyone who ever wrote sonnets). The interests virtually never include a sincere attempt to fathom the consciousness of the subject. Elizabeth Boyle, Stella, Laura, Delia, and even Beatrice possess no psychologically individuating characteristics apart from the emotions of the speaker, and therefore make up a convention that the apprentice must confront. Again, Shakespeare expands on custom and distorts it in his parodic technique. Will becomes so entangled in his own emotional toils that he seems even more obtuse and narcissistic than is customary for sonnetdom.[38] He subtly but aggressively criticizes his subject's capriciousness, cruelty, and vanity; he chafes at the perceived lack of appreciation or response; he constructs a hostile Other; his anger, disappointment, and slavishness comment on him more than on his silent and seemingly helpless subject. Part of the subtle comedy of the Sonnets lies in Will's frustration in his subject's inconvenient lack of helplessness. In spite of such comedy, however, the speaker remains resolutely humorless, with none of Drayton's awareness of his own churlishness, or Spenser's bemused acknowledgement of his old man's desire for a beautiful young woman who miraculously wants to marry him.

Shakespeare combines masochism and sheer nastiness in Will to create effects that appear at times bizarre. He seems to be more misogynistic than usual for a sonneteer, infuriated by his hyphenless "Master Mistris" whom he cannot make more mistress than master. In modes of address that parody attitudes to sonnet ladies, he prostrates himself and grovels before the Man Right Fair, then turns sarcastic, resentful, and aggressive when his subject fails to acknowledge him. The insistence on procreation suggests another agenda, such as a desire that the young man's conveniently aroused sexual interest be directed at the speaker. The related diction and tone of Sonnets 9 and 10 contain a glimmering of this *sub rosa* conversation: "No loue toward others in that bosome sits / That on himselfe such murdrous shame commits" (9.13–14) and "For shame deny that thou bear'st loue to any / Who for thy selfe art so vnprouident" (10.1–2). Some readers may note the emphasis on the word "shame" and question its validity in this context, since it is such a strong, humiliating term, overstated, manipulative. What is shameful? The Man Right Fair's reluctance to reproduce himself, or his apparent indifference to Will's entreaties? A notorious reiteration of the term in question occurs later in the sequence, when the speaker affixes it to some kind of psychosexual offense: "How sweet and louely dost thou make the shame, / Which like a canker in the fragrant Rose, / Doth spot the beautie of thy budding name?" (95.1–3). Plaintiveness becomes sarcasm.

Yet at times, sarcasm becomes plaintiveness. Will makes labyrinthine attempts to absolve the Man Right Fair of such moral criticism, a logical

escape that provides the other side of the traps of needlessly complex wordplay that some commentators have noted as aberrations in the speaker's psyche. Of the labored eye-heart dichotomy in Sonnets 46 and 47, for example, Stephen Booth has detected in them "a sense of futile waste, of barren ingenuity, and of neurotic diversion of energy on trivia."[39] One could apply this tripartite description to any number of moments in the subsequence, especially the adjective "neurotic." "O That you were your selfe, but loue you are / No longer yours, then you your selfe here liue" (13.1–2) continues to puzzle readers who attempt to untangle its syntax, since the lines can refer to a desire for the subject to achieve self-knowledge, self-possession, or self-discipline, and may lead one to wonder how, exactly, a person cannot belong to himself, except in the most dire metaphorical circumstances. Puzzling verbiage complements the complicated *ménage à la trois* between Will, the Man Right Fair, and the Woman Colored Ill implied in Sonnets 41, 42, 43, 134, 135, 136, and 144. The word "Will," sometimes italicized in the quarto, deployed eighteen times in 134–36, can refer to the speaker, the woman's husband, her sex drive, Will's sex drive, the young man, the troika's respective sexual organs—perhaps "neurotic" is an understatement. The speaker's desperation to link himself to the Man Right Fair fuels such demotic verbiage and abject self-flagellation:

> If I loose thee, my losse is my loues gaine,
> And loosing her, my friend hath found that losse,
> Both finde each other, and I loose both twaine,
> And both for my sake lay on me this crosse,
> But here's the ioy, my friend and I are one,
> Sweete flattery, then she loues but me alone. (42.9–14)

After Will devotes dozens of sonnets to explaining his subject's superiority to himself, he then insists on their oneness because both of them are unfortunate enough to be having sex with the same woman. She appears to be much more desirable to the young man than Will is. For Will, whose ultimate preference remains indeterminable, the woman, although hotly and shamefacedly desired, serves as surrogate for the unattainable, *kouros*-like young man. Will can only possess him at one remove, through this conjunction with the woman, and a bitter consolation it is: "And when a woman woes, what womans sonne, / Will sourly leaue her till he haue preuailed" (41.8–9). Yet amorous crimes, those pretty wrongs that liberty commits, cannot, must not, be the fault of the Man Right Fair. To betray such feelings explicitly would undermine the value of Will's emotional investment. He chooses to express himself instead in forebemoaned moans, such as the sonorous, "o"-invested Sonnet 30,

hinting at the real object of his anger and disappointment: "Since why to loue, I can alledge no cause" (49.14).

Will may be distinguished from the legion of Shakespeare's predecessors in another way. Duncan-Jones, like Booth, argues that Will's unreliability figures heavily in the Sonnets. She argues that this narrator, "trapped in a web of his own fabrication," constitutes the center of "a book of lies and lying."[40] Indeed. Shakespeare provides many clues to suggest that Will not only lies, but in the manner of most liars, is not self-deceived about this personality flaw and tellingly alludes to it, such as his admission that his utterances concerning the Woman Colored Ill are "At random from the truth vainely exprest" (147.12). He struggles with sincerity much earlier in the Sonnets, "O let me true in loue but truly write, / And then beleeue me, my loue is as faire, / As any mothers childe" (21.9–11). The two sonnets that lead up to the much anthologized "Let me not to the marriage of true mindes" (116.1) primarily concern the role of the poet in representing the truth for his own private ends. Perhaps "the monarks plague this flattery" (114.2) can make one doubt whether "mine eie saith true" (3), since a poet can "make of monsters, and things indigest, / Such cherubines" as the young man may resemble, "Creating euery bad a perfect best" (5–7). But equipoise vanishes, since "Those lines that I before haue writ doe lie, / Euen those that said I could not loue you deerer" (115.1–2). Praise for the Man Right Fair is praise for Will: "What can mine owne praise to mine owne selfe bring; / And what is't but mine owne when I praise thee[?]" (39.3–4). That the young man, like Michelangelo's Cavalieri, may see through this with fey detachment or amusement, be stoutly repulsed, remain neutral, uninterested—any of these states could create the "seperable spight" (36.6) to which Will alludes, and which contributes to the two of them being twain. Spite with spite is best repaid, as Milton's Satan reminds us.

Readers who cannot endorse the thesis that Will is a habitual liar may at least admit that he misrepresents himself. The passive-aggressive wooer of Sonnets 1–17 explicitly reveals his motives for praise in "Shall I compare thee to a Summers day?" (18.1) as an intertwined vainglorious desire for poetic immortality and steady sexual desire for the Man Right Fair. Yet the latter motive surfaces earlier. In calculated poetical fashion, Will hesitates to insinuate himself into the young man's thoughts until he must, preferring to lay the groundwork first, to continue the unexpected and even bizarre request that he simply go out and impregnate someone in order to reproduce his beauty in the appropriate vessel, a handmaiden of the goddess of love, an uneared womb who will not disdain the tillage of his husbandry. But insinuate himself he must, waiting until the couplet of the tenth sonnet to reveal the wish that he has not hidden as carefully as it would appear: "Make thee an other selfe for loue of me" (10.13).

The "loue of me" then begins to outweigh the admonition to reproduce, in spite of the continuation of the motif for the next seven sonnets: "thee," "love," and "me," expertly layered, buttress the invitation to love. That "sweets and beauties do them-selues forsake" (12.11) concerns not so much the failure to spread seed as it does the idea that the young man is sweet and beautiful, worthy of being fulsomely praised and won, a Stella, a Delia, a Laura. Will waits for fourteen sonnets to say the three most difficult words in the proper order, subject-verb-object—"Then may I dare to boast how I doe loue thee" (26.13)—and then reminds the Man Right Fair of this at regular intervals. "I loue thee in such sort" (36.13); "I loue you so" (71.6); "I loue thee in such sort" (96.13); "I loue you best" (115.10). Perhaps the iteration of this four-letter word contributes to the impression that it is an ever-fixed mark for Will. It is, in fact, his last word as he echoes the Song of Songs, "water cooles not loue" (154.14).[41]

The sonnet most celebrated for its analysis of this term, 116 (misnumbered 119 in twelve of the thirteen extant quartos) represents a kind of terminus. The last ten sonnets specifically concerning the Man Right Fair (117–26) reflect a radical shift in tone, mood, and subject from the rest of the subsequence. Although the "terminal" poem boldly asserts, "Let me not to the marriage of true mindes / Admit impediments" (116.1–2), the first half of the following group explains what these impediments are and how one may stumble over them, stations of the cross for the collapse of a relationship. Both generic parody and the aura of overt homoeroticism dissipate. Will seems to have accepted the impossibility of the desired conjunction with his subject. He expresses bitter despair and sarcasm: "Accuse me thus, that I haue scanted all, / Wherein I should your great deserts repay" (117.1–2); "being full of your nere cloying sweetnesse, / To bitter sawces did I frame my feeding" (118.5–6). Then Will, as if horrified at such sabotage of his own project of praise, angrily incriminates himself: "What wretched errors hath my heart committed, / Whilst it hath thought it selfe so blessed neuer?" (119.5–6). Yet he still wonders if his rhetoric has had any effect on his subject: "For if you were by my vnkindnesse shaken / As I by yours, y'haue past a hell of Time" (120.5–6). Yet, to paraphrase Desdemona, what ignorant sin has Will committed? Perhaps to be himself: "I am that I am, and they that leuell / At my abuses, reckon vp their owne" (121.9–10),[42] which necessitates some misanthropy: "All men are bad and in their badnesse raigne" (14). After this revealingly pessimistic admission, the second half of this decade of sonnets consists of obscure meditations on time, praise, death, and eternity before the final, *envoi*-like set of six couplets that summarize what Will regards as his best intentions. He, as well as posterity, shall remember his subject: "Nor need I tallies thy deare loue to skore" (122.10); "No! Time, thou shalt not bost that I doe change" (123.1). It is as if Will reasserts

the platitudes of 116, defiantly declaiming that his love is no mere "childe of state" (124.1), not subject to the mysterious and disjunctive "subbornd Informer" (125.13) whose identity has never been satisfactorily explained.[43] One man speaks to another without sexual overtones. Significant, perhaps, is the absence of the feminizing diction and the use of the familiar until this last poem, the farewell, or as Will puts it, the "*Quietus*" (126.12), after which two sets of parentheses stand empty, as if gaping for the "missing" pair of lines. Parody, which Shakespeare uses to reconfigure the idea of passion, must temporarily stand aside at the gradual exit of the Man Right Fair, until its renewal in Sonnet 127 and the entrance of the Woman Colored Ill. One might even describe the ten sonnets as a short dissertation on passion. Love not only alters when it alteration finds, but can be needlessly complicated and ultimately unfulfilling. Will finally admits (unless this also represents another untruth) that his love for the Man Right Fair resembles a kind of sickness: "Drugs poyson him that so fell sicke of you" (118.14). And, perhaps, to parody sonnetdom allows Shakespeare to create a space, after much effort, in which such a man can speak to another, to "mutuall render onely me for thee" (125.12).

The Man Right Fair diverges from yet depends absolutely on the traditions that, in a sense, make him recognizable as the sonnet lady he so closely resembles. As Orsino says to Viola-Cesario, "all is semblatiue a womans part" (*Twelfth Night* 1.4. 34; 285). At the end of the same play, Olivia, horrified to see Cesario declare what appears to be fervent love for Orsino, cries out: "Aye me detested, how am I beguil'd?" (5.1.139; 2298). We can apply this line to gender transformations in the Sonnets and critical responses to them. Will attempts to beguile his Man Right Fair by encouraging his biological heterosexuality and then attempting to make passionate love to him in words; the young man beguiles Will by resisting, taking up with his mistress, and, worst of all, seeing through him. Editors have been beguiled from the beginning by the text; critics have experienced the same sensations and have accused each other of beguiling themselves. As Shakespeare remodels the sonnet form and the idea of the subject, he also transforms the idea of the speaker and our readerly reception of him. Shakespeare invites us to anatomize Will, even to treat him with scorn. Northrop Frye's assessment of the young man, "an unresponsive oaf as stupid as a doorknob and as selfish as a weasel,"[44] seems to fit Will somewhat better. In counter-revenge to the Man Right Fair's vengeful indifference and mistress-stealing, Will, selfish but not stupid, does him one better. He does not kill his subject, as Petrarch does Laura. He finds it much more effective to stop writing about him, instead.

Indiana University-Purdue University
Fort Wayne, Indiana

NOTES

1. All references to the Sonnets follow the facsimile of the 1609 Quarto in *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Stephen Booth (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). All other references to Shakespeare are taken from *The Norton Facsimile: The First Folio of Shakespeare*, ed. Charlton Hinman, introduction Peter W. M. Blayney (New York: Norton, 1968; reissue 1996), whose continuous lineation I use along with the act, scene, and line numbers from *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Blakemore Evans et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

2. These quotations from *Haec Vir: Or, The Womanish Man* (1620) are taken from *Half Humankind: Contexts and Texts of the Controversy about Women in England, 1540–1640*, ed. Katherine Usher Henderson and Barbara F. McManus (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 286, 287.

3. See "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis (London: Methuen, 1985): 166–90.

4. For recent approaches to the problem, see Lisa Jardine, *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Daughters in the Age of Shakespeare* (London: Harvester, 1983), 9–36; Laura Levine, *Men in Women's Clothing: Antitheatricality and Effeminization, 1579–1642* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

5. These recent articles use the name "Will" to describe the speaker in the Sonnets: Margreta de Grazia, "Babling Will in *Shake-speares Sonnets* 127 to 154," *Spenser Studies* 1 (1980): 121–34; M. L. Stapleton, "'My False Eyes': The Dark Lady and Self-Knowledge," *Studies in Philology* 90 (1993): 213–30; Joseph Pequigney, "Sonnets 71–74: Texts and Contexts," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays*, ed. James Schiffer (New York: Garland, 1999), 285–304. See also Booth, 466–67.

6. See Brian Vickers, ed., *Shakespeare: The Critical Heritage*, 6 vols. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 6:288, 551. For more exchanges between these editors, see 6:288–96; 551–55.

7. Henry Brown discusses parody as a means of avoiding the homoerotic subtext. See *The Sonnets of Shakspeare Solved* (London: J. R. Smith, 1870), 7, 35–52. Hyder E. Rollins mentions other commentators who discuss the matter. See *A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: The Sonnets*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1944), 1:55, 2:50, 141, 285. Thomas Roche does not mention parody, but implies the possibility: "The sonnet sequence is the Renaissance equivalent of the fantasy now produced monthly as Miss Centerfold. In how many ways can we debauch human love? Shakespeare saw the sonnet sequence in this way and gave the conventions an extra twist to make the ironies even clearer. Why not take as the object of love a beautiful, blonde young man who would not say YES (because not asked)?" See "How Petrarchan Is Shakespeare?" *Proceedings of the Comparative Literature Symposium, Texas Tech University* 12 (1981): 155. Paul Innes limits his discussion of satire in the Sonnets to Sir John Davies's *Gulling Sonnets*. *See Shakespeare and the Renaissance Sonnet: Verses of Feigning Love* (London: Macmillan, 1997), 67–69.

8. See *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, ed. Katherine Duncan-Jones (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 32, 79; Simpson, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: N. Trubner, 1868), 38, 57, 75; and Lee, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (London: Smith, Elder, 1898), 100. Lee's *Dictionary of National*

Biography entry on Shakespeare first asserted the autobiographical character of the Sonnets and even alluded to "the potency of love which figures in the Greek anthology" (see Rollins, 2:144).

9. Malone's famous riposte to Steevens's dismissal of Sonnet 20 symbolizes the editorial practice and theory of literature that moderns tend to associate with him: moderate, decorous, nonprescriptive. His inclusion of the Sonnets in his 1790 Shakespeare was, as virtually everyone knows, the first time that this text had been so honored. Steevens, of course, refused to canonize it, even in 1793: "We have not reprinted the Sonnets, &c. of Shakespeare, because the strongest act of Parliament that could be framed would not compel readers into their service." See Vickers, 6:577.

10. London: John Benson, 1640.

11. These critics offer this argument: Josephine Waters Bennett, "Benson's Alleged Piracy of Shakespeares Sonnets and Some of Jonson's Works," *Studies in Bibliography* 21 (1968): 235–48; Arthur Marotti, "Shakespeare's Sonnets as Literary Property," in *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry,* ed. Elizabeth Harvey (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 143–73; Margreta de Grazia, "The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Shakespeare Survey* 46 (1994): 35–49.

12. For Shakespeare's Petrarchism and Benson's precedents in editing practices, see Gordon Braden, *Petrarchan Love and the Continental Renaissance* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), as well as "Shakespeare's Petrarchism," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays,* ed. James Schiffer, 163–83. See also William J. Kennedy, "Petrarchan Textuality: Commentaries and Gender Revisions," in *Discourses of Authority in Medieval and Renaissance Literature,* ed. Kevin Brownlee (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1989), 151–68; and *Authorizing Petrarch* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

13. Duncan-Jones suggests that the relatively large number of surviving copies (thirteen) may signify the volume's unpopularity compared with *Venus and Adonis,* of which only one copy is extant (8). She theorizes further about their early reception (69–81).

14. See *Homosexual Desire in Shakespeare's England: A Cultural Poetics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 260.

15. *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge,* 2 vols. (New York: Murray, 1835), 2:93. The sentence that precedes the one cited: "I do not think that Shakespeare, merely because he was an actor, would have thought it necessary to veil his emotions toward Pembroke under a disguise, though he might probably have done so, if the real object had perchance been a Laura or a Leonora."

16. See Rollins, 2:29–30, 37–38.

17. See Herbert S. Donow, *A Concordance to the Sonnet Sequences of Daniel, Drayton, Shakespeare, Sidney, and Spenser* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), 742.

18. See de Grazia, "Scandal," 35–49; Smith, *Homosexual Desire,* and his "I, You, He, She, and We: On the Sexual Politics of Shakespeare's Sonnets," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays,* ed. James Schiffer (New York: Garland, 1999), 411–30; Dubrow, "Incertainties Now Crown Themselves Assur'd: The Politics of Plotting Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 47 (1996): 291–305; Stallybrass,

"Editing as Cultural Formation: The Sexing of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Modern Language Quarterly* 54 (1993): 91–103; Fineman, *Shakespeare's Perjured Eye: The Invention of Poetic Subjectivity in the Sonnets* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and his "Shakespeare's Ear." *Representations* 28 (1989): 6–13. All of these studies offer useful correctives to received opinion about this Shakespearean text. Dubrow questions the Malonean division between 1–126 and 127–54 as subsequences referring exclusively to the youth and dark lady; de Grazia explains the exaggerations of Rollins concerning Benson's changes to Q1609 for the 1640 edition (see Rollins, 2:20, 29); Fineman makes the strong Lacanian division between male and female in the subsequences. Joyce Sutphen reaffirms Malone's divisions in "'A Dateless Lively Heat': Storing Loss in the Sonnets," in *Shakespeare's Sonnets: Critical Essays,* ed. James Schiffer, 199–217; Braden excoriates Fineman's arguments, sometimes by simply quoting the more convoluted passages of elliptical prose and letting them speak for themselves ("Shakespeare's Petrarchism," 163–83). I accept the Malonean division of 1–126/127–54 and do not necessarily subscribe to Fineman's Lacanian binaries between idyllic homosexuality and savage heterosexual misogyny—as Will constructs the feminine in creating the young man's subjectivity, there appears to be very little idyll at all.

19. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century Excluding Drama* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), 503.

20. de Grazia seems to subscribe to this theory ("The Scandal of Shakespeare's Sonnets," 42). It is most clearly delineated by Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 149–53. Three outstanding attacks on his thesis are Lorna Hutson, "On Not Being Deceived: Rhetoric and the Body in *Twelfth Night*," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 38 (1996): 140–74; Janet Adelman, "Making Defect Perfection: Shakespeare and the One-Sex Model," in *Enacting Gender on the English Renaissance Stage,* ed. Viviana Comensoli and Anne Russell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 23–52; Winfried Schleiner, "Early Modern Controversies about the One-Sex Model," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 180–91.

21. See Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men's Press, 1982); Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), especially the chapter on the Sonnets; Joseph Pequigney, *Such Is My Love: A Study of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Stephen Greenblatt, "Fiction and Friction," in *Reconstructing Individualism,* ed. Thomas C. Heller, Morton Sosna, and David E. Wellberry (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1986), 30–52, later revised into a chapter in *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Smith, *Homosexual Desire* (1991); Valerie A. Traub, *Desire and Anxiety: Circulations of Sexuality in Shakespearean Drama* (London: Routledge, 1992); Jonathan Goldberg, ed., *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994).

22. Hutson's article effectively dismisses the theories of Laqueur, Traub, and Greenblatt that early modern men possessed a very real fear of being transformed into women, which they allege the literature of the time reflects (145).

23. See W. H. D. Rowse, ed., *Shakespeare's Ovid: Arthur Golding's Translation of the "Metamorphoses"* (New York: Norton, 1966), 91.

24. See *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

25. Bruce Smith uses the verb "feminize" in this sense (*Homosexual Desire*, 143). According to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, "to feminize" does not enter the language as a transitive verb until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This "fact" would, at first glance, seem to support the Laqueur thesis about post-Renaissance theories of gender—this differentiating word indicates real and substantive difference between the sexes not previously present in a single term. However, historical examples in *OED* suggest that "feminize" and words like it arose in written English in an adjectival form, the past participle, by the time of the English Revolution (just as Benson publishes his pronoun-altered *Poems* of 1640), to describe a woman who acts like a man who acts like a woman: "Her vigorous exertion made them incline to the thought of her beeing a Male Feminiz'd" (1652); and to describe the first man, in thrall to a woman, "the feminized Adam" (1653), a concept that Smith discusses in *Homosexual Desire*: "It is too great a sexual interest in women that makes a man become like them" (171). I assert that these examples suggest the opposite of Laqueur's radical thesis: that early moderns thought of the sexes as discrete entities, not as strange shadows of each other. An equivalent of "feminize" is a very rare verb, perhaps even a nonce usage, "to feminine," from Shakespeare's own time, in Philip Stubbes's polemical *Anatomy of Abuses* (1583), a slighting reference to entertainments: "Musicke dooth rather femenine the minde."

26. Pequigney sees the problematic "Master Mistris of my passion" (20.2) as an attack on convention as well as a homoerotic statement: "it indicates that the erotic role played by the lady of other sonneteers, even in Shakespeare's own Sonnets 127–54, is here taken by a man" (*Such Is My Love*, 31). Duncan-Jones emphasizes the "darkly satirical heterosexual" nature of this subsequence (6), even to the point of finding an analogy between these twenty-eight poems "and a male disgust with the lunar, menstrual cycle alluded to in their number" (6, 49, 99). See also Heather Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

27. Joseph Quincy Adams, *A Life of William Shakespeare* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1923) on the "Master Mistris" crux: "Is not Shakespeare here thinking of the numerous mistresses celebrated in sonnet cycles . . . and meaning to comment, favorably, on the fact that he is celebrating in his cycle a *man*?" (quoted in Rollins, 1:57).

28. All further references to Barnfield's poetry: *Richard Barnfield: The Complete Poems*, ed. George Klawitter (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1990); Francis Meres's famous adjective to describe the Sonnets in the *Palladis Tamia* (1598) is also anticipated by Barnfield, who describes Ganymede with the same word, "Whose surged [sic] love is full of sweet delight" (*The Affectionate Shepherd* 1.86). (Klawitter's text reads "surged," [82], but his explanatory gloss reads "sugred" [207].) Smith discusses Barnfield at length in *Homosexual Desire*, passim, but especially 99–115.

29. Some heterosexual exceptions: a father admonishing his son (Bolingbroke and Prince Hal); two men of fairly equal rank dislike each other (Hotspur and Hal). For scholarship on this linguistic point, see G. P. Jones, "You, Thou, He or She? The Master-Mistress in Shakespearian and Elizabethan Sonnet Sequences,"

Cahiers Elisabéthains 19 (1981): 73–84; Andrew Gurr, "You and Thou in Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Essays in Criticism* 32 (1982): 9–25. Both essays strongly imply that the use of the familiar is slighting and magisterial, not romantic and intimate. Smith, "I, You, He, She, and We," as well as de Grazia, "Scandal," reach some of the same conclusions, based on the work of Jones and Gurr.

30. Daniel, in his fifty-sonnet *Delia* (1592), marks his subject as feminine not only with pronouns but with "fair" (twenty times), "sweet"/"sweetest" (fourteen/five), "beauty" (sixteen), "lovely" (twice). He also demonstrates his affection and perhaps superiority with a relatively frequent use of the familiar: "thy" (seventy-seven times), "thou" (forty-two), "thee" (thirty-two), and "thine" (nine). The formal and less intimate "you" is less in evidence (sixteen times). One might also note that Daniel's second most commonly used word, "my" (233 times), suggests an almost maniacal insistence on possession, that Delia is indeed his.

Drayton's much-revised *Idea in Sixtie Three Sonnets* (1619) and *Idea's Mirrour: Amours in Quatorzains* (1594) feature twice as many sonnets as *Delia* (114 poems) with usage of the same words at approximately the same frequency in order to fashion femininity: "sweet"/"sweetest" (thirty-three times), "fair" (forty-four), "beauty" (thirty-three). "Lovely," however, appears only once in both of his sequences, unsurprising given the tone: "(A Libertine) fantastickly I sing" (*Idea*, "To the Reader," 8); "I scorne all Earthly Dung-bred Scarabies" (31.14). The familiar and formal modes of address are more in equipoise, suggesting, perhaps, less intimacy: "thee" (fifty-seven times), "thou" (eighty-nine), "thy" (119), "thine" (twenty-three), "you" (eighty), "yours" (twenty-three): "You love in Hate, by Hate to make Me love You" (*Idea* 19.14). Again, in nearly twice as many sonnets as Daniel writes, Drayton uses "my" approximately the same number of times (224 for *Idea*, 254 for the *Mirrour*); this word is the second most commonly used in the 1619 text, the most common in the *Mirrour*.

Sidney and Spenser use a good many of these words at approximately the same rate in the 108 sonnets of *Astrophil and Stella* (c. 1582) and the eighty-nine sonnets of the *Amoretti* (1595). The differing purposes and moods of these sequences may make this observation somewhat surprising. Spenser devotes his sequence to an actual and verifiable woman, Elizabeth Boyle, whom he would eventually marry, celebrated in the accompanying *Epithalamion*. Sidney's Stella may or may not be Penelope Rich, but he treats several other subjects besides women and love, especially the state of poetry at the present time and the struggles of the individual consciousness as it attempts to make art. Spenser and Sidney use "sweet" (thirty-eight and thirty-nine times, respectively) as much as Drayton does. Spenser is somewhat freer with "fair" (fifty-two times) than Sidney is (thirty-six); *Amoretti* 79 and 81 are essays on the word, which Spenser often links ironically with "proud" and "cruel" to make uncomplimentary epithets (2.9; 27.1; 49.1). Both poets use "lovely" more often than Drayton does, Spenser ten times, Sidney three. Spenser chooses not to overdo the use of "beauty" and its variations (sixteen times); Sidney's philosophical and aesthetic obsessions guarantee that this word appears with great frequency (thirty-eight times). As for terms of address, Sidney's use of the familiar occurs 226 times, the formal "you"/"yours" exactly one hundred; he does not always address Stella, but sometimes pastoral poetasters. Spenser uses the familiar only thirty-four

times, actually less frequently than he deploys "you" (thirty-eight). As with Drayton, Sidney's most commonly used word is "my" (298 times); in contrast, Spenser, indicative of the caution one must exercise when addressing an actual person with whom one will set up housekeeping, uses "my" seventh most frequently in his word-hoard; "her" is actually used much more (231 times), fourth most common.

For the foregoing discussions of word usage among the sonneteers, see Donow, 722–72. Editions used for each of the poets throughout are as follows: Samuel Daniel, *Poems and a Defence of Rhyme,* ed. A. C. Sprague (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930; rpt. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); *The Poems of Sir Philip Sidney,* ed. William A. Ringler Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962); *The Works of Michael Drayton,* 5 vols., vols. 1–4 ed. J. William Hebel, vol. 5 ed. Kathleen Tillotson and Bernard Newdigate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931–61), 1:95–124; 2:309–42; *The Yale Edition of the Shorter Poems of Edmund Spenser,* ed. William A. Oram, Einar Bjorvand, Ronald Bond, Thomas H. Cain, Alexander Dunlop, and Richard Schell (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 598–658.

31. See Donow, 742.

32. All references to *Hero and Leander: The Works of Christopher Marlowe,* 5 vols., vols. 1–4 ed. Roma Gill, vol. 5 ed. David Fuller and Edward Esche (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987–98), 1: 175–210.

33. Text and translation: Martin L. McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 176–77.

34. See David Marsh, *The Quattrocento Dialogue: Classical Tradition and Humanist Innovation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980); George Pigman, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance." *Renaissance Quarterly* 33 (1980): 1–32; and his "Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation," *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance* 44 (1982): 341–52; Thomas M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982).

35. Pygmalion's rampaging desire to create his own perfect and compliant woman resembles Will's makeover of the Man Right Fair: "by wondrous Art an image he did grave / Of such proportion, shape, and grace as nature never gave / Nor can too any woman give" (*Metamorphoses* 10.265–67). In *The Faerie Queene,* the anonymous Witch creates the False Florimell for her horrible son the Carle, who, beside himself with lovesickness, had attempted the real Florimell. Spenser's description of her creation of this demonic creature sounds very much like a sonnet lady, especially of her eyes: "In stead of eyes two burning lampes she set / In siluer sockets, shyning like the skyes, / And a quick mouing Spirit did arret / To stirre and roll them, like to womens eyes" (3.8.7). One can even hear echoes of Sonnets 130.1 and 20.5. It is important to remember that this "wicked Spright yfraught with fawning guyle" is male, "And all the wyles of wemens wits knew passing well" (3.8.8). See *The Faerie Queene,* 2nd ed., ed. A. C. Hamilton, Hiroshi Yamashita, and Toshiyuki Suzuki (London: Longman, 2001), 363.

36. Although Sonnets 1–17 are sometimes mislabeled "The Marriage Sequence," only one sonnet even hints at matrimony, "Is it for feare to wet a widdowes eye" (9.1). By the time one reaches the second quatrain of the poem, one cannot even be certain that the "makeless wife" (4) is not a metaphorical

construction for "The world" (4, 5) throughout the poem, including the quatrain that precedes it. Again, Will emphasizes arousal, fruition, gestation, and birth.

37. See, for example, Alison Sharrock, "Womanufacture," *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 36–49; Elizabeth D. Harvey, *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (London: Routledge, 1992); and Patricia Parker, *Literary Fat Ladies: Rhetoric, Gender, Property* (London: Methuen, 1987). Sharrock's positivism tends to mar her interpretations, which tend toward the anachronistic. For Fetterley, see *The Resisting Reader: A Feminist Approach to American Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

38. For an analysis of psychological narcissism in the Sonnets, see Jane Hedley, "'Since First Your Eye I Eyed': Shakespeare's Sonnets and the Poetics of Narcissism," *Style* 28 (1994): 1–31.

39. *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* ed. Booth, 208.

40. *Shakespeare's Sonnets,* ed. Duncan-Jones, 95.

41. Ronald Jaeger, "A Biblical Allusion in Shakespeare's Sonnet 154." *Notes and Queries,* n.s. 19 (1972): 125.

42. Booth comments that these lines and their echo of divine authority make Will "sound smug, presumptuous, and stupid" (410).

43. See Rollins, 1:317–18; Booth, 429.

44. See "How True a Twain," in *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), 89.