SOME MANUSCRIPTS OF SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS

By GARY TAYLOR

Alone among Shakespeare's works the sonnets were not intended for immediate publication or public performance, but for private circulation. In 1598 Francis Meres praised Shakespeare's "sugred sonnets among his priuate friends". Consequently, we know that some sonnets circulated in manuscript at least eleven years before the Quarto edition of SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS was published in 1609. No autograph manuscripts have yet been found, but a number of transcripts from the first half of the seventeenth century survive. The Quarto was itself printed from a scribal transcript, as textual scholars have demonstrated; hence, the printed text is at least two removes from Shakespeare's hand. By contrast, some of the extant transcripts could, for all we know, have been copied directly from Shakespeare's originals, and hence might be only one remove from the font of authority. These early transcripts, recently catalogued in Peter Beal's Index of English Literary Manuscripts, therefore deserve investigation, and Stanley Wells and I have collated all the known examples for the forthcoming Oxford edition of the Complete Works.

Sonnet 2 was particularly popular: it survives in thirteen manuscripts. Eleven of these share a significantly different version of the poem. The second half of this essay will attempt to determine the nature, authority, and importance of that version.

1 This paper would not have been possible without the generous assistance of the libraries which contain manuscripts of the sonnet. I am also indebted to the John Rylands University Library, the Birmingham Shakespeare Library, and the Bodleian; to Stanley Wells, Robin Robbins, Glenn Black, William Montgomery, Richard Proudfoot, MacD. P. Jackson, Eugene Waith, John Kerrigan, and Jeremy Maule, for assistance on various points of detail. An abbreviated version of this article appeared in the Times Literary Supplement, 19 April 1985.

2 Palladis Tamia. Wits Treasury (1598), pp. 281*-2. The book (STC, 17834) was entered in the Stationers' Register on 7 September 1598.

3 SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS. Neuer before Imprinted (1609): STC, 22353: Stationers' Register, 20 May 1609.

alternative text. But before that can be done, the character and interrelationships of the eleven manuscripts must be evaluated.

I. The Witnesses

Peter Beal lists thirteen manuscripts of the sonnet, as follows:⁵

B1 British Library Add. MS.10309, f. 143 (c. 1630; Margaret Bellasys)
B2 British Library Add. MS.21433, f. 114′ (c. 1630s; Inns of Court)
B3 British Library Add. MS.25303, f. 119′ (c. 1620s-30s; Inns of Court)
B4 British Library Add. MS.30982, f. 18 (c. 1631-3; Daniel Leare)
B5 British Library, Sloane MS.1792, f. 45 (c. early 1630s; “I.A.” of Christ Church)
C St. John’s College, Cambridge, MS.S.23 (James 416), f. 38′ (1630s-40s)
F1 Folger Shakespeare Library, MS.V.a.148, Pt. I, f. 22 (1650s; Christ’s College, Cambridge)
F2 Folger Shakespeare Library, MS.V.a.170, pp. 163-4 (c. 1625-35)
F3 Folger Shakespeare Library, MS.V.a.345, p. 145 (c. 1630)
N University of Nottingham, Portland MS.Pw V 37, p. 69 (c. 1630)
R Rosenbach Museum and Library, MS.1083/17, ff. 132′-133 (c. 1638-42; Horatio Carey)
W Westminster Abbey, MS.41, f. 49 (1619-30s; George Morley)
Y Yale University, Osborn Collection, b. 205, f. 54′ (c. 1625-35)

Of these manuscripts, F1—a late compilation of quotations from the sonnets, clearly derived from the 1640 edition of Shakespeare’s Poems—possesses no independent authority, and in any case only contains the first quatrain.⁶ Another manuscript

contd. on p. 215

⁵ Index of English Literary Manuscripts, 1450-1625 (London and New York, 1980), Part ii, 452-3. Dates and identifications come from Beal, except for F2, W, and Y (see below). Beal himself, in a private communication of 29 May 1985, supplied the new date and provenance for F1; he says the “E.H.”, previously identified as the compiler, was a later owner, Edward Hailstone.

⁶ Folger MS. V.a. 148, Pt. I, ff. 22-3; Poems: written by Wil. Shake-speare
Spes Altera

When forty winters shall besiege thy brow
And trench deep furrows in thy lovely field
Thy youthes faire Liu’rie so accounted now
Shall be like rotten weeds of no worth held
Then being asked where all thy beauty lies
Where all thy lustre of thy youthfull days
To say within these hollow sunken eyes
Were an all-eaten truth, & worthless praise
O how much better were thy beautyes use
If thou couldst say this pretty child of mine
Saues my account & makes my old excuse
Making his beauty by succession thine

This were to be new borne when thou art old
And see thy bloud warme when thou feelst it cold.

W.S.

COLLATIONS TO THE MANUSCRIPT VERSION

Spes Altera] B1, B2, B3; Spes Altera A song F3; To one ye would dye a Mayd B4, B5, F2, W, Y; A Lover to his Mistres N; The Benefitt of Marriage. R

1 forty] thre[core B1; 40 B4 (?)
winters] yeares R
2 trench] drench R
feild] cheeke B2, B3
3 youthes] youth B5, F3
faire] fairer R
Liu’rie] liverie B2, B3, B4, B5, F2, F3, N, W; feild R
accounted] accompted B3; esteemed N
4 like] like like B5
weeds] cloaths F2
5 being asked] if we A\k B2; if wee aske B3; a\kt R.
thy] this B3
lyes] lye W (cropped)
7 these] tho\e Y; not in B4
hollow sunken] hollow-funken B1
[THE QUARTO VERSION]

2

When forty Winters shall besiege thy brow,
And digge deep trenches in thy beauties field,
Thy youthes proud liuery so gaz'd on now,
Wil be a totter'd weed of smal worth held:
Then being askt, where all thy beautie lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty daies;
To say within thine owne deepe sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftlesse praise.
How much more praise deseru'd thy beauties vse,
If thou couldst answere this faire child of mine
Shall sum my count, and make my old excuse
Proouing his beautie by succession thine.

This were to be new made when thou art ould,
And see thy blood warme when thou feel'st it could.

SHAKE-SPEARE

(COLLATIONS contd.)

8 eaten] beaten F2
praye] praye W (cropped); prayes B4; pleajure B5
9 O] not in B5
how] whow B4
much] far Y; not in B5
bewtyes] bwtious Y
10 pretty] little B2, B3
11 Sаues] Saud Y
my] mine N
account] accompt B3
makes my old] makes me old B4; makes no old F2; yeilds mee an N; makes the old R; make no old Y
13 new borne] made younge B2, B3
14 feelst] fel[t B2, B3, B4
14.1 W.S.] N (opposite title), B2 (see notes on p. 214)
Notes

*Formal arrangement.* In W and B5 the first line of each quatrain is indented, as are both lines of the couplet. In R the quatrains are separated by a blank space; in F3 they are numbered “1”, “2”, “3” (and “4” for the couplet). In R and F3 the first six even-numbered lines are indented to indicate the rhyme scheme; in F3 the couplet is not indented, and in R it is separated from the quatrains by a page-break.

1 forty B4 at this point has two forms, the second of which is clearly an “o” (letter or numeral); the first is difficult to decipher, but seems closer to “4” (as on 38”) than to “f” or “j”.

5 askt In B5 the “k” and “t” were originally separated by another letter, probably “e”, which has been crossed out in another ink and replaced with an apostrophe. This ink is responsible for many corrections in the manuscript as a whole.

9 O In B1 this letter is deformed but clearly visible; “how” is accordingly indented and begins with a minuscule “h”. (Verse lines in this manuscript begin with majuscule letters.)

13 to In B4 the compiler first wrote “by”, but immediately crossed it out, and continued properly with “to”.

13 old In R the compiler originally wrote another word (probably “dead”), then smudged it out and interlined “old”.

14 warme In B5 an original “ware” has been corrected in a different ink to “warme”. See 1.5 “askt”.

14.1 W.S. At the end of B2 is a list of “Authors of the foregoing collection” (f. 187), among which is included “W.S.”. In another ink and probably another hand, “W.S.” is identified as “Will. Shakespeare” who “died 1616”. As no other poem in the collection is or has ever been attributed to Shakespeare, it seems probable that the attribution relates to “Spes Altera”.

(C) essentially reproduces the Quarto text, with a few indifferent variants of uncertain authority. The remaining eleven, all dating from the 1620s and 1630s, share a quite different version of the sonnet. I print here the text of that manuscript version which our collations have established. Except for the title and attribution, this text coincides with the Westminster Abbey copy, one of the earliest of the extant manuscripts (and one which has never before been published). The collations record all variations from this edited text in the eleven relevant manuscripts.

In analysing the relationship of the eleven manuscripts it would be simplest to begin by identifying dead-ends: manuscripts which contain unique variants, unlikely to be authoritative and difficult to correct conjecturally. In evaluating variants I have adopted a simple premise: variants confirmed by the Quarto text are more likely to be authoritative than variants which depart from the Quarto. Hence in the reading ‘threscore’ (line 1), B1 differs not only from the other ten manuscripts but from the Quarto, too, and its unique variant seems unlikely to represent Shakespeare’s intention at any time. But because ‘threscore’ is sensible, no one copying the text present in B1 would have been likely to correct it back to ‘forty’. Hence, B1 appears to be a dead-end. Other variants which apparently identify manuscripts as dead-ends are: ‘fairer feild’ (R), ‘esteemed’ (N), ‘cloaths’ (F2), ‘if wee aske’ (B2, B3), ‘this’ (B3), ‘those’ (Y), ‘beaten’ (F2), the omission of ‘O’ and

There is no title. Substantive variants as follows: “tatterd” (line 4), “deserues” (9), “say that this faire” (10), “make thy ould excuse,” (11). Of these the first is only a spelling change, and the second is indifferent (though probably wrong); the fourth supplies the necessary punctuation, but its alteration of the pronoun is almost certainly unauthoritative. (See the discussion of other variants in this line.) Only the third variant is potentially interesting, since it stands midway between “say this pretty” (other manuscripts) and “answere this faire” (Quarto). One might conjecture that C derives from a holograph text of the Quarto version, in which line 10 stood in an intermediate state. This possibility might be encouraged by the manuscript’s attribution of the sonnet to “W. Shakspere”—a spelling of the name which could not derive from the Quarto (consistently SHAKE-SPEARE) or from any other printed edition of his works, but which resembles all six authentic signatures in its omission of the “e” in the first syllable; moreover, only one of the signatures contains an “a” in the second syllable. (See S. Schoenbaum, William Shakespeare: Records and Images (London and New York, 1981), pp. 93-109.) Such orthographical evidence cannot be considered decisive, but it does suggest that the manuscript may derive from some source other than the 1609 edition.
'much' (B5), 'far' (Y), 'bewtious' (Y), 'makes me old' (B4), 'yeilds mee an' (N), and 'makes the old' (R). Such variants identify nine of the eleven manuscripts (B1, B2-3, B4, B5, F2, N, R, and Y) as dead-ends.

As we might expect in a group of manuscripts containing such a large proportion of dead-ends, there is little evidence of progressive deterioration. In 1.7 'those' (Y) is much more likely to be a misreading of 'these' than an independent attempt to repair B4's omission; likewise, in 1.9 'far' (Y) is an easy substitution for 'much', and probably not related to B5's omission. Someone who wished to repair the metre of 1.5 in R would be more likely to conjecture 'being' or 'wert thou' than to emend the whole phrase to 'if wee aske' (B2-B3). But the ellipsis in 1.12 clearly gave readers trouble, and the variants in F2 and Y may well be related: simple substitution of 'no' (F2) for 'my' (giving the sense: 'this pretty child ... makes no old excuse'), leading in turn to emendation of 'makes' to 'make' (giving the sense: 'if thou couldst answer ... and make no old excuse'). But Y cannot be a copy of F2 itself: Y could hardly have corrected F2 'cloaths' without access to a more authoritative source. It therefore seems probable that both F2 and Y derive from a lost manuscript (X), containing the title "To one that would die a maid" and the reading 'makes no old excuse'.

The possibility of progressive deterioration allows us to link two manuscripts (F2 and Y), but the variant titles enable us to divide all the manuscripts into two families. Anyone copying a poem entitled "Spes Altera" might substitute a simpler vernacular descriptive title, but no one copying a manuscript with any of the other titles is likely to have invented or reverted to "Spes Altera" without access to another authority. It thus seems most unlikely that B1, B2, B3, or F3 derives from any of the other manuscripts. Theoretically one or more of these four manuscripts might be behind all the others. But three of the "Spes Altera" group also belong to the 'dead-end' group (B1, B2, B3). B3 is a mere copy of B2: as G.E. Moore-Smith pointed out in 1921, on the fly-leaf of the manuscript, the entire miscellany is a copy of B2, and hence of no independent authority. For stemmatic purposes, B2 and B3 may be regarded as a single witness; like B1, they constitute a dead-end. If the seven manuscripts with variant titles derive directly from one of the extant members of the "Spes Altera" group, then F3 is the ultimate authority for the entire manuscript tradition.
One must immediately suspect that the five manuscripts with the title "To one that would die a maid" are related: as N and R (and Benson's 1640 edition) demonstrate, even for someone seeking a descriptive vernacular title "To one that would die a maid" is not an inevitable solution which five different copyists might independently have achieved. Even if a similar formula were adopted, verbal variants—'To one who would die a virgin', for instance—would be likely to occur. On the evidence of the title of this poem alone one would be justified in suspecting some connection between these five manuscripts (B4, B5, F2, W, and Y), and Mary Hobbs has shown by an examination of the entirety of these miscellanies that such a connection—chronological, biographical, and textual—indeed exists. Four of these manuscripts (B4, B5, F2 and Y) are dead-ends. The entire group of manuscripts linked by this title—B4, B5, F2, Y and the lost "X"—could derive from W, which cannot derive from the others, and is evidently the most authoritative manuscript in this group. Jeremy Maule, on the basis of a fuller survey of all five miscellanies, has shown that W is the central text, from which the other four all radiate.

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8 Benson's edition combines Sonnets 1, 2, and 3 under the title "Loves crueltie" (A5'-A6).


10 Private communication, 27 March 1985.
Neither N nor R is likely to belong among W's descendants. "To one that would die a maid" offers an immediately sensible and attractive title for the poem, and one would not expect variant descriptive titles to proliferate unnecessarily. It would, therefore, be safest to assume that N and R derive from a text or texts which contained the title "Spes Altera", and to place them among the "Spes Altera" group, as distinct from the W group.

The variant in 1. 6 suggests that all six texts (B1, B2, B3, F3, N and R) do derive from a common ancestor. The variant "Where's" makes sense, but seems unlikely to be authoritative. The Quarto text has "Where"; "Where's" by contrast spoils the symmetry with 1. 5, and forces an awkward change into direct address. By the criteria adopted elsewhere, this variant should be regarded as an error, and one which—because it makes sense—should not often have been conjecturally rectified. Because five of the six extant manuscripts which contain this error are dead-ends, if it originated in any extant manuscript that manuscript must have been F3. But B2 and N, in their attributions, contain information not present in F3. The compilers of N or B2 might have attributed the sonnet conjecturally, or on the basis of a familiarity with the Quarto; but the other attributions in the manuscripts are reliable, and the text of neither betrays any awareness of or contamination by Q. The hand which compiled N also composed another miscellany, Folger MS. V. a. 103, Pt. 2 (Beal, p. 366), but his identity is not known. On balance, it seems probable that N's (and perhaps B2's) attribution derives from its parent text, and hence that N does not derive directly from F3 (or from W). This, in turn, means that the shared error in 1. 6 presumably originates in a lost common ancestor "z". This analysis, if correct, reduces the number of independent witnesses to two: "W" and the lost manuscript which originated the error in 1. 6 (z).

The eleven manuscripts thus belong to two groups: the 'W' family (of which W is the single parent) and the 'z' family (of which F3 is the least corrupt descendant). Neither family can be directly descended from the other. The 'W' family does not inherit the 'z' error in 1. 6; the 'z' family could hardly have derived "Spes Altera" from W or its descendants.
This stemma is probably a simplification: it assumes, for instance, that only one autograph copy of the sonnet existed. Shakespeare—unlike Wyatt or Sidney or Greville—would probably have had to do his own copying in the 1590s, and several autograph copies might have circulated; there might even have been minor textual variants between these copies. Moreover, both branches might be many removes from an autograph original—though, equally, each might be only a single remove from such an original.

A text of the manuscript version must therefore be constructed on the basis of W and the five extant direct descendants of the lost ‘z’. F3 appears to be the most reliable manuscript in the “z” family: it contains only one demonstrable extra error (‘youth’ in 1.3). If we disregard B3, as a mere copy of B2, and reconstruct a text of the lost ‘z’ manuscript simply by eliminating variants contained in only one of the manuscripts in this family, that text would differ from W in only a single semi-substantive reading (“livery”) and a single substantive (“Where’s”). The two families, thus, to a comforting extent, reinforce one another’s testimony. The parent text of the ‘W’ family—W itself—does not contain a single demonstrable error. (Because of the present cropping of the right-hand margin, we cannot tell whether the copyist wrote ‘lye’ or—as sense, rhyme, and all the other texts urge—‘lyes’.) Moreover, W correctly syncopates ‘livre’ in 1.4, as does B1 (but none of the manuscripts in the ‘z’ group). If we were compelled to choose one of the extant manuscripts as copy-text solely on the basis of the apparent accuracy of its copyist, W would be the obvious choice. Its attraction for an editor is increased by its almost total freedom from punc-
tuation: it contains one hyphen (l. 8), three superfluous commas (ll. 3, 8, 14), and one terminal stop (l. 14). This is very much the sort of punctuation we would expect in a Shakespearian text: it corresponds with the punctuation of the ‘Hand D’ pages in *Sir Thomas More*, and with what may be inferred about Shakespeare’s punctuation from the extant printed texts. *W* is also the text in which we might repose most confidence for purely historical reasons. Jeremy Maule has concluded that parts of the manuscript were compiled as early as 1619; the sonnet itself follows an elegy on King James (died 27 March 1625). On present evidence only *B2* might be earlier.

For such reasons *W* seems the natural choice of manuscript to serve as copy-text; but in respect to substantive readings an editor’s choice is generated less by allegiance to this single text than by allegiance to readings which it shares with at least two of the manuscripts in the other family. Moreover, manuscript readings which coincide with Quarto readings should obviously be preferred, for the Quarto must represent an independent textual tradition. By the application of these twin principles a text of the manuscript version of the sonnet, the lost manuscript from which all eleven extant copies derive, is easily and indeed automatically constructed.

*W* was owned and partly compiled by George Morley (1597-1684), later Bishop of Winchester. According to Clarendon, Morley was a man “of eminent parts in all polite learning, of good wit, readiness and subtlety in disputation”; indeed, “the best man alive”. He entered Christ Church, Oxford, in 1615 (B.A. 1618, M.A. 1621, D.D. 1642). He was himself a minor poet in his youth, a cousin of the poet Sir John Denham (1615-69), and (according to Edmund Waller) “one of Jonson’s sons”; he numbered among his friends at Oxford Clarendon, Robert Sanderson (later Bishop of Lincoln), Gilbert Sheldon (later Archbishop of Canterbury), Lucius Cary (later second Viscount Falkland), and the divines Henry Hammond and William Chillingworth. Two of the other manuscripts in the *W* group have clear connections with Christ Church (B4, B5).

The “2” group of manuscripts is much more loosely connected historically. *R* was compiled by one “Horatio Carey” between

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12 See *The Dictionary of National Biography*. 
1638 and 1642; he signed and dated the beginning and the end of the manuscript. Although neither Beal nor the Rosenbach curators identified him, Horatio Carey (1619—ante 1677) was the eldest son of Sir Robert Carey (1583-1638), who was the eldest son of Sir Edmund Carey (1558-1637), who was the youngest son of Sir Henry Carey (1524?-96), first Baron Hunsdon, the first patron of the Lord Chamberlain’s Men (1594-6). Sir Edmund’s elder brother, Sir George Carey (1546-1603), second Baron Hunsdon, was the second patron of Shakespeare’s company (1596-1603). Thus, Horatio Carey had direct family links with Shakespeare’s two known theatrical patrons from 1594 to 1603; he was in the direct line of male descent, and his own son Robert (1640?-1692) became sixth Baron Hunsdon in 1677.

Horatio’s grandfather, Sir Edmund Carey, had initiated a link with the Low Countries which persisted for several generations. The first appearance of Horatio in English records is on 13 February 1637/8, when “Horatio Carey, sergeant major” was one of a number of petitioners to King Charles who, having “gained experience in horsemanship in foreign wars”, proposed to offer advice on the reformation of the British cavalry (Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1637-8, p. 250). Two years later another petition claims that the petitioners “having served in the King of Sweden’s [i.e. Gustavus Adolphus’s] wars for eight years together, were, upon occasion of the late expedition to the North, directed by the English ambassador at Hamburgh to repair hither for your Majesty’s service. They have ever since remained here without employment, and having spent all their own means, are now, without your Majesty’s favour, unable to subsist” (S.P.D., 17 January 1639/40, p. 343). In April of 1640 they claim that “most of us are run into debt and dare not walk the streets” (S.P.D., 1640, p. 93); they ask for leave to return to the continent (p. 92). It seems unlikely that Carey ever left, however, for on 25 January 1640/1 Sir William Uvedale wrote, in a letter to Matthew Bradley, that “Captain Horatio Carey has got one of the cashiered companies in Sir William Ogle’s regiment; I have lent him 20 l” (S.P.D., 1640-1, p. 432). During the Civil War Horatio fought in the Parliamentary and Royal armies successively, was knighted by Charles I, then (in September 1648) proscribed by Parliament. At this time (if not before) he returned to the Continent.

13 Fairfax Harrison, The Devon Careys, 2 vols. (New York, 1920), i. 374-5 (For Uvedale see ii. 421).
R contains (besides a text of this Sonnet) eighty-seven poems by Thomas Carew: it is one of the largest and most important manuscript collections of his poetry. Sir William Uvedale, who loaned Horatio money in 1641, was related to him: his first wife was Horatio’s aunt, and his second was the sister of Lucius Cary. As I have already mentioned, Lucius Cary was one of George Morley’s many friends. This is not the place to sort out the complex literary and political relationships of the members of the ubiquitous Carey family in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century; but the apparent links between the Careys and this poem are intriguing.

The only other identification now possible is of B1 with Margaret Bellasys. Beal conjectures that this is Margaret, the daughter of Thomas Bellasys, first lord Fauconberg (1577-1653). This identification may well be correct, but there was one other Margaret in the Bellasys family during these years: the wife of Sir William Bellasis (d. 1640), of Morton House, county Durham. This other Margaret was the eldest daughter and co-heiress of Sir George Selby, of Whitehouse, county Durham. She died in 1671.14 Nothing about her circumstances makes her a particularly compelling candidate, but at the moment she cannot be ruled out.

The other Margaret, Beal’s candidate, died on 7 November 1624. If she was the woman whose signature appears in the manuscript, her death explains certain peculiarities of the document. The “Characters” transcribed at the beginning of the manuscript (pp. 1-75) are indexed at the end, over the signature “Margaret Bellasys”. The intervening poems are not indexed; uncharacteristically, there is no catchword at the bottom of p. 75, and the poems begin on p. 76 with a satirical verse on the Duke of Buckingham, dated “1628”. Hence, it would be reasonable to conjecture that Margaret was only responsible for compilation of the first half of the manuscript, and that a second compiler took over after Margaret’s death. If so, then the second compiler presumably belonged to Margaret’s family.

Sir Thomas Bellasys (of Newborough, Yorkshire) married, about 1600, Barbara, the first daughter of Sir Henry Cholmley (of Roxby and Whitby, Yorkshire). Margaret was their eldest

14 For the pedigrees of both Margarets, detailed in this and the following paragraphs, see Joseph Foster’s Pedigrees of the County Families of Yorkshire, 3 vols. (London, 1874) and Pedigrees of the County Families of Lancashire (London, 1873).
daughter. Her brothers and sisters were Henry (m. Grace Barton), Mary (m. John, Lord Darcy of Aston), Barbara (m. Sir Henry Slingsby), Ursula (m. Sir William Vavasour), Francis (m. Sir Thomas Ingram), and John (m. Jane Boteler). None of these connections seems of any compelling interest; but I record them, for the benefit of future investigators. If Margaret compiled her part of the manuscript in her teens, before her marriage (which would explain why she used her maiden name in the signature), then we might expect the manuscript to have passed to one of these relatives. (Her mother died on 28 February 1618/19).

On 13 October 1618 Margaret married Sir Edmund Osborne (1596-1647) of Kiveton, Yorkshire. Sir Edmund was the son of Sir Hewett Osborne (knighted by Essex in Ireland in 1599); he was created a baronet on 12 July 1620, and became vice-president of the council of the north in 1629. If Margaret still owned the manuscript at the time of her death in 1624, it would probably have remained in Osborne's household. Margaret had one son, who died in 1638; but he would have been too young to compile the miscellany in the late 1620s and early 1630s. The two likeliest candidates would then be Sir Edmund himself, or his second wife, Anne. Anne was the widow of William Midelton (of Thurntofte, Yorkshire); her father was Thomas Walmesley, Esq., of Dunkenhalgh, Lancashire; her mother was Mary Hoghton, of Hoghton Tower, Lancashire. This Mary Hoghton was the sister of Sir Richard Hoghton (1570-1630), of Hoghton Tower. This connection is particularly intriguing, because the Hoghton family in the 1580s has been conjecturally linked with Shakespeare. It would therefore be helpful to identify more confidently the compiler of the second half of B1. More generally, it would be useful to know a good deal more about the contents, compilers, and relationships of all eleven manuscripts. Such a study would be best undertaken by someone broadly familiar with manuscript miscellanies of the Caroline period.

The popularity of this sonnet in manuscript has already raised one question: why so many copies? Hobbs, seizing upon the ambiguous words "A song" in F3, suggested that the sonnet had been set to music in the 1620s, and Beal has apparently endorsed

15 E. A. J. Honigmann, Shakespeare: the 'lost years' (Manchester, 1985). I am sceptical of many of the conclusions in this book, but the Lancashire connection certainly deserves further investigation.
this conjecture. Such speculation may be justified, and certainly cannot be disproved. But the case of Sonnet 116, which Beal cites as a parallel, is of dubious value, for in Lawes' setting that sonnet has been completely rewritten as an eighteen-line poem with three regular stanzas. Moreover, even if we ignore the eleven manuscripts which contain a variant text (allegedly that used for the musical setting), the sonnet would still survive in two manuscripts, and hence be matched in manuscript popularity only by 106. There must therefore be other causes for the poem's popularity. Such causes can only be properly evaluated in the context of a wider survey of the history of English artistic taste. (Venus and Adonis, after all, went through more editions than any of Shakespeare's plays.) But we should perhaps not be too surprised that the miscellanies of bachelor gentlemen often contain a poem about the need to propagate a family line. For instance, Horatio Carey's miscellany was composed just after the death of his own father and grandfather (1637 and 1638), at about the time of the birth of his first son and heir (1640?). If we knew more about the other miscellanies, similar biographical explanations for the poem's relevance might be apparent elsewhere.

More important than the popularity of this single sonnet is the pattern of distribution of Shakespeare's sonnets in manuscript. Altogether, 10 of the sonnets survive in a total of 19 manuscripts. Only two manuscripts (F1 and Folger MS. V. a. 162) contain more

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16 See Beal's letter to the TLS, 10 May 1985, p. 521, and my reply, 17 May, p. 549. In another letter (unpublished), Beal notes that Carey did not himself necessarily compile manuscript R, and suggests that the collection originated in the same Oxford milieu as the Westminster Abbey group. This is certainly possible, and Beal's knowledge of miscellanies in this period is far greater than my own. But Carey's responsibility is certainly suggested by the fact that the miscellany was compiled in the very years (1638-42) between his return to England and the outbreak of full-scale civil war. Moreover, although Beal rightly draws attention to the miscellany's inclusion of poems by authors strongly associated with the Oxford circle (Corbet, Strode, King, and to a lesser degree Jonson and Donne), it is unique in its access to the poems of Thomas Carew, and contains a number of poems with an Elizabethan and/or theatrical origin: Basse's "Epitaph on Shakespeare", the epitaph "Upon y' death of y' famous Actor R. Burbadge", and poems by Raleigh, Beaumont, Sidney, Anthony Munday, and William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. However, the sources of the Rosenbach miscellany can only be confidently determined in the context of a wider study of miscellany manuscripts from this period.

than one sonnet, and both clearly derive from the 1609 or 1640 edition. In fact, ignoring temporarily the texts of this sonnet, only three sonnets survive in manuscripts which are not demonstrably derivative of the printed texts: Sonnets 8 (B.L. Add. MS. 15226), 106 (Pierpont Morgan MA 1057 and Rosenbach 1083/16) and 128 (Bodleian, Rawl. poet. 152). In total, then, we possess 16 texts of individual sonnets which may be independent of the printed tradition, and these 16 texts occur in 16 different miscellanies. This pattern of distribution would be difficult to explain if the sonnets had circulated in manuscript as a sequence; it strongly suggests, instead, that they circulated as individual poems.

The Passionate Pilgrim (1599? STC 22341.5, 22342) tends to confirm this supposition: this miscellaneous collection of poems, attributed, in large part falsely, to Shakespeare, and evidently printed without his consent, contains only two sonnets present in the 1609 sequence (138 and 144). Since the compiler of The Passionate Pilgrim obviously wished to capitalize on Shakespeare’s reputation, he had every reason to reproduce as many sonnets as he could acquire, and it therefore seems obvious that 138 and 144 were circulating separately from any other sonnets yet composed. Cumulatively, the testimony of the extant manuscripts and The Passionate Pilgrim strongly encourages the conclusion that the sonnets circulated in manuscript individually, not as a sequence—although of course they might theoretically have been composed as a sequence; even though they were distributed as disparate artistic entities. Certainly, by 1598 Shakespeare had written sonnets from the “young man” group (“Spes Altera”, and perhaps 8 and 108) and the “dark lady” group (138, 144, and perhaps 128). Whether he yet saw these groups as components of a larger whole, we do not know, and probably never will.

The early history of the manuscripts is for the most part irredeemably obscure, and can be reconstructed only with the help of generous quantities of conjecture. The history of subsequent interpretation of the manuscripts can be more confidently recovered. Transcripts of two copies were published in The Athenaeum in July and September 1913 by C.C. Stopes and

18 For collations and discussions of manuscripts of the other sonnets, see the relevant textual introduction and notes to the Oxford Complete Works, gen. ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (forthcoming).
Bertram Dobell. Stopes transcribed B5, and claimed that the manuscript had belonged to Robert Killigrew (1579-1633). She had mixed feelings about the value of the manuscript: on the one hand, “There is little interest in the variations; they seem to have arisen just from inexactitudes of memory”, but on the other the manuscript “may represent an earlier draft than that published by Thorpe” (p. 45). Dobell, who transcribed what is now Folger MS. V. a. 170 (F2), was more confident. He dated the relevant portion of the Folger manuscript “1625-35”, and concluded that there must have been a “common source” for both manuscripts. “If Mrs. Stopes had seen this version as well, I think she would hardly have said that there is little interest in the variants, or have thought that they probably arose from inexactitudes of memory”; instead, the manuscript version represents “Shakespeare’s first draft of the sonnet” (p. 112). Dobell promised to discuss the matter in greater detail elsewhere—a promise which, unfortunately, he never kept. On 6 September H.T. Price concluded the correspondence by drawing attention to C (p. 230), which essentially reproduces the Quarto text.

R.M. Alden copied the Athenaeum transcripts in his 1916 edition of the sonnets (pp. 21-3). Of B5 he reports the conclusions of “Professor Charles W. Wallace”, who claims that “the MS. is probably an exercise book of a student at Christ Church, with tutorial corrections, and dates from the Restoration period”. The connection with Christ Church, and the amount of correction, are manifest; the date seems wildly wrong. Alden reprinted F2 without comment, and added a transcript of F1; he concluded, “In general it is obvious that none of these variant MSS. has any independent textual value; though the variants in the first quatrain, similar in B5 and F2, have been thought to give indications of a different early version of the sonnet”. Alden’s unsubstantiated dismissive attitude was taken even further by C.F. Tucker Brooke, who in his Clarendon edition of 1936 listed all the manuscripts of all the sonnets known to him (pp. 66-9). But he prefaced this list with the declaration that none of the manuscripts was earlier than the 1609 edition, or improved upon its text in any particular. He did not transcribe the alternative version of this sonnet, or even record its variants, merely noting that F2 (like other manuscripts with a similar text) is a “Bad copy containing thirty altered words”.

Tucker Brooke’s summary condemnation effectively dismissed the manuscripts from the collective scholarly consciousness.
H. Harvey Wood had printed a transcript of the Nottingham copy in Essays and Studies (1930); a facsimile of the Yale copy was published by Laurence Witten in The Book Collector (1959). One of these articles was entitled “A Seventeenth-Century Manuscript of Poems by Donne and others”; the other, “Contemporary Collectors: XXIII: James Marshall Osborn”, described Osborn’s entire collection. Neither title recommends itself to a wide public. The authors of these articles did not draw attention to the critical and textual significance of the variants; did not know of the Athenaeum transcripts; did not realize how many early manuscripts contain such variants. Their transcripts emerged from a vacuum, and descended into an abyss.

Hyder Rollins, in his great 1944 Variorum edition (Philadelphia, two volumes), refers to the transcriptions of Stopes, Dobell, Price, and Wood, and to the collations of Brooke, but then claims that “All these versions are later than 1640” (i. 10). This statement is not only false, but irrelevant. Rollins explicitly states elsewhere (ii. 328) that the manuscripts derive from Benson’s edition (which they do not); more generally, he assumes that the manuscripts must be corrupt because they are late. For all Shakespeare’s undoubted work we depend on copies; half the plays survive in one late copy only; at least five plays (The Tempest, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, Measure for Measure, The Merry Wives of Windsor, and The Winter’s Tale) survive in a single late copy, copied from another copy, prepared by a known scribe after Shakespeare’s death. Late copies can accurately echo early originals, and the relative lateness of the extant manuscripts—which has in any case been exaggerated—does not in any way invalidate their potential textual authority.

Like Brooke, Rollins did not bother to collate or discuss the manuscript variants. Only Mary Hobbs, in a brief contribution to Notes and Queries (1979), recognized the consistency of the manuscript testimony, or its potential importance. None of the countless editions of the sonnets since 1916 gives readers any idea of the nature of the variation in this manuscript tradition: its extent, its quality, its consistency.

19 Essays and Studies, xvi (1930), 179-90; The Book Collector, viii (1959), 383-96. Witten notes that the Sonnet was “probably written down early in the reign of Charles I” (p. 386); the facsimile is among several between pp. 392 and 393.
II. The Manuscript Version

Clearly, the manuscript version represents a different textual tradition. The poem as we know it from the Quarto contains 116 words; 31 of these words are variant in the manuscript tradition—not counting the title. That is, 27 per cent of the poem is altered. Moreover, all 31 variants make sense. Surely no one will imagine that, in the normal process of transmission, 27 per cent of the text was altered, or that such grotesque irresponsibility in a copyist would produce such a sensible text. Nor does it seem likely that eleven of the manuscripts of so popular a poem should derive from one remarkably corrupt transcript—especially when an alternative good text of the poem already existed in print by the time the extant manuscripts were compiled. Nor are many of the variants in the manuscript version of the kind which normally arises through scribal error.

The variants in the manuscript tradition not only make sense; they make characteristically Shakespearian sense. Unlike the Quarto, the manuscripts use the word “furrows” in 1. 2, as a metaphor for wrinkles; Shakespeare wrote “time’s furrows” (Sonnet 22) and “help time to furrow me with age” (Richard II, 1.3.229), using the same metaphor. The manuscripts treat “trench” as a verb, not a noun as in the Quarto. OED’s two earliest examples of the collocation “trench ... in” come from Shakespeare (Two Gentlemen of Verona, 3.2.7, Venus and Adonis, 1052); OED’s earliest example of a comparable figurative use of the verb comes from 1624, and must be antedated by this passage. Such linguistic inventiveness is, of course, typical of Shakespeare.

The manuscripts have “fair liv’ry”, meaning “outward appearance”; in Venus and Adonis Shakespeare wrote “beauteous livery” (1107), meaning “outward appearance”. In the manuscripts the youth’s beauty is “so accounted”; at Merchant of Venice 3.2.157 “beauties ... exceed account”, and at Two Gentlemen of Verona 2.1.61 Shakespeare wrote, “I account of her beauty”.

The manuscripts read “rotten weeds”; in the Folio text of Hamlet a “weed ... rots itself in ease” (1.5.33). Shakespeare also uses the verb “rot” to associate human with vegetative decay: “the green corn / Hath rotted ere his youth attained a beard”

(Midsummer Night’s Dream, 2.1.94-5), “Beauty within itself should not be wasted: / Fair flowers that are not gathered in their prime / Rot, and consume themselves in little time” (Venus and Adonis, 130-2). Both texts of the sonnet pun on “weed(s)”, as plants and apparel; Shakespeare used “rotten” of military apparel at Richard III, 3.5.0, where the phrase “rotten Armour” in the Folio stage direction must be authorial, because it echoes Shakespeare’s historical sources.21

The manuscripts ask, “where is all thy lustre?”, and reply, “within these eyes”. Shakespeare elsewhere associates “lustre” with eyes at Henry V, 3.1.30, Julius Caesar, 1.2.124, and Troilus and Cressida, 4.4.118. An even closer parallel occurs in King Lear, where Cornwall cruelly inquires of the eye he has just removed from Gloucester’s socket, “Where is thy lustre now?” (3.7.84). Like the manuscripts, Shakespeare describes eyes as “hollow” at Comedy of Errors, 5.1.241, Richard II, 2.1.270, Merchant of Venice, 4.1.270, 2 Henry IV, 4.5.6, and Henry V, 5.2.162.

Neither the manuscript compound “all-eaten” nor the Quarto “all-eating” occurs elsewhere in the canon; but Shakespeare was exceptionally generous in inventing compound adjectives.22 He uses “eaten” as the second element of a compound seven times elsewhere: compare “ore-eaten” (Troilus 5.2.160), which, like “all-eaten”, is a neologism. The manuscripts use the idiom “a truth” (literally, “an” + adjective + “truth”); Shakespeare has “a truth” eleven times, thrice interposing an adjective between article and noun, as here.23 The manuscripts describe “truth” as “eaten”, inferentially by Time; in Sonnet 60, “Time ... feeds on ... truth”. The manuscripts juxtapose “truth, and worthless”; Shakespeare juxtaposes “worth, and truth” (Sonnet 37). The manuscript phrase “worthless praise” recurs at Titus Andronicus, 5.3.117. The

21 The Folio has Richard and Buckingham enter “in rotten Armour, marvellous ill-favoured”, following Edward Hall’s “harnessed in olde euill-fauoured briganders” (Edward V, f. XV). Antony Hammond, in the new Arden edition (1981), calls this “the most obviously authorial direction in the play” (p. 237).


23 LLL, 2.1.65, AWW, 2.5.30 (“a known truth”), 4.3.156 (twice), 5.3.207, 2H4, 1.1.96, Troilus, 4.4.31 (“a hateful truth”), 5.2.119, Romeo, 4.1.33, Macbeth, 1.3.133, Othello, 5.2.189 (“a strange truth”). The idiom also appears at Henry VIII, 2.1.154, usually attributed to Fletcher.
manuscript phrase "how much better" recurs twice in Shakespeare (I Henry IV, 1.2.210, Much Ado, 1.1.28). The manuscript collocation "pretty child" occurs at King John 4.1.129; Love's Labour's Lost has "a child, most pretty" (1.2.97). Shakespeare applies the adjective "pretty" to a baby, boy, or child 24 times.24

In the manuscript the child "Saves" his father's account, his image, his story, his wealth. Shakespeare uses the same verb in similar contexts twice in I Henry VI. At 4.5.38, Talbot says to his son, "Part of thy father may be saved in thee"; at 4.6.38-41, he tells him,

In thee thy mother dies, our household's name,
My death's revenge, thy youth, and England's fame:
All these, and more, we hazard by thy stay;
All these are saved if thou wilt run away.

Even those who doubt Shakespeare's authorship of the entire play grant him these two scenes.

The manuscripts contain the two words "new born", meaning "newly born"; this collocation occurs twice in Shakespeare, once at Lucrece, 1190, once at Love's Labour's Lost, 4.3.240. The latter is worth quoting:

She passes praise, then praise too short doth blot.
A withered hermit, five-score winters worn,
Might shake off fifty, looking in her eye:
Beauty doth varnish age, as if new born,
And gives the crutch the cradle's infancy.

An extraordinary number of the themes, images, and words of this passage reappear in the manuscript version of the sonnet.

Noticeably, most of these parallels come from plays and poems Shakespeare wrote in the 1590s—the decade in which certainly some, probably most, and possibly all of the sonnets were written. The same chronological bias can be seen in other words unique to the manuscript tradition. All 16 examples of "worthless" in the canon date from before 1600; so do all but four of the 29 dateable

24 TGV, 2.1.116 (youth), Errors, 1.1.72 (babes), LLL, 5.2.97 (page), WT, 1.2.62 (lordlings), 3.3.48 (of the infant Perdita), 3.3.70 (barne), 3.3.71 (twice), John, 3.4.89 (Arthur), 3H6, 4.6.70 (lad), R3, 1.3.177 (Rutland), 2.4.31 (York), 4.1.100 (of the princes), Cor, 1.3.58 (boy), Romeo, 1.3.31, 44, 48, 60 (all of Juliet as an infant), Macbeth, 4.3.216, 218 (of Macduff's children), Lear, 1.4.96 (of the fool), Antony, 2.2.202 (boys).
examples of "youthful". Shakespeare uses "lovely" 43 times, outside the sonnets themselves; all but two are earlier than 1600.

The vocabulary common to the manuscript and printed versions shows a similar pattern of parallels with the Shakespeare canon. Thus, Shakespeare measures the passage of time in "winters", rather than years, ten times elsewhere (Sonnet 104; LLL, 4.3.238; R2, 1.3.211, 214, 260; 4.1.258; MM, 3.1.75; WT, 5.3.50; TMP, 1.2.96; TNK, 5.1.108). "Forty years" occurs at Titus, 1.1.193, 1 Henry VI, 1.3.91, and Richard II, 1.3.159. Shakespeare uses the verb "besiege" fourteen times; only three are late (LC, 177; All's Well, 2.1.10; TMP, 1.2.205); the rest all predate 1 Henry IV.

Brows are wrinkled, as line 2 metaphorically describes them, in Sonnets 60 and 63, as well as Venus, 139, 3 Henry VI, 5.2.19, John, 2.1.505 and 4.2.192, Merchant, 4.1.270, and Lear, 1.4.284. Shakespeare quibbles on "field", as here, at Lucrece 58 and 72. "Being ask'd, to say" occurs at As You Like It, 4.3.90, and "being ask'd" at Coriolanus, 3.2.88. The idiom "make excuse(s)" shows up nine times (Venus, 188, Lucrece, 114, 225, 1653, Richard III, 1.2.84, Romeo, 2.5.33, TN, 1.5.33, Troilus, 3.2.85, 99). The word "beauty", which occurs three times in both texts, is used more often in Lucrece (19), Venus (21) and the Sonnets (66) than in any of the plays; the two plays which come closest are Love's Labour's Lost (15) and Romeo (13). Shakespeare describes blood as "warm" eight times elsewhere (Romeo, 2.5.12, John, 5.2.59, Merchant, 1.1.83; Titus, 2.4.22, Richard III, 5.2.9, Richard II, 3.2.131, 2 Henry IV, 4.3.103, Antony, 3.1.6); the first three parallels associate warm blood with youth, as here. Shakespeare never elsewhere associated "cold blood" with age, but the collocation does occur eight times (3 Henry VI, 1.1.84, 5.2.37, John, 3.1.123, 2 Henry IV, 4.3.118, Henry V, 3.5.20, JC, 4.3.280, Macbeth, 3.4.93, Antony, 1.5.74).

None of these parallels is so striking, or so convincing as evidence of authorship, as the Shakespearian parallels with the vocabulary and imagery unique to the manuscripts. But in both sets of imagery, parallels from before 1600 heavily predominate; indeed, the bulk of the parallels clearly belong to the period before 1 Henry IV and The Merchant of Venice (1596-7). These two plays are a watershed in Shakespeare's chronology, in that all his other works can be confidently placed before or after this pair; moreover, although problems remain, the chronology is much clearer after this pair than before it. On the basis of internal evidence, we
would have no choice but to date the manuscript version of this sonnet before 1597. This conclusion is, of course, compatible with the explosion of sonneteering in the early 1590s, with the widely-accepted and manifest correspondence between *Venus and Adonis* (no later than Spring 1593) and Sonnets 1-17, and with the conventional assumption that Shakespeare turned to writing sonnets in bulk for a literary patron at a time when the theatres were closed for a prolonged period because of plague (June 1592-December 1594). I would thus feel little anxiety about dating composition of the manuscript version of this sonnet in the four years after June 1592.

The machinery of coincidence will hardly account for such correspondences between the manuscript variants and Shakespeare's early work. The parallels do not involve the verbal small change of an era, worn smooth by general circulation. The poetry of Donne, Herbert, Jonson, Marvell, Milton, Sidney, and Spenser, and the sonnet sequences of Daniel and Drayton, have all been concorded. These concordances confirm that the language unique to the manuscripts is not only typical of Shakespeare but typical of no one else. Spenser eight times, and Milton once, has "hollow eyes"; Jonson once has "how much better"; Sidney once has "prety childish"; Herbert has "Redeem truth from [time's] jawes"; Spenser and Herbert each have "a truth" once; Donne, Drayton, and Sidney each associate "lustre" with eyes once; Spenser once and Drayton once describe wrinkles as "furrows". For several manuscript variants these writers provide no parallels at all; with the exception of "hollow eyes", Shakespeare's early work provides more parallels than all these writers combined; no writer but Shakespeare affords parallels for more than three variants. Moreover, noticeably, most of the parallels come from works of the 1580s and 1590s, which might themselves have influenced—or been influenced by—Shakespeare's early sonnets. Few parallels come from the period when the extant transcriptions were copied.

The possibility of influence affords another piece of testimony to the authenticity of the manuscript text. As a parallel for 1.2 Hyder Rollins cited a line from the Second Elegy of Drayton's "Shepheard's Garland" (1593): "The time-plow'd furrowes in thy fairest field" (1.46). Whoever might be the plagiarist, Drayton's

Arnold Davenport, "The Seed of a Shakespeare Sonnet", *Notes and Queries*, clxxii (1942), 242-4; Rollins (i. 10) rightly singles this line out as the only purported parallel deserving attention. Neither Davenport nor Rollins notes the relevant manuscript variants.
line resembles the manuscript version more closely than it does the Quarto.

The variant title points, if anything, even more clearly to Shakespeare's hand. Anyone copying the poem into a commonplace book might invent for it a title like “A Lover to his Mistres”, “The Benefitt of Marriage” or “To one that would die a maid”. But a copyist is most unlikely to invent a title like “Spes Altera”, which occurs in four of the manuscripts, but to my knowledge is not used elsewhere as an epigraph or motto or title in this period.

“Spes Altera” alludes to Vergil’s *Aeneid* (xii. 168), where Ascanius is called “magnae spes altera Romae” (“second hope of great Rome”). Within the poem, this title must refer to the “pretty child”, who offers a second hope, another chance, for the youth’s own beauty to flourish. In Book XII the Trojans “besiege” a city; Aeneas, wounded, almost dies, but is saved by the intervention of Venus, the goddess of love—just as sexual activity leading to procreation “Saves” the protagonist of this sonnet from his own mortality. The allusion itself deftly compliments the youth: for if “this pretty child” is Ascanius, then the youth himself, the father of that child, must be Aeneas.

Elizabethan Englishmen liked to imagine that they descended, like the Romans, from the Trojans: as a compliment to a young nobleman “Spes Altera” would be difficult for vaulting hyperbole to o’erleap. The flattery would be even apter if—like Aeneas (and the Earl of Southampton)—the young man wavered on the

26 Vergil’s line is echoed by Ausonius (b. 310 A. D.): “tuque puerque tuus, magnae spes altera Romae” (“A Nuptial Cento”, I: Praefatio, 1.7). This is a work which combines disparate quotations from classical authors, in order to produce an apparently coherent narrative on a trivial topic. Ausonius thus calls attention to his own cannibalism of Vergil. The “cento”, in this case, celebrates the wedding of a young man, to whom the phrase “magnae spes altera Romae” is applied. The connection with the theme of Shakespeare’s poem is, to say the least, curious. I do not think the coincidence can establish that Shakespeare intended an allusion to Ausonius, as well as Vergil himself; but if he did, two features of “Cento Nuptialis” may be significant. The poem ends with an elaborately-detailed obscene description of the bridal night in Vergilian pastiche; and the poet proclaims, in the Praefatio, “non iniussa cano” (1.10: “I sing as I am bidden”). I have checked all the available concordances to classical authors, and found the collocation only once elsewhere, in Ovid’s *Fasti* 3:625: “neque enim spes altera restat” (“for no other hope was left her”)—which seems to have no relevance. However, *Fasti* was a prime source for *The Rape of Lucrece*: this passage concerns Dido’s sister Anna and Aeneas himself (after his defeat of Turnus).
threshold of a dynastically ambitious marriage, or if—like Aeneas (and the Earl of Southampton)—his mother was alive, but his father dead. 27 "Spes Altera" may not unlock the sonnets' romance à clef. But such a dynastic allusion establishes that Shakespeare did, in the early 1590s, write at least one sonnet for a real, specific, educated bachelor aristocrat, being urged to marry: someone with a strong resemblance to Southampton. 28

The allusion is interesting in other ways too. Shakespeare clearly knew the Aeneid, a less popular but more prestigious work than his beloved Metamorphoses. 29 Shakespeare also knew the phrase "Spes Altera", for he translated it in Troilus and Cressida: "They call him Troilus, and on him erect / A second hope as fairly built as Hector. / Thus says Aeneas, one that knows the youth / Even to his inches, and with private soul / Did in great Ilion thus translate him to me" (4.5.108-12; my italics). Troilus is thus a "youth" who is the "second hope" of "great Ilion" just as Ascanius is of "magnae Romae"; the fortuitous association with Aeneas, and the unusual verb "translate", make it reasonably clear that Shakespeare was thinking specifically of this passage in Vergil's Aeneid. But although Shakespeare continued to adapt Vergil throughout his career, all of his direct quotations of Latin classics (as in the title of the sonnet) date from the early 1590s, when he was anxious to establish his cultural credentials. 30

27 I have not found "Spes Altera" in the standard collections of family mottos, or as a caption for a portrait miniature; but my search of such sources has been limited.


30 Venus and Adonis (dedication), Love's Labour's Lost, 4.2.95, Shrew, 1.1.167, 3.1.28, 2 Henry VI, 1.4.65, 2.1.24, 2.1.53, 4.1.117, 3 Henry V, 1.3.48, Titus, 2.1.135, 4.1.82, 4.2.20, 4.3.4. All these passages can be dated on unimpeachable documentary evidence no later than Spring 1593, except for those in Shrew and Love's Labour's Lost, which are both dated earlier than 1595 by almost all modern scholars. The lone quotation in the later work—Timon 1.2.28—is in a passage written by Thomas Middleton: see David Lake, The Canon of Middleton's Plays (Cambridge, 1975), MacD. P. Jackson, Studies in Attribution: Middleton and Shakespeare (Salzburg, 1979), and R. V. Holdsworth,
only explicit mention of Ascanius himself comes at 2 Henry VI, 3.2.116.\textsuperscript{31}

Although Vergil must be the prime target of the allusion in “Spes Altera”, the title probably also echoes a second source. “Spes Altera Vitae” first appears as an emblem motto in Joachim Camerarius’s Symbolorum et Emblematum (Nuremburg, 1534), a work often reprinted during the next century;\textsuperscript{32} from there it was copied by Claude Paradin’s popular Symbola Heroica, which in turn was “Translated out of Latin into English by P.S.” and printed in London as Heroicall Devises (1591: STC, 19183). Camerarius’s full-page Latin gloss on the emblem cites John 12.24, St. Paul, Ambrosius, and Chrysostomos. “P.S.” is more succinct: “Corne, graine, and seeds of sundrie sorts, being dead and cast into the ground do reuiue, and spring againe: So mans bodie falling into the ground shall rise againe in glory, in the last and general day of the resurrection of the flesh” (p. 321).

Emblems were the intellectual billboards of the Renaissance, and their familiarity to Shakespeare and his contemporaries has been amply demonstrated.\textsuperscript{33} Pericles, for instance, clearly makes use of Paradin.\textsuperscript{34} Any reader or writer equipped to apply the Vergilian allusion could hardly have been ignorant of the Christian alternative. In Vergil the “second hope” is dynastic and genetic: a pagan overcomes his mortality by impregnating his wife. In the emblems, a Christian instead overcomes his mortality on the Day of Judgement. Vergil and the emblems offer alternative recipes for immortality: erection or resurrection.

The manuscript title thus yokes two antithetical allusions. In the poem itself, the classical referent silences its Christian opponent,


\textsuperscript{31} This is a passage attributed to Shakespeare even by scholars who doubt his authorship of the entire play: see John Dover Wilson’s New Shakespeare edition (Cambridge, 1952), p. 158.

\textsuperscript{32} For a full bibliography see Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, \textit{Emblemata} (Stuttgart, 1967), cols. 324-5.


\textsuperscript{34} Green, pp. 167-75, 183-4; William Scott, “Another ‘Heroical Device’ in Pericles”, \textit{Shakespeare Quarterly}, xx (1969), 91-5.
which only speaks at all through the title, and so is utterly absent from the Quarto version. But other sonnets similarly appropriate and transmute Christian allusion: the parable of the talents (Sonnet 4), the doctrine of the Trinity (105), the Lord’s Prayer (108), “I am that I am” (121), “Eve’s apple” (93), Ecclesiastes’ famous declaration that “there is nothing new” under the sun (59)—all profanely exploited in the service of Shakespeare’s young aristocrat. The manuscript title is thus Shakespearian in its priorities, as well as its versatility. Though he might have disapproved of the priorities, Milton himself could hardly have improved upon the title’s allusive technique.

Transcripts of poems in commonplace books sometimes suffer from memorial contamination or inept rewriting. But the transcriber of a sonnet in the 1620s should not have introduced a tissue of reminiscences of poems and plays which Shakespeare wrote three decades earlier. Nor would we expect one badly contaminated transcript to have formed the foundation for eleven of the twelve complete extant manuscripts. In themselves, the nature and extent and popularity of the variants virtually demonstrate that we are here dealing with two authorial recensions of one poem. The Shakespearian character of the variants themselves, and the authorial character of the title, simply make assurance double sure.

This sonnet consequently provides the clearest extant example of the fact—and the process—of Shakespeare revising his work after composition. It also provides an example which a reader can master in a single sitting. In *Hamlet*, there are some 1300 variants between the Second Quarto and the First Folio; each might have a significant relationship with any of the others, so potentially there are 1,692,000 links between the variants themselves. And each of those variants might have a relationship with any or every other word in the text. Since the two good texts of *Hamlet* have about 28,000 words in common, there are literally billions of potential links between the variants and the invariant text. Such mathematical formulas no doubt exaggerate the scope of the critical problem. But anyone can appreciate that a holistic critical interpretation of textual variants is easier to achieve in a poem of 14 lines than in a play of 3000.

The two versions differ noticeably in their portrayal of the youth. In the manuscripts we know he is beautiful; in the copies entitled “Spes Altera” we might deduce that he is well-born. That
Securus moritur, qui sic se morte renasce:
Non ea mors dici, sed nos vita poscit.
is all we know. In the Quarto the youth is not only beautiful, but also "proud" (both "magnificent" and "arrogant") and "lusty" (both "spirited" and "lustful"). In the manuscripts his beauty is simply "so accounted" (that is, valued, prized); in the Quarto he is more specifically "so gazed on", suggesting both "looked on with admiration" and "in the public eye". Implicitly, the Quarto's youth is both selfish ("all-eating") and "thriftless". He is imagined as an old man either ashamed of his childless ugly age (11. 7-8) or proud of his lovely child (11. 10-11).

Cumulatively, these Quarto variants characterize the youth economically but vividly. They also ironically distance the poet from his patron. The youth is no longer another Aeneas, an incarnation of mythological virtues, but a handsome, flawed, specific human being. All these changes stitch the sonnet much more tightly into the sequence of sonnets printed in 1609. The youth in those other sonnets is also proud, lusty, gazed on, thriftless, selfish.

Other Quarto variants link this sonnet to the sequence. Within the internal economy of this poem itself it would be hard to defend the Quarto’s "thine own" (1. 7) as an inspired improvement upon the manuscript "these", or vice versa. But the explanation for this variant may lie not in Sonnet 2, but in Sonnet 1, where the second quatrain begins "But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes". The contrast with "thine own deep-sunken eyes" certainly looks intentional. Likewise, the Quarto variant "all-eating" strongly echoes the closing couplet of the preceding sonnet: "Pity the world, or else this glutton be, / To eat the world's due ...

Such links between adjacent sonnets have been recognized elsewhere in the 1609 sequence (Sonnets 5-6, 15-16, 27-8, etc.).

Katherine Duncan-Jones has recently demonstrated that the 1609 edition of the Sonnets is both deliberately organized and likely to be authoritative.35 Thomas Thorpe, a reputable publisher, had links with Shakespeare's friends and fellow-poets; the collection itself, with A Lover's Complaint as a coda, follows the pattern of other contemporary sonnet sequences. Recent studies have shown that A Lover's Complaint can hardly be earlier than

c. 1603. Thus, the collection cannot have taken its final shape—and may not have taken any shape—until about five years after Meres alluded to the private circulation of the sonnets. Although proof eludes us, the foregoing Quarto variants would be most economically explained by a conjecture that Shakespeare revised this poem when he decided to organize the sonnets into a sequence, perhaps as much as a decade after he had composed it.

The evidence of the vocabulary unique to the Quarto tends to confirm this judgment. While Shakespeare's uses of "trench" as a verb are all early (\textit{TGV}, 3.2.7, \textit{Venus}, 1052, \textit{I Henry IV}, 3.2.111), he uses the noun not only three times in early plays but also three times in \textit{Coriolanus} (1.4.42, 1.6.12, 40). He associates the word "livery" with pride only once, at \textit{A Lover's Complaint}, 115 ("livery falseness in a pride of truth"). Most of the parallels for the Quarto's use of "proud" also come from the later work. At \textit{Richard II} 2.1.21 Shakespeare wrote of "fashions in proud Italy", and at \textit{2 Henry VI}, 4.9.27 of "proud array"; but "proud array" recurs at \textit{Lear}, 3.4.83. Late parallels include: "proud man, dressed in a little brief authority" (\textit{Measure}, 2.2.117), courtiers who "almost sweat to bear / The pride upon them" (\textit{Henry VIII}, 1.1.24-5), "with a proud heart he wore his humble weeds" (\textit{Coriolanus}, 2.3.153), and "proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited" (\textit{Lear}, 2.2.16). \textit{Coriolanus} offers the only one of these parallels which repeats the actual wording of the sonnet context, for the purposes of a similar content. Moreover, at \textit{All's Well}, 1.1.141-4 "Virginity ... consumes itself to the very paring, and so dies of feeding his own stomach. Besides, virginity is peevish, proud"; at \textit{Troilus}, 2.3.154, "he that is proud eats up himself", and at 3.3.136 "one man eats into another's pride / While pride is fasting in his wantonness". These three passages provide the only parallels in the canon for the association of pride with virginity and "all-eating" self-consumption.

Shakespeare elsewhere uses "thriftless" only at \textit{Richard II}, 5.3.69, \textit{Twelfth Night}, 2.2.39, and \textit{Macbeth}, 2.4.28-9 ("thriftless

ambition, that will ravin up / Thine own life's means’'); only the last of these echoes the sonnet. Shakespeare has “deserved” 33 times after 1599, and only 19 before. The closest parallel to the sonnet is “deserved praise” at Henry V, 3.2.33; others include “deserves more” (TGV, 1.2.48), “how much ... deserve” (Ado, 4.1.261), “deserve more” (Henry VIII, 4.1.113, Cymbeline, 1.4.119), and “more ... deserving” (TNK, 5.4.34). Shakespeare uses the verb “sum” only four times: 2 Henry IV, 1.1.167 (“summ’d the account”), Troilus, 1.3.325, 2.2.28 (“will ... with counters sum”), and Cymbeline, 5.4.167. He uses “count” as a noun only nine times elsewhere: early in Two Gentlemen and Romeo (twice), late in Hamlet, All’s Well, Othello, Timon, Macbeth, and Antony.

I would be the first to concede that such parallels cannot in themselves establish a late date for the Quarto variants. The closest parallel to line 4 of the Quarto is “tattered weeds” at Romeo, 5.1.39; the only other use of “trenches” as a metaphor for wrinkles, at Titus, 5.2.23. For a number of variants no chronological bias can be discerned. But it would be fair to say that while parallels for the manuscript variants heavily concentrate in the period up to 1596, no such preponderance is visible in the Quarto variants, and that a number of striking parallels occur in Shakespeare’s later work. If we were forced to date the Quarto text purely on the evidence of parallels for its variants, it would be difficult to place it earlier than 1598, when Meres alluded to the sonnets. It would be equally difficult, on such evidence, to date the Quarto variants as early as either the manuscript variants or the vocabulary shared by both versions.

Literary criteria also suggest that the Quarto is probably the revised text. Shakespeare, in time, increasingly abandoned simile in favour of metaphor (as in l. 3). Each text contains verbal repetitions not present in the other, but the kinds of repetition unique to the manuscripts differ from the kinds unique to the Quarto. The Quarto repeats “thy beauty” three times, each time in a metrically identical position, in three different lines, one in each quatrain: such a pattern appears formally deliberate. Likewise, the Quarto repetition of “praise” in lines 8 and 9 creates a pointed contrast between the last line of the octet and the first of the sestet.

across the pivot of a sonnet’s structure: the contrast between two kinds of praise contributes directly to the poem’s argument, and hence to the relation between argument and form.

Most of the repetitions unique to the manuscript version serve no such discernible formal function. The manuscript echoes of “youth” in “youthful”, of “worth” in “worthless”, and of “accounted” in “account” are all verbally inexact, and separated by several lines; only “worth” and “worthless” occupy parallel positions in the poem’s form. The Quarto repetitions structure the poem’s meaning; the manuscript repetitions simply reduce the range of ideas and images present in the poem. This pattern suggests that the Quarto represents a later version: as a whole its variants increase the poem’s content while tightening its form.

For instance, in the manuscripts lines 3 and 10 both contain an adjective. The adjectives are different, but they mean much the same thing: “fair” and “pretty”. The Quarto also contains an adjective in each line, but they mean different things: “proud” and “fair”. The Quarto thus contains an idea—that the youth is proud—not present in the manuscripts.

This new idea contributes to the sonnet’s structure of thought. In the octet the youth is proud, foolishly, of himself; in the sestet he deserves “much more praise” for his “fair child”. The manuscripts not only do not contain “proud” in the octet; they also lack “more praise deserved” in the sestet. This Quarto contrast between octet and sestet encourages us to infer an implied contrast between the explicit pride of the youth in his own beauty (3), and the implicit pride of the father in his child (10-11). The Quarto’s “proud” thus not only characterizes the youth; it also helps characterize the old man, and gives to the poem an idea relevant to the balances of its form.

“Proud” means both “magnificent” and “arrogant”. Other Quarto readings possess a similar ambiguity, absent from their manuscript counterparts. For instance, “tottered” can mean both “tattered” (pertinent to the “livery” image) and “tottered” (pertinent to the imagery both of old age and of a besieged city). Stephen Booth writes that the Quarto compound “all-eating” describes “both the extent of the disgrace (total) and the nature of the offense (miserly greed in hoarding and thus devouring the vigor and beauty of youth)”. The manuscript “all-eaten”

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encourages only the first of these meanings. Likewise, "thriftless" describes "both the value of the praise (profitless) and the nature of the quality offered as praiseworthy (wastefulness)". Again, the manuscript "worthless" contains no such ambiguity.

Moreover, "thriftless" leads much more naturally into the ambiguity of the rhyme in the next line, "use". Unlike the manuscript reading "worthless", the Quarto "thriftless" suggests the need for careful management of money: husbandry, investment, profit. This suggestion—along with the variant "how much more"—encourages a reader to perceive the implication of usury in "use".

The Quarto also has "lusty" in place of the manuscript "youthful" (1. 7). Like "all-eating" and "thriftless", "lusty" packs an ambiguity not present in the manuscripts: it means both "spirited, energetic" and "lustful". The ambiguity of "lusty" brings sex into the poem for the first time, and so makes it likelier that a reader will grasp the double entendre in "use" (which was a euphemism for copulation).

In the manuscripts, "use" need only bear its modern meaning; it looks like an instance of the idiom "use (something) better"—an idiom Shakespeare employs at Love's Labour's Lost, 2.1.226 and Winter's Tale, 5.1.57. But in the Quarto three variants in the immediately preceding text—"lusty", "thriftless", and "how much more"—anticipate and so illuminate for a reader a pair of potential puns in the rhyme word, again lending more meaning to the poem's structure.

A poem's meanings can be increased—more thematic bodies can be packed into its formal phonebooth—either by increasing the ambiguity or reducing the repetition of words. In both respects the Quarto is the denser text. It also repeats its ideas less frequently than the manuscripts. For instance, the "lustre" of youthful days has a single obvious meaning: in essence "lustre" simply repeats the word "beauty" from the previous line. By contrast, the Quarto variant "treasure" introduces a distinct new image: "treasure", by apposition, functions as a metaphor for "beauty". Likewise, the Quarto variant "shame" (1. 8) tells us that such a reply would be a disgrace, and that it would produce or reflect a sense of shame in the speaker. As a result, in the Quarto the youth is "proud" in the first quatrain, ashamed in the second, and (implicitly) proud again in the third. The middle quatrains contrasts with the first in time, and with the third as a result of the youth's own choice.
Our sense of a poem’s imaginative density depends not only upon the degree to which it repeats its own words and ideas, but also on the degree to which it repeats other people’s. Thus, the figurative description of old or sick eyes as “hollow” goes back to the fourteenth century. The manuscript collocation “hollow eyes” is something of a cliché. That the world “hollow” has here lost its original metaphoric force is suggested by its juxtaposition with “sunken”, another conventional way of describing ill or aged eyes. Are we really meant to imagine those eyes as something literally both hollow and sunken, like a ship? Such a confused tangential conceit does not repay much critical investment.

The Quarto’s “deep-sunken” turns a pair of conventional, awkwardly juxtaposed adjectives into an unusual compound. Moreover, “deep-sunken” restores some of the imaginative force of the original conventional adjective “sunken”, by forcing us to understand it in a more explicitly spatial sense. The suggestion of something lost at sea is, I think, more likely to arise from “deep-sunken” than from “hollow sunken”. The archetype of depth is the sea, and the Quarto word “treasure” in the previous line imaginatively anticipates and encourages that association. Finally, we know that Shakespeare elsewhere brilliantly entertained the conceit of human eyes as sunken treasure, in Clarence’s dream (Richard III, 1.4.24-33) and Ariel’s song to Ferdinand (Tempest, 1.2.397-402). The Quarto variants thus give us an unusual compound adjective and an unusual implicit conceit in place of the manuscripts’ coupling of clichés.

No immutable law of nature decrees that an author’s revisions will always reduce adventitious verbal repetition, increase ambiguity, introduce new ideas and images, substitute particular and unusual expressions for general and conventional ones, particularize the poet’s imagined audience, and emphasize the poem’s formal structure. Nevertheless, given Shakespeare’s own demonstrable delight in ambiguity, verbal invention, compound adjectives, imaginative particularity, characterization, and—in the poems, at least—formal structure, it would seem reasonable to conjecture that the Quarto represents a later, revised version of this sonnet.

But the best evidence for the order of the versions—and, incidentally, for the authenticity of the manuscript variants—comes from Erasmus. T.W. Baldwin first observed the connection between sonnets 1-17 and a model letter from De Conscribendi Epistolis, translated in Thomas Wilson’s popular textbook The
Arte of Rhetorique (1553, rev. edn. 1560) as "An Epistle to perswade a young gentleman to Mariage". Several passages in one paragraph seem to have influenced this sonnet (my italics):

what man can be greeued that he is old, when he seeth his owne countenance ... to appeare liuely in his sonne? you shall have a pretie little boie, running up and doune your house, soche a one as shall expresse your loke, and your wifes loke ... by whom you shall seme to bee newe borne

We would not expect scribal error, or authorial revision, to introduce variants which are closer than the Quarto to the poem's unacknowledged source. If "pretty" and "new borne" are genuine authorial variants, then so presumably are the other manuscript readings.

And if the variants in this sonnet are authentic, what variants elsewhere in the canon might be? For instance, the sonnet gives us examples of revision stimulated by aural similarity: rotten/tottered, lustre/treasure, were/deserved. One can hardly avoid the inference that "lustre" suggested "lusty", but the word has been transposed as well as metamorphosed. Likewise, "trench" occurs in both texts, but is a verb in one and a noun in the other, and its position has been altered. In these cases, as in others, only a part of the original word is altered. Hence, we get all-eaten/all-eating, worthless/thriftless, and hollow sunken/deep-sunken. And a poem originally entitled "Second Hope" becomes (coincidentally?) the second sonnet in the 1609 collection.

All the variants are, in one sense, indifferent, in that either text makes good sense; but some are more indifferent than others. Is there anything to choose, intrinsically, artistically, between "fair" and "pretty", or "say" and "answer"? We also find what might be

39 On the Literary Genetics of Shakspe'res Poems and Sonnets (Urbana, 1950), p. 183. Baldwin notes that De Conscribendis was "a standard text upon letter writing which Shakespeare appears to have used" (p. 183), though he does not find "a clear indication that Shakespeare has consciously used" this epistle (p. 185). But see also John Dover Wilson's New Shakespeare edition (Cambridge, 1966), p. 90, and Katherine M. Wilson, Shakespeare's Sugared Sonnets (London, 1974), pp. 146-67.

40 For an argument that the numbers assigned to certain sonnets in the 1609 sequence are thematically significant, see René Graziani, "The Numbering of Shakespeare's Sonnets: 12, 60, and 126", Shakespeare Quarterly, xxxv (1984), 79-82. The links are in some cases attractive, but they cannot be taken as evidence that Shakespeare wrote the sonnets in their numerical order (as Graziani alleges).
called compensating variation. Both texts contain the word “fair”, once, but use it in different lines, so that its loss in one seems related to its gain in the other. Textual variants of all these types are found in the autograph manuscripts of many poets. They occur, too, in the variant texts of Sonnets 138 and 144 (printed in The Passionate Pilgrim) and Sonnets 8, 106, and 128 (extant in manuscripts)—and in the sonnets of Daniel, Drayton, Spenser, and Henry Constable. Whole lists of such variants could be culled from the two good texts of Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Othello, and King Lear.

Like the variants in this sonnet, the textual variants in those plays do not dramatically change the outlines of the story: the narrative remains essentially the same, the structure remains essentially the same. In the sonnet, noticeably, not one rhyme is altered. The variants affect the manipulation of minutiae, the finessing of verbal detail.

In a sonnet, of course, Shakespeare could not make major additions or omissions, as he could in a play. But one thing which Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets do have in common is characters. In the sonnet, a series of variants affects the characterization of the youth; similar patterns of variants have been found in some plays. Nevill Coghill and E.A.J. Honigmann have shown that a series of Folio additions to Othello changes the role of Emilia.41 Michael Warren, Steven Urkowitz, Thomas Clayton, John Kerrigan, and Randall McLeod have seen similar changes in the portrayal of Lear, Edward, Albany, Kent, the Fool, and Goneril, in the two texts of King Lear.42

The sonnet is a little island, encompassable and self-contained. The plays are vast continental expanses, which even critical Napoleons cannot easily conquer. But the variants in this sonnet

42 Warren, “Quarto and Folio King Lear and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar”, in Shakespeare: Pattern of Excelling Nature, eds. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (Newark, Del., 1978), 95-107; Urkowitz, Shakespeare’s Revision of “King Lear” (Princeton, 1980); Warren, “The Diminution of Kent”; Clayton, “‘Is this the promis’d end?’: Revision in the Role of the King”; Kerrigan, “Revision, Adaptation, and the Fool in King Lear”; McLeod, “Gon. No more, the text is foolish.”. The last four essays are all contained in The Division of the Kingdoms: Shakespeare’s Two Versions of “King Lear”, eds. Gary Taylor and Michael Warren (Oxford, 1983).
resemble, to a remarkable degree, the variants in some of Shakespeare's greatest plays. The pattern of textual instability in the Shakespeare canon may be, at first, difficult to reconcile with some of our most cherished myths: the conscious craft of Shakespeare's revisions does not easily co-exist with Milton's memorable but ignorant image of "fancy's child/Warbling his native wood-notes wild". But we can hardly any longer deny that there is something of great constancy in the pattern of Shakespeare's inconstancy.