

An un-lyrical ode to the Bard?

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Strophe

Although commonly represented as a poem to a man, this would misrepresent many of the underlying aspects of the world Shakespeare lived within.¹ Shakespeare existed in a world that had been in upheaval only shortly prior to his age; it was remembered. Because of this turmoil was a conflict between Plantagenets, the ruling powers and the future King. Shakespeare had written many times detailing the House of Lancaster (the red rose) and the House of York (the white rose).

This dispute led to a battle or rather, a bloody civil war for the throne of England.

Each house traced their origin to the sons of Edward the third. In the end, all the male heirs to York had been killed. The family (York) had been forcibly unified to that of Lancaster. From this, the Tudor Rose of white and red was born. In lines 7 and 8, the poet argues that all things fair decline. When this was written, Shakespeare who was yet to be a King's man had sought to ingratiate himself with the throne. At the same time, as with his plays, he was politically astute and even when mocking the government did so without providing a direct connection to what he sought to describe.

Lines 1 to 4 reflect on “temperate”, relating to *Tempus* or time. The virgin Queen was ageing. Elizabeth, the red-and-white Tudor Rose had heir. To many, she fulfilled the role of a man. So, when people say that this is about a young boy I would argue that the

¹ Barnstorff (1862) made the claim that Shakespeare was defining a man. However, the second last line is people watching the individual and the earlier is the heavens. In this analysis, Barnstorff erroneously used a translation of the sonnet are not the original. During the Renaissance, individuals talked and defined interactions in ways that were different to now. Dietrich Barnstorff produced multiple claims that are still built upon today, but are fundamentally flawed when the analysis extended using multiple sources.

best have failed to see what is obvious in front of them. Elizabeth would end. In this, so with the England that Shakespeare had known. By capturing Elizabeth in his verse, Shakespeare's poem will keep not only her but the nation alive. The strong metre of verses seven and eight captures the changing cycles of both growth and decay must necessitate every empire and every nation. Everything that is born must eventually die, including the untrimmed. The ultimate untrimmed item, the ultimate virgin was Elizabeth.

Antistrophe

The major theme in nearly every Elizabethan sonnet is time. As with Sonnet 98, many have taken a group of sonnets to be within what is referred to as the Fair Youth sequence. It is reported that this sequence expresses Shakespeare's love towards a young man. Again, as with Sonnet 18, those analysing the works of Shakespeare are doing so outside of the meaning at the time. In line 4, the heavy Saturn's laugh mirrors the work of Keats (The Fall) and the surrender to Apollo, the immortal poet.

In not wondering as to the lily's white (9) we see the Tudor Rose. The Lily was a flower associated with the Rose (Lewis 2014, 166). Often, the Lily "occurs as the emblem of the virgin" (Lewis 2014, 173). As with the *Merry wives of Windsor*, each of Shakespeare's sonnets incorporate allusions to the virgin Queen.

Proud-pied April (4) represent something with two colours. The rose is absent in the spring (1) and equally Elizabeth, the lilywhite was a two-coloured rose. This reflects the

winter of Elizabeth and her age, and in this Shakespeare had been merely the shadow performing for the Queen.²

Epode

To be *v'trimmed* (8) is to be a virgin. As strong notes, the cult of Elizabeth was a virgin white and fair as a lily (Strong 1986). The virgin Queen had no heir and hence the future was increasingly becoming chaotic. In some ways, there was an understanding that the Globe performances were merely previews before court, a rehearsal. In this it can be argued that everything was a rehearsal for the Queen. So, with the shadow I with these did play (98, 14) we see the virgin Queen of lilywhite and vermilion rose red.

Ironically, the make-up worn by Queen Elizabeth the first was known as Venetian Ceruse (the spirit of Saturn). Whilst this made her lilywhite, it was lead paint. When referring to his plays concerning the Plantagenet family, Shakespeare frequently utilised iambic pentameter. We see a trochaic inversion to begin the speeches of Richard the third and the same form of metre when discussing the white and the red branches of the family.

Shakespeare uses perfect iambic rhythm when discussing monarchy. Each of Sonnet eighteen and ninety-eight and others in these series (both those attributed to a young male and the dark woman series follow this pattern). In all of the dark lady sonnets, there is a femininity and a duplicity. The start of each Sonnet demonstrates a variation from strict

² See <https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/podcasts/lets-talk-shakespeare/did-shakespeare-know-queen-elizabeth-i/>

representation following. Each of the first four lines are without caesuras (pauses) and do not demonstrate feminine endings.

Helen Hackett (2009) and other researchers have forwarded the claim that the dark lady was Elizabeth the first. And the flower symbolism throughout the series of sonnets, both the *dark lady* and the *fair youth* derived from Petrarch's Sonnet 42 inform linking the Rose and the Lily as an endearing pattern of flower symbolism.

Importantly, the original spelling of the word untrimmed, *vntrim'd* does not represent sailing nor disorderliness. The word, as noted above refers to a state of a woman being a virgin. In this phrase we are not seeing nature trimming sales but rather this was a common reference to a maid, or woman who had not lost her virginity. These conceptions of the etymology of the word developed after Shakespeare's death. In each Sonnet, the colour schemes, the metaphorical analogies, and the use of metaphors of the Queen's virginity at the time link each play directly to Shakespeare's recommendation and occasional dissatisfaction with Queen Elizabeth the first. Elizabeth was the May (Maie) Queen, she was the virgin Queen and she was the light to which Shakespeare remained in the shadows when he was merely practising the court in the theatre in the round.

References

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The original as published in 1609...

SHall I compare thee to a Summers day?
Thou art more louely and more temperate:
Rough windes do fhake the darling buds of Maie,
And Sommers leafe hath all too fhorte a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heauen fhines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
And euery faire from faire some-time declines,
By chance,or natures changing courfe vntrim'd:
But thy eternall Sommer fhall not fade,
Nor loofe poffeffion of that faire thou ow'ft,
Nor fhall death brag thou wandr'ft in his fhade,
When in eternall lines to time thou grow'ft,
So long as men can breathe or eyes can fee,
So long liues this,and this giues life to thee,

In "Poems Written By Wil. Shakespeare Gent." SHAKESPEARE, William,
Published by Printes by Tho. Cotes, London (1640); this changes.

We see the May variant replacing Maie.