

Breaking the Book Known as Q

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Breaking the Book Known as Q

COLEMAN HUTCHISON

Readers, in fact, never confront abstract, idealized texts detached from any materiality. They hold in their hands or perceive objects and forms whose structures and modalities govern their reading or hearing, and consequently the possible comprehension of the text read or heard.

—Roger Chartier

O let my books be then the eloquence . . .

—“23” *Shake-speares Sonnets*

IN THE FIRST SENTENCE OF HER *ART OF SHAKESPEARE’S SONNETS*, Helen Vendler tells a little white lie: “I have reprinted both the 1609 quarto *Sonnets* and a modernized version of my own” (xiii). The crux of this declaration is “reprinted.” Vendler does indeed *print* a version of the 1609 quarto—or “Q,” as it is referred to bibliographically;¹ one could even say that she “reprints” the *type* of the quarto. Vendler does not, however, “reprint” the 1609 quarto *Sonnets*. Like nearly every modern editor before her, Vendler presents the poems as discrete units on a page, eliding and ignoring the page breaks that so often—and, I will argue, so meaningfully—interrupt the poems. In “reprinting” these poems, Vendler uses a deft cut-and-paste method to rearrange, re-member, and reconstitute the type of the 1609 quarto into uninterrupted material units, into what we would visually recognize as “sonnets.” The result of Vendler’s seemingly innocuous editorial decision is profound. On her page, the sonnets appear as and in

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a visual totality (fig. 1, Vendler's presentation of sonnet 55; cf. figs. 2 and 3, poem 55 as it appears in the 1609 quarto). Girded by an architecture of white space that focuses our visual as well as our interpretive gaze on the type, Vendler's poems are presented in a form that accentuates their status as visual objects. Thus, the materiality of this presentation reinforces and even produces the strict poetic form so often associated with the sonnet. Implicitly, and perhaps insidiously, Vendler's sonnets argue that material form recapitulates poetic form. Yet to reach this end, Vendler has significantly altered the materiality of the 1609 quarto by quieting its conspicuous interruptions.

Advocating a reading practice that might seem at first unusual, dubious, or even nonsensical, this essay considers a series of questions about the relations between material presentation and poetic meaning. In truth, the 1609 quarto evinces a far more complex relation between materiality and poetic form than Vendler's edition allows us to see; *Shake-speares Sonnets* renders its poems as both concrete and fluid material objects. Through a nonuniform, seemingly arbitrary imposition of page breaks, several quarto poems appear clipped, severed, and fractured; others are preserved and monumentalized in the field of the page.² Given this, and cribbing from *Random Cloud*, this essay will "scrutinize the evidence visually, spatially, even topologically" (61) and consider how the quarto's breaks, breaches, fissures, disruptions, and interruptions matter.³ What happens when the sonnet—that paragon of structured, disciplined poetic unity—is cut in two? What textual effects do such breaks enact? What might it mean to read across the fold—to read, that is, the openings of this book? In addressing these questions, this essay will limn the ways that our epistemologies of poetic form seem blind to the visual registers through which that form is experienced or expressed.

As one recent sonnet critic urges, "we must first remember that a sonnet is a very

highly coded form of text. The peculiarity of its code is that it combines to an unusual degree *visibility of formal elements* (due in part to its inflexible brevity) and an organized cumulative system of intertextuality" (Kuin 29; my emphasis). The status of a sonnet's formal elements (e.g., rhyme scheme, number of lines) is thus linked inextricably to its material presentation and, by extension, to its visual recognition and readerly reception. But, as this essay will suggest, the critical history of *Shake-speares Sonnets* evinces several moments in which readerly expectations have exceeded or ignored the material-visual presentation of the book known as Q—Vendler being but the latest in a distinguished line of critics to have done so.⁴ At stake in such a critical history are a series of pressing issues: issues of authorship, textual authority, the recognition of poetic form, the history and sociology of reading practices, and, finally, the very idea of literature. Thus, by underscoring how the 1609 quarto's breaks might matter and mean, and by affirming that the page and the page break are units of meaning with particularly urgent implications, this essay argues for a reading practice that is attentive to both the materiality of the 1609 *Shake-speares Sonnets* and the effect of that materiality on the early modern scene of reading.

The Matter with Q

Even the most casual reader approaches a collection of sonnets with a set of expectations about the poetic form those sonnets should take. As one commonplace definition suggests, a sonnet is a "lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme" (Abrams 290). The pithiness and iterability of this definition bespeak the assumptions of continuity, stability, and fixity that attend—and produce—sonnets. The existence of such strict conventions suggests that a modern reader's encounter with a sonnet is

determined in advance, that our reading is always and already guided by the proscriptive, disciplining signifier “sonnet.” Given this sort of predetermination, we might consider the question, usefully articulated by Michael R. G. Spiller, “[W]hen is a sonnet not a sonnet?” Spiller’s answer is provocative for the work this essay undertakes:

The short answer is that there is by custom a basic or simple sonnet, of which the others are variations: it has proportion, being in eight and six, and extension, being in ten- or eleven-syllable lines, and duration, having fourteen of them. Any poem which infringes one of these parameters will remind us of a sonnet quite closely; a poem which infringes two will be more difficult to accommodate, but we will probably try to establish some procedure to account for the deformation; and a poem which infringes all three will not be recognisable as a sonnet at all, and we will regard it as something else unless there is contextual pressure—if, for example, we found it in the middle of a group of normal sonnets. (3–4)

Spiller’s rhetoric deserves some attention: variation, infringement, recognition, “difficult to accommodate,” “deformation,” “something else,” and, most urgently, “normal.” All these figures establish an inside-outside binary and evoke a play of sameness and difference that betrays the stakes of reading poetry through its poetic form. Here the “parameters” of poetic form—that is, the lines between “normal” and aberrant sonnets—are constantly being policed. The presence of such a regime inevitably leads one to ask, If *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* interrupts or breaks several of its poems in two, are these poetic units still sonnets? Does the infringement of these breaks interfere with our ability to read them as sonnets per se? Or does the title *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* apply enough “contextual pressure” to allow us to recognize these poems as sonnets?⁵

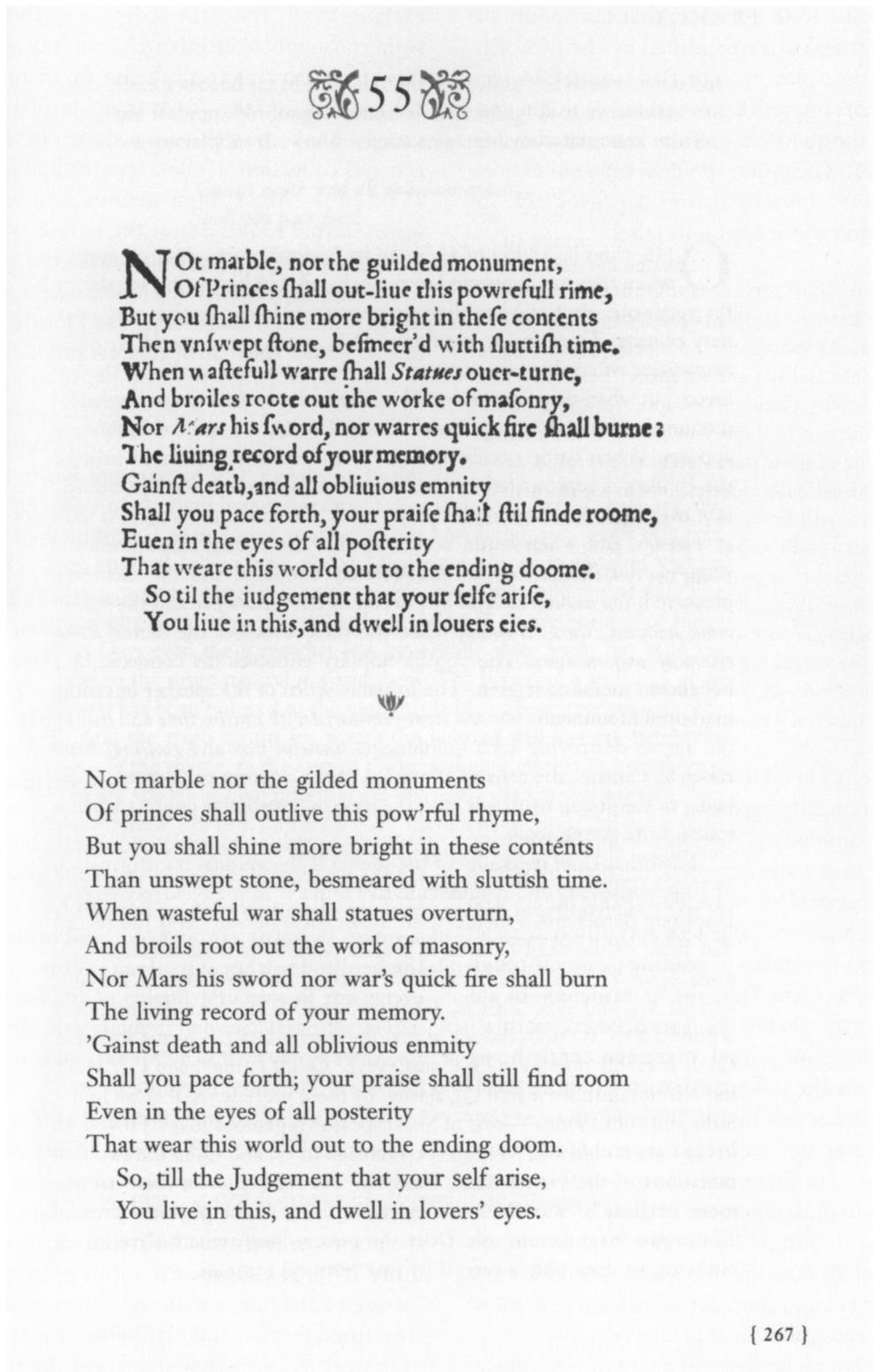
Though Spiller will go on to read *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* as “not interested in formal

variants at all” (159), the poems nevertheless seem constantly to be infringing on “normal,” repeatedly varying from the norm, thematically and materially. As Arthur Marotti has noted, “Shakespeare’s sonnets are a heterogeneous collection” (“Shakespeare’s Sonnets” 155).⁶ In the highly homogenous context of other sonnet sequences of the period, such heterogeneity paradoxically marks the 1609 quarto as abnormal. Perhaps the best way to register such abnormality is to locate the quarto within the field of cultural production of early modern sonnet sequences. Wendy Wall describes an “outpouring of sonnet sequences at the end of the sixteenth century” following the 1591 publication of Philip Sidney’s *Astrophel and Stella* (Wall 58). Of the fourteen “sonnet sequences” published between 1591 and 1609—Samuel Daniel’s *Delia* (1592), Henry Constable’s *Diana* (1592), Barnabe Barnes’s *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* (1593), Giles Fletcher’s *Licia* (1593), Thomas Lodge’s *Phyllis* (1593), the anonymous *Zepheria* (1594), William Percy’s *Coelia* (1594), Michael Drayton’s *Ideas Mirrour* (1594), Edmund Spenser’s *Amoretti* (1595), Richard Barnfield’s *Cynthia* (1595), Richard Linche’s *Diella* (1596), William Smith’s *Chloris* (1596), Bartholomew Griffin’s *Fidessa* (1596), Robert Tofte’s *Laura* (1597)—all but one sequence maintain their sonnets as uninterrupted material units on the field of the page (figs. 4–15).⁷ (The single exception, Barnes’s *Parthenophil and Parthenophe*, subtitled “Sonnettes, madrigals, elegies and odes,” may be less a sequence of sonnets and more a poetic miscellany).⁸

In accounting for historical shifts between manuscript and printed forms, Wall argues that the publication of sonnet sequences “altered the physical presentation of the poems in ways that bolstered . . . textual unity” (70). She suggests that this bolstering “arranged the poetic material within a more structured format, and highlighted the typographical features that stabilized the text” (70). The fourteen examples offered above

FIG. 1

Helen Vendler, *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997) 267.



SONNETS.

Since euery one, hath euery one, one shade,
 And you but one, can euery shaddow lend:
 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:
 Speake of the spring, and foyzon of the yeare,
 The one doth shaddow of your beautie show,
 The other as your bountie doth appeare,
 And you in euery blessed shape we know.
 In all externall grace you haue some part,
 But you like none, none you for constant heart.

54

OH how much more doth beautie beautiful seeme,
 By that sweet ornament which truth doth giue,
 The Rose lookes faire, but fairer we it deeme
 For that sweet odor, which doth in it liue:
 The Canker-bloomes haue full as deepe a die,
 As the perfumed tincture of the Roses,
 Hang on such thornes, and play as wantonly,
 When sommers breath their masked buds discloses:
 But for their virtue only is their show,
 They liue vnwoo'd, and vnrespected faie,
 Die to themselues. Sweet Roses doe not so,
 Of their sweet deathes, are sweetest odors made:
 And so of you, beautiful and louely youth,
 When that shall vade, by verse distills your truth.

55

NOt marble, nor the gilded monument,
 Of Princes shall out-liue this powrefull rime,
 But you shall shine more bright in these contents
 Then vnswep stone, besmeer'd with sluttish time.
 When wastefull warre shall *Statues* ouer-turne,
 And broiles rote out the worke of masonry,
 Nor *Nars* his sword, nor warres quick fire shall burne:
 The liuing record of your memory.

Gainst

FIG. 2

*Shake-speares
 Sonnets* (1609) D4r.
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FIG. 3

Shake-speares
Sonnets (1609) D4v.
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SHAKE-SPEARES.

Gainst death, and all obliuious emnity
 Shall you pace forth, your praise shall stil finde roome,
 Euen in the eyes of all posterity
 That weare this world out to the ending doome.
 So til the iudgement that your selfe arise,
 You liue in this, and dwell in louers eies.

56

Sweet loue renew thy force, be it not said
 Thy edge should blunter be then apeteite,
 Which but too daie by feeding is alaied,
 To morrow sharpned in his former might,
 So loue be thou, although too daie thou fill
 Thy hungrie eies, euen till they winck with fulnesse,
 Too morrow see againe, and doe not kill
 The spirit of Loue, with a perpetual dulnesse:
 Let this sad *Intrim* like the Ocean be
 Which parts the shore, where two contracted new,
 Come daily to the banckes, that when they see:
 Returne of loue, more blest may be the view.
 As cal it Winter, which being ful of care,
 Makes Sómers welcome, thrice more wish'd, more rare :

57

Being your slaue what should I doe but tend,
 Vpon the houres, and times of your desire?
 I haue no precious time at al to spend;
 Nor seruices to doe til you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world without end houre,
 Whilst I (my soueraine) watch the clock for you,
 Nor thinke the bitternesse of absence sowre,
 VWhen you haue bid your seruant once adieue.
 Nor dare I question with my icalious thought,
 VWhere you may be, or your affaires suppose,
 But like a sad slaue stay and thinke of nought
 Saue where you are, how happy you make those.
 So true a foole is loue, that in your Will,
 (Though you doe any thing) he thinkes no ill.

58

evinced just such “unity” and “stabiliz[ation].” Take for instance figure 11, from Spenser’s *Amoretti*. The visual effects created by the elaborate borders that ensconce the poems produce—not simply reinforce—the unity and totality of the sonnet form on the printed page. As Wall notes, borders in the period “served to create the effect of a closed and complete poetic unit, finished without the reader’s collaborative aid” (71).

Thus, while monumentality, visual unity, borders, and the like were all conventional choices available to *Shake-speares Sonnets*, Q seems to have deferred such choice, choosing instead to “not choose” by presenting some but not all poems as visually unified (see Cameron). In the context of the above unified, monumental visual objects, *Shake-speares Sonnets* and its recurrent interruptions emerge as deviant, as infringing boldly on the “normal” materiality of the early modern sonnet sequence page. Page breaks are not the only abnormal material aspects of Q,⁹ but a primary emphasis on page breaks here allows us to focus our attention on an aspect of materiality that has the broadest implications for the ways readers conceptualize literary form, encounter the page as a unit of meaning, and experience—or do not experience—what Barbara Herrnstein Smith dubs “poetic closure.”

Given such abnormality, it is not surprising that generations of critics have labored to distance William Shakespeare—that apex of both poetic genius and author function—from the textual and thematic abnormalities of Q.¹⁰ For instance, W. H. Auden famously declared: “How the sonnets came to be published—whether Shakespeare gave copies to some friend who then betrayed him, or whether some enemy stole them—we shall probably never know. Of one thing I am certain: Shakespeare must have been horrified when they were published” (105). Auden’s projected horror is deeply indeterminate. Does this horror arise from the poems’ frank and

complex sexualities?¹¹ from the volume’s deviant and complex textuality? from both? What about Q’s circulation would have so horrified William Shakespeare? Undergirding this fictive horror is Auden’s implicit but unbending belief that, despite its title, *Shake-speares Sonnets* was never authorized or approved for publication by the “bard”—put simply, that Shakespeare would never have allowed a volume as abnormal as Q to appear in print.

If we are to read Q’s breaks as carrying meaning—to recognize them as being worthy of literary attention—we must first suspend the nagging questions of intentionality that Auden’s horror raises: “yes, but did Shakespeare mean for those breaks to be there?”¹² Such questions of authorization and authorial intentionality have garnered an astonishing amount of attention from Shakespeare scholars.¹³ Lisa Freinkel sees at stake in such long-raging and prolix debates about authorization the grounds of authority for readers’ interpretations of the text: once the text of Q is authorized “we are ourselves authorized in our attempts to interpret the book as a whole: to ascribe to it a unified meaning, positing an Author behind its words” (171). Amid several incisive criticisms of “recursive” attempts to prove the authorization of Q, Freinkel cautions, “We cannot put an end to the question of authorization in this text, but we can demonstrate that the question is, indeed, the *end* of the text” (183). For Freinkel, authorization is a problem that the poems themselves thematize, “a problem *intrinsic* to our construction of meaning . . . a problem *of* the text” (182).¹⁴

In truth, and despite the better efforts of critics such as Katherine Duncan-Jones, we may never know what circumstances brought *Shake-speares Sonnets* to the publisher Thomas Thorpe and thus to print. Yet even if we could reconstruct such a narrative, would we be any closer to Shakespeare’s intentions? Where would such a narrative get us? This desire to return to some fantastical, hypothesized intent bespeaks what Jerome

FIG. 4

Samuel Daniel, *Delia* (1592) E1v–E2r. Reproduced by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University, and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

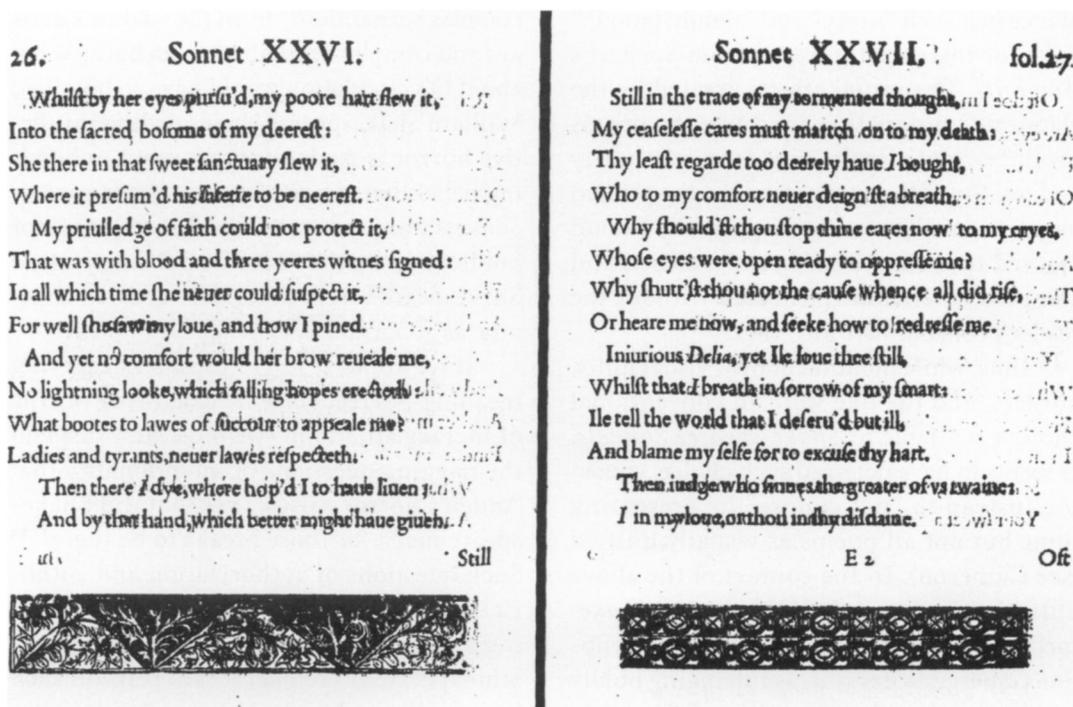
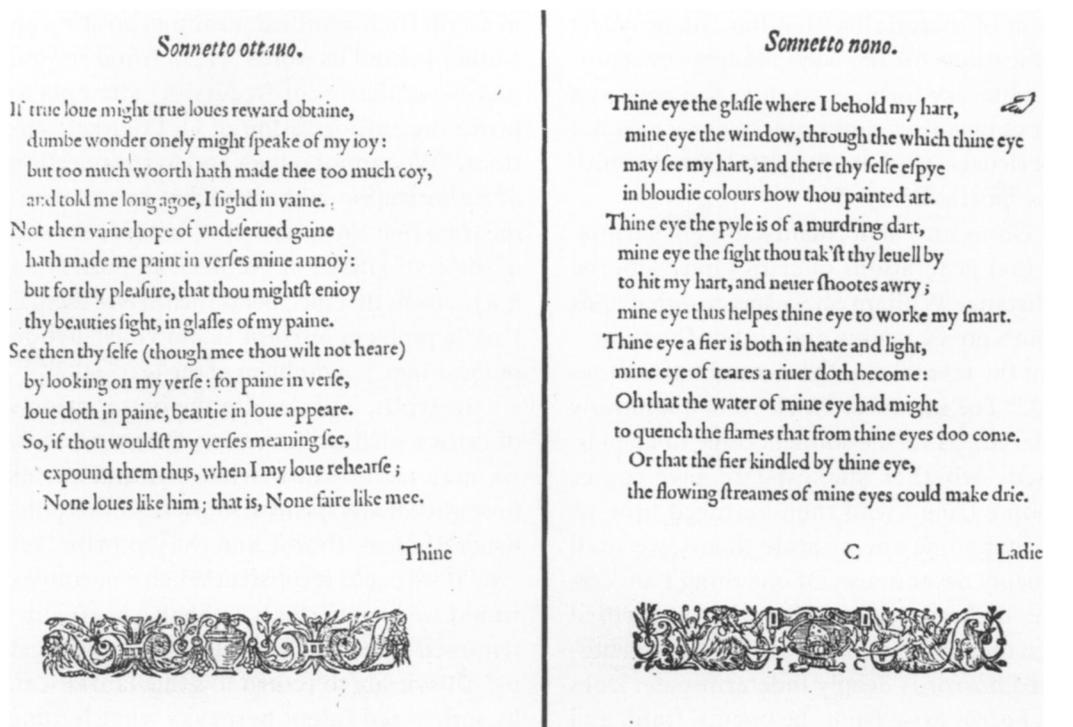


FIG. 5

Henry Constable, *Diana* (1592) B4v–C1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 28501), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.



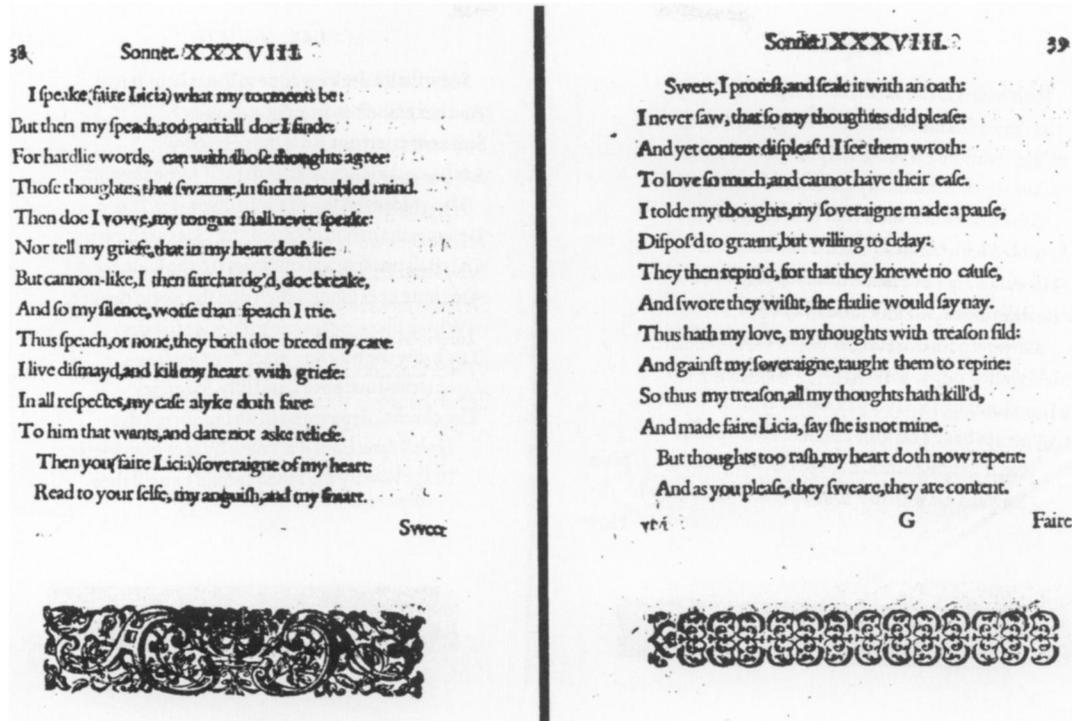


FIG. 6

Giles Fletcher, *Licia* (1593) F4v–G1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 14668), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

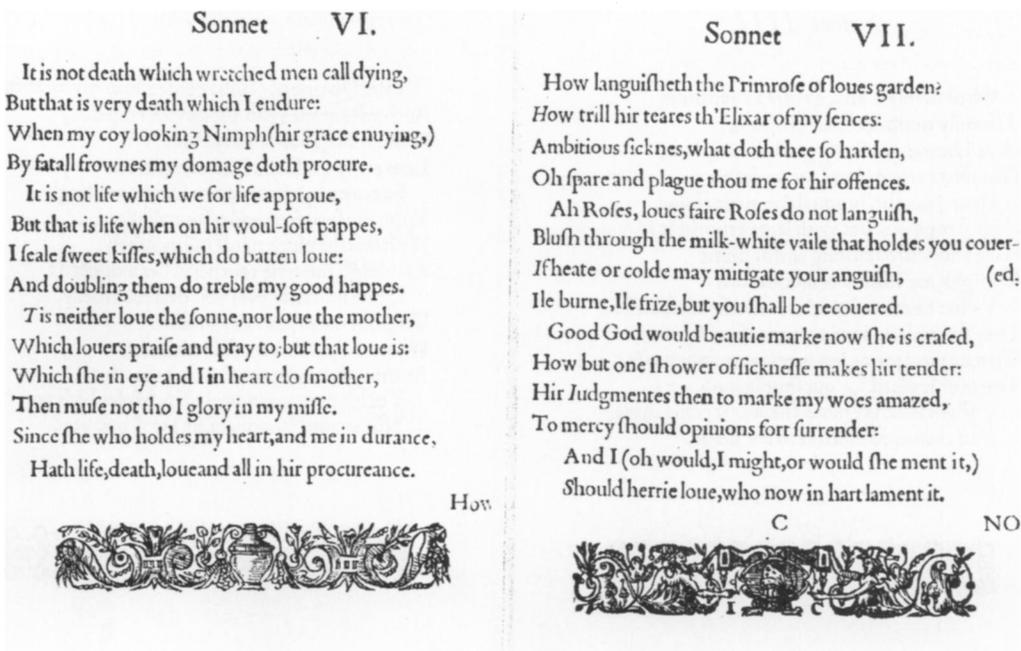


FIG. 7

Thomas Lodge, *Phillis* (1593) B4v–C1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 59549), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

FIG. 8

Zepheria (1594) C4v–D1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 32077), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Canzon. 16.

How haue I forfeited thy kind regard?
That thy disdain should thus enage my brow,
Which whilome was the scripture and the card
Whereon thou made thy game and seal'd thy vow.
Which whilome thou with lawrell vaticall
Enobled hast, (high signall of renowne)
Marrying my voyce with thine hast sayd withall,
Be thou alone, alonely thou *Ambion*.
Oh how hath black night welked vp this day?
My wasted hopes why are they turn'd to graze?
In pastures of depayre, *Zepheria* say,
Wherein haue I on loue committed trespasse?
Oh if in iustice thou must needs acquit me, (pitie
Reward me with thy loue, sweete heale me with thy
How



Canzon. 17.

How shall I deck my loue in loues habiliment,
And her embellish in a right depaint?
Sith now is left nor Rose, nor *Hyacinth*,
Each one their beauties with their hue acquaint.
The golden feeling of thy browes rich frame
Designes the proud pomp of thy faces architure:
Chrystall transparent casements to the same
Are thine eyes sunne, which doe the world depure,
Whose siluerie canopic gold wier fringes:
Thy brow the bowling place for *Cupid's* eye,
Loues true-loue knots, and lilly-lozenges
Thy cheekes depaynten in an immortal dye.
If well thou limn'd art now by face immagerie,
Iudge how by life I then should pencill thee.

D *Exaltet*

FIG. 9

William Percy,
Coelia (1594) A4v–B1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 62886), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

Sonnet IIII.

Oh heavenly *Coelia*, as faire as vertuous,
The only mirror of true chastitie,
Haue I beene gainst thy godhead impious,
That thus am guerdond for my fealtie?
Haue I not shed vpon thine yurie shrine,
Huge drops of teares vvith large eruptions?
Haue I not offred euining and at prime
My sighs, my Pfalms of inuocations?
VVhat be mens sighs, but calcs of guilefulnesse?
They shevv, deare loue, true proofs of fermite.
What be your teares, but meere vngratioulnesse?
Teares only plead for our simplicie:
VVhen all strike mute, she faies it is my dutie,
And claimes as much as to her deitie.



Sonnet V.

Faire Queene of *Gnidos* come adorn my forehead,
And crowne me vvith the lavrell emperor,
To thrife sing I'o about thy Poet,
Loe on my goddesse I am conqueror.
For once by chaunce, not sure, or vvittingly,
Vpon my foot, her tender foot alighted,
With that she pluckt it off full vvimbely,
As though the verie touch had her afrighted:
Deere mistresse, vvill you deale so cruelly,
To priue me of so small a benefit?
What? do you iett it off so nimbely,
As though in verie sooth a snake had bit it?
Yea bit perhaps indeed: Ho, Muses blab you?
N'ot a vvord Pieannets, or I vvill gag you.



B

Amour. 40.

O thou vnkindest fayre, most fayrest shee,
 In thine eyes tryumph murthering my poore hart,
 Now doe I sweare by heauens, before we part,
 My halfe-flaine hart shall take reuenge on thee.
 Thy Mother dyd her lyfe to Death resigne,
 And thou an Angell art, and from aboue,
 Thy father was a man, that will I proue,
 Yet thou a Goddesse art, and so diuine.
 And thus if thou be not of humaine kinde,
 A Bastard on both sides needes must thou be,
 Our Lawes allow no Land to basterdy:
 By natures Lawes we thee a Bastard finde.
 Then hee... to heauen vnkind, for thy childs part,
 Goe Bastard, for sure of thence thou art.

Rare



Amour. 41.

Rare of-spring of my thoughts, my deereft Loue,
 Begot by fancy, on sweet hope exhortiue,
 In whom all purenes with perfection stroue,
 Hurt in the Embryon, makes my ioyes abhortiue.
 And you my sighes, Syntomas of my woe,
 The dolefull Anthems of my endlesse care,
 Lyke idle Ecchoes euer aunswering: so,
 The mournfull accents of my loues dispayre.
 And thou Conceite, the shadow of my blisse,
 Declyning with the setting of my sunne,
 Springing with that, and fading straight with this,
 Now hast thou end, and now thou wast begun.
 Now was thy pryme, and loe, now is thy waine,
 Now wast thou borne, now in thy cradle flayne.

G

Plac'd



FIG. 10

Michael Drayton, *Ideas Mirrou* (1594) F4v-G1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 51353), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

(130)



SONNET. XL.

MArk when she smiles with amiable cheare,
 And tell me whereto can ye lyken it:
 when on each eyelid sweetly doe appeare,
 an hundred Graces as in shade to sit.
 Lykest it seemeth in my simple wit
 vnto the fayre sunshine in somers day:
 that when a dreadfull storme away is flit,
 through the broad world doth spred his goodly ray
 At sight whereof each bird that sits on spray,
 and euery beatt that to his den was fled:
 comes forth afresh out of their late dismay,
 and to the light lift vp theyr drouping hed.
 So my storme beaten hart likewise is cheared,
 with that sunshine when cloudy looks are cleared.

Is



(131)



SONNET. XLI.

IS it her nature or is it her will,
 to be so cruell to an humbled foe:
 if nature, then she may it mend with skill,
 if will, then she at will may will forgoe.
 But if her nature and her wil be so,
 that she will plague the man that loues her most:
 and take delight t'encreate a wretches woe,
 then all her natures goodly guits are loit.
 And that same glorious beauties ydle boast,
 is but a bayt such wretches to beguile:
 as being long in her loues tempell toit,
 she meanes at last to make her piteous spoyle.
 O fayrest fayre let neuer it be named,
 that so fayre beauty was so fowly flamed.

The



FIG. 11

Edmund Spenser, *Amoretti* (1595) 130-31. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 69571), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

FIG. 12

Richard Barnfield,
Cynthia (1595) C1v–
C2r. Reproduced
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SONNET. VIII.

Sometimes I wish that I his pillow were,
So might I steale a kisse, and yet not scene,
So might I gaze vpon his sleeping eie,
Although I did it with a panting feare:
But when I well consider how vaine my wish is,
Ah foolish Bees (thinke I) that doe not sucke,
His lips for hony; but poore flowers doe plucke
Which haue no sweet in them: when his sole kisses,
Are able to reuiue a dying foule.
Kisse him, but sting him not, for if you doe,
His angry voice your flying will pursue:
But when they heare his tongue, what can controule,
Their backe returne / for then they plaine may see,
How hony-combs from his lips dropping bee.

Diana



SONNET. IX.

Diana (on a time) walking the wood,
To sport herselfe, of her faire traine forlorne,
Chaunc't for to prick her foote against a thorne,
And from thence issu'd out a streame of blood.
No sooner shee was vanisht out of sight,
But loues faire Queen came there away by chace,
And hauing of this hap a glym'ring glance,
She put the blood into a christall bright,
When being now comen vnto mount *Rhosay*,
With her faire hands she formes a shape of Snow,
And blends it with this blood; from whence
A louely creature, brighter then the Dey,
And being christned in faire *Paphos* thine,
She call'd him *Ganymede*: as all diuine.

C 2



FIG. 13

Richard Linche,
Diella (1596) D2v–
D3r. Reproduced by
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Sonnet XXXV.

End thys enchantment (Loue) of my desires,
let me no longer languish for thy loue,
Ioy not to see mee thus consume in fires,
but let my cruell paines thy hard hart moue,
And now at last, with pittifull regard,
eye me thy Louer, lorne for lack of thee,
Vvhich dying, liues in hope of sweet reward,
which hate hath hetherto with-held from mee,
Constant haue I been, still in fancie fast,
ordayn'd by heauens to dote vpon thy faire,
Nor will I e're, so long as life shall last,
say any's fairer, breathing vitall ayre;
But when the Ocean sands shall lye vnwet,
Then shal my soule to loue thee (Deere) forget.

Long



Sonnet XXXVI,

Long did I wish before I could attaine
the lookt for sight I so desir'd to seee,
Too soone at last I saw what bred my baine,
and euer since hath sore tormented mee;
I sawe her selfe, whom had I neuer seene,
my wealth of blisse had not been turn'd to baile,
Greedy regard of her, my hartis sole Quene,
hath chang'd my summers sun, to winters haile.
How oft haue I, since that first fatal howre,
beheld her all-faire shape with begging eye,
Till shee (vnkiad) hath kil'd me with a lowre,
and bad my humble-lying lookes, looke by.
O pittie mee (faire Loue) and highest fame
Shall blazed be in honour of thy name.

D 3

Did



SONNET. XXII.

IT was of loue vngentle gentle boy,
That thou didst come and harbour in my brest:
Not of intent my body to destroy,
And haue my soule with restles cares oppress.
But sith thy loue doth turne vnto my paine,
Returne to Greece (sweete lad) where thou wast
Leaue me alone my griefes to entertaine, (borne:
If thou forsake mee, I am lesse forlorne.
Although alone, yet shall I finde more ease:
Then see thou hie thee hence, or I will chase thee:
Men highly wronged care not to displesae:
My fortune hangs on thee, thou doest disgrace me.
Yet at thy farewell play a friendly part,
To make amends, flye to *Fidessas* hart.

Flye

SONNET. XXIII.

FLye to her heart, houer about her heart,
With daintie kisses mollifie her heart,
Pierce with thy arrowes her obdurate heart,
With sweet allurements euer moue her heart.
At midday and at midnight touch her heart,
Be lurking closely, nestle about her heart:
With power, (thou art a god) command her heart,
Kindle thy coales of loue about her heart,
Yea euē into thy selfe transforme her heart.
Ah she must loue, be sure thou haue her heart,
And I must dye, if thou haue not her heart.
Thy bed (if thou rest well) must be her heart:
He hath the best part sure that hath the heart:
What haue I not, if I haue but her heart?

C 4

Striving



L A U R A .

XI.

Vpōst triumphant Chariot, passing rare,
In which my Sunne doth sit like Maieitic,
And makes the day shew vnto vs more faire,
Whose cheerfulness delights each mortall eyes
I rash, like to another *Phaeton*,
With hare-braine haue too hastic leapt thereon.
But for my boldnes deely did I pay,
And had like plague (as he) for being ore-brave.
Yet though in equall fortune both did stay,
(For life he lost, and death she to me gaue)
The punisher of both was not the same:
For he by *Ioue*, and I by *Loue* was slaine.

XII.

The Beanie that in Paradise doth grow,
Luely appears in my sweet Goddesse face,
From whence (as from a christall Ruer) flow
Fauour dewine, and comelines of grace.
But in her daintie (yet too cruell) Brest
More crackie and hardnes doth abound,
Than doth in painfull Purgatorie rest:
So that (at once) she's faire and cruell found,
When in her face and brest, (ah griefto tell)
Bright Heauen she shoves, and crackie hides dark hell.

Whilſt

L A V R A .

XIII.

Whilſt angry *Ioue* from the scowling Skies
Thicke winging showers did downward send amaine,
My Ladie mourning vp in lately wile,
From heauen more fall did fierie lightning raine:
So that the people (poſſing) had lesse harme
By water wet, than by the fire ore-warme.
The water onely wet their outward skin,
A matter small, in which was danger none;
But this her fire did burne their harts within,
And forſt them so they went to sigh and grone:
So that theiſt grieft was greater (sauns all doubt)
To haue withn fier, than water without.

XIII.

The swift *Messenger* turning, windes so fast,
And with his beaume in circle wile so runs;
That wanton-like (from whence he springs) at last
Backe to his fountaine head againe he comes.
In me a ruer huge of teares from hart
To watter eyes sicend, from whence they flow,
And running downe doo from mine eyes depart,
Descending to my hart againe below:
So that through vertue of most mightie *Loue*,
In hart a new *Messenger* I doo prouē.

B

Thou

FIG. 14

Bartholomew Griffin, *Fidessa* (1596) C3v–C4r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 31301), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

FIG. 15

Robert Tofte, *Laura* (1597) A8v–B1r. Reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, CA (RB 31032), and of ProQuest Information and Learning Company. Further reproduction is prohibited without permission.

McGann has called our “hypnotic fascination with the isolated author” (122), our desire to locate ourselves at the level of the authentic, the originary, the most real. This mystification of the author and his or her work often distracts us from the matter at hand—in this case, several broken poems—and occasionally determines in advance our experience of that matter. Likewise, the desire to distance Q’s author from the “vicissitudes of the printing-house” (Marotti, “Shakespeare’s Sonnets” 157)—from sloppy compositors errantly casting off copy; from thrifty publishers scheming to save paper—belies a deeper desire to keep this authorial narrative simple: one author, one authority. For better or worse, authorial narratives often prove anything but simple. Here, the concept of authority is vexed by the number of agents who took part in the production and reproduction of Q: several agents could make competing claims of responsibility for, or authority over, Q.¹⁵

To open up writing would be then (as Roland Barthes famously suggested [147]) to suspend this fixation on authorial intention and return again (as Freinkel admirably does) to the text itself. In doing so, we shift the focus from Shakespeare’s original intention or “authentic” work to the material text or trace that remains: Q, the 1609 quarto, writing in its fullest textual sense. Though we will never know who intended these breaks—Shakespeare, Thorpe, the printer Thomas Eld, “Compositor Q”—we do (or will) know that they matter to the presentation, interpretation, and reception of the poems. If, in turn, we can accept such a premise, then we can begin resisting the doxa that these breaks are incidental and thus should be elided in modern editions. No matter who wrote or who authorized Q, or even who was responsible for Q’s interruptions, the volume remains, in all its abnormality, a fascinating and urgent literary artifact that, despite hundreds of years of sustained criticism, has not been exhausted. Acknowledging the complexity of

intention and authority enables us to trouble the equivalence on which modern editors such as Vendler rely: “it can be assumed that whatever I say in the Commentary [of *The Art of Shakespeare’s Sonnets*] is as true for the Quarto as of the modern text” (xiii). This acknowledgment enables us to move from the matter *with* Q to the matter *of* Q.

Building Monuments, Jotting Down Notes

In considering the quarto’s imposition of breaks into its poems, perhaps we should begin with those instances where Q follows Vendler in presenting poems as visually unified or monumental objects. The collection’s opening and closing poems, for instance, appear uninterrupted. We find Q’s first poem under an ornate border and austere title; likewise, 154 stands alone on its page, punctuated by a large-font “FINIS” (figs. 16 and 18).¹⁶ This visual presentation is, perhaps, to be expected. Common sense tells us that these two poems appear uninterrupted because they are the alpha and omega of this collection; they deserve or demand a certain attention and presence on the page because of their placement in the sequence or order of these poems. Yet the protocols of seventeenth-century printing houses meant that the decision to maintain or preserve these two poems on their respective pages necessarily affected the presentation of other poems as well.¹⁷ The question to ask here is, Which poems were interrupted so that the first and the last could appear as visually unified objects? If we assume that whole is better than broken, was there already a distinction between “better” and “worse” poems guiding the casting off and laying out of this volume and these pages? If so, what were the criteria for such determinations?

Interestingly, several of the collection’s best-known and eminently quotable sonnets appear without material interruption. Number 18 (“Shall I compare thee to a Summers day?”), for instance, rests in the center of its

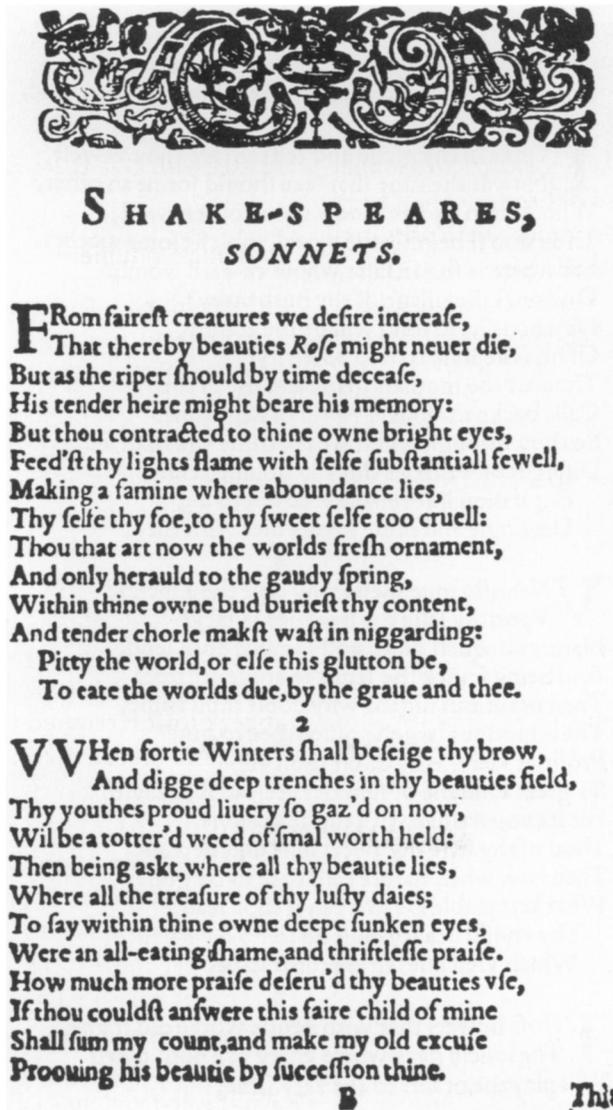


FIG. 16

*Shake-speares
Sonnets* (1609) B1r.
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FIG. 17

Shake-speares
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SHAKE-SPEARES

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

3

Looke in thy glasse and tell the face thou vewest,
 Now is the time that face should forme an other,
 Whose fresh repaire if now thou not renewest,
 Thou do'st beguile the world, vnlesse some mother.
 For where is she so faire whose vn-card wombe
 Disdaines the tillage of thy husbandry?
 Or who is he so fond will be the tombe,
 Of his selfe loue to stop posterity?
 Thou art thy mothers glasse and she in thee
 Calls backe the louely Aprill of her prime,
 So thou through windowes of thine age shalt see,
 Dispight of wrinkles this thy goulden time.
 But if thou liue remembered not to be,
 Die single and thine Image dies with thee.

4

Vnchristy louelinese why dost thou spend,
 Vpon thy selfe thy beauties legacy?
 Natures bequest giues nothing but doth lend,
 And being franck she lends to those are free:
 Then beaurious nigard why doost thou abuse,
 The bountious largesse giuen thee to giue?
 Profitles vsurer why doost thou vse
 So great a summe of summes yet can'st not liue?
 For hauing traffike with thy selfe alone,
 Thou of thy selfe thy sweet selfe dost deceauc,
 Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,
 What acceptable *Audis* can'st thou leaue?
 Thy vnus'd beauty must be tomb'd with thee,
 Which vsed liues th'executor to be.

5

Those howers that with gentle worke did frame,
 The louely gaze where euery eye doth dwell
 Will play the tyrants to the very same.

And

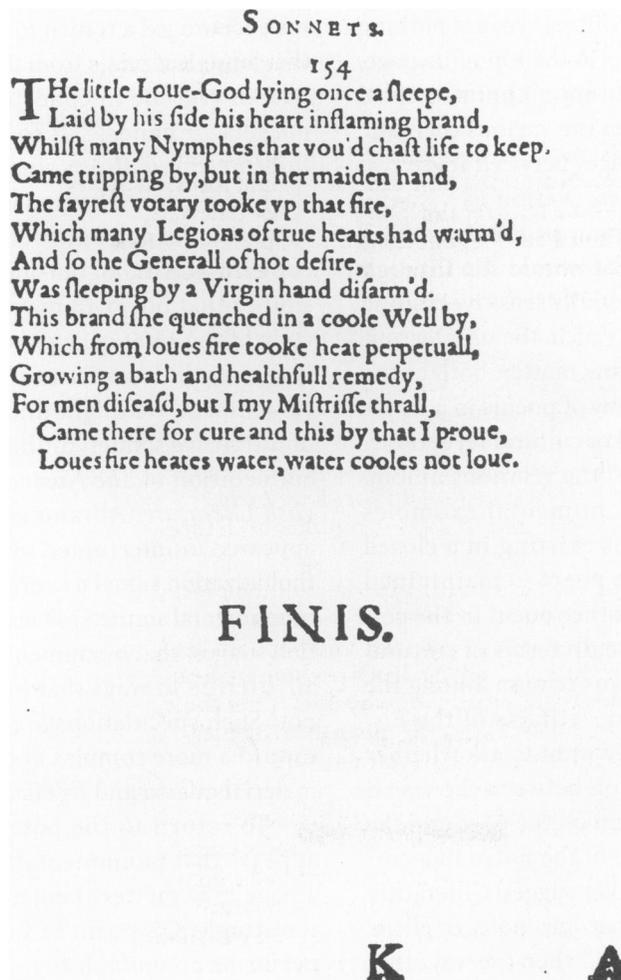


FIG. 18

*Shake-speares
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page, calling strong visual and interpretive attention to itself, possibly at the expense of the two fractured poems that enclose it (fig. 19). In contrast, 130 (“My Miftres eyes are nothing like the Sunne”) begins at the top of its page, allowing space for 131 to appear uninterrupted below it (fig. 20). Given the various thematic and rhetorical resonances between these two poems, their dual preservation as visually unified objects on the same page may enable a comparative reading that would slip through the cracks of a less materially sensitive reading or editorial practice. As such, the uninterruptedness of these two poems matter, both at the level of the interrelations of poems in a single volume and at the level of cultural reception.

When we speak to the relations among poems, the above monumental examples must be understood as existing in a closed textual circuit. If one poem is maintained as a unified object, another poem in the collection likely cannot be. In terms of cultural reception, the two poems remain among the most enduring literary artifacts of the English language. Here we want to ask whether there might be a relation between the visual preservation of the poem on the page and the canonical preservation of the poem in a culture. If, as Jonathan Culler suggests, literature is a form of discourse that “promotes or elicits special kinds of attention,” then the ways that the materiality of a text calls visual and interpretive attention to itself surely influences its definition or evaluation as literature (23).¹⁸ That is, perhaps poems 18 and 130 are “literary” in part because they situate themselves in the field of the page in a way conducive to attracting attention.

Another related concern for this style of material reading might be the ephemerality of the short quarto book format. As Marotti notes, the “casual manner in which short quartos were treated” led to a “peculiarly perishable” status for copies of the 1609 quarto.¹⁹ If only thirteen copies of these “self-destructing artefacts” remain (“Shakespeare’s Sonnets”

157–58), a series of pressing questions emerges: Where did loose pages of the quarto go? Is it possible that the ephemerality of these quartos encouraged a return to sonnet circulation, that loose-leaf pages from the quarto may have had an afterlife in collections, miscellanies, pockets, or hands?²⁰ If so, then those poems fully preserved on any single leaf would stand the best chance to be read and reread after the inevitable disintegration of a complete quarto copy. Thus, it is not outside the realm of possibility that poem 18 may have outlived any copy of the 1609 quarto from which it came. Bringing all this to bear on our current critical moment, we might find it significant that of thirty-five sonnets anthologized in the seventh edition of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* (Abrams et al.), twenty-three appeared uninterrupted in Q.²¹ Does this anthologization signal a canonical privileging of monumental sonnets? Does such anthologization suggest that monumental sonnets enjoyed an afterlife in ways that broken sonnets did not? Such speculations are but first gropings toward a more complex engagement with the material quarto and its effects.

To return to the poems themselves, it appears that monumentality in the space of a page may matter thematically as well. Interestingly, Q’s poem 81 both describes and performs an epitaph (fig. 21). Is it mere coincidence that a poem deploying the figures “monument,” “Epitaph,” “furuuiue” (i.e., “survive”), “immortall,” “graue,” and “intombed” is presented in a visually unified form? The poem begins with a fractured correlative conjunction: “Or I fhall liue your Epitaph to make. . . .” By Stephen Booth’s account, the first two lines of the poem present equivocal alternatives: either the speaker will die first or the addressee will die first; the permanence that the epitaph promises to the addressee will be maintained regardless (“Commentary” 275). Yet, by beginning both in medias res and with a figure of equivalence and uncertainty (“Or”), 81 seems to extend

beyond the bounds of its form. Again, the materiality of the printed page suggests that “Or” might be functioning as an intertext to 80, which appears as a visually unified object directly above 81. Line 11 of poem 80 begins with a similar deployment of conjunction, “Or (being wrackt).” Interestingly, 80 closes with an image that is resonant with the imagery of 81: “my loue was my decay.” If poem 80 ends with a scene of decay, 81 begins with an object of permanence being made (i.e., an “Epitaph”). Read in concert and as conjoined monumental objects presented in the same visual field, these two poems seem to support Kuin’s definition of the sonnet; to reiterate: “a very highly coded form of text, [one that] combines to an unusual degree visibility of formal elements . . . and an organized cumulative system of intertextuality.” In 80 and 81 that cumulative system of intertextuality has a highly visible material expression, as 80 literally lies on top of 81.

Returning to 81—but with an eye now back on 80—we see that lines 7–8 oppose a “common graue” with “mens eyes,” displacing the act of remembrance from a physical to a cognitive register (“graue” to “mens eyes”). Such a displacement anticipates line 9’s declaration that “Your monument fhall be my gentle verfe.” Any reading of this poem hinges on an interpretation of this movement. If one reads this as a transcendent movement, from the physical to the metaphysical, then the speaker of the poem offers the addressee everlasting life. If, more cynically, one reads this movement as anticlimactic, devolving from the physical and purportedly permanent (“monument”) to the ethereal and ephemeral (“verfe”), then the value of the speaker’s offer is called into question. The crux in line 9 is “gentle,” which Booth glosses as having at least three significations: “(1) tender, meek, weak; (2) amiable, kindly meant; (3) noble, ‘well-born’ (as opposed to *common*—see line 7)” (“Commentary” 278). Not one of these significations suggests this “verfe” to be du-

rable, resolute, or strong; indeed, these significations evoke a certain fragility. Yet the poem goes on to argue that “verfe,” gentle or not, shall span time: “Which eyes not yet created fhall ore-read” (10).

A vexed couplet closes the poem: “You ffill fhall liue (fuch vertue hath my Pen) / Where breath moft breaths, euen in the mouths of men” (13–14).²² Generations of critics have troubled over what to do with this seeming ambivalence. Can “breath” (or “verfe”) prove a more permanent resting place than a monument? Can an epitaph “intombed in mens eyes” and “mouths” outlive an epitaph inscribed in stone? More broadly, does this poem espouse or mock the poetic permanence its speaker offers? While such questions are arresting, the reading practice advocated here asks instead: If this poem posits and then explores two forms of remembrance and two registers of temporality, is it not significant that the poem’s final material expression comes without break, fissure, or interruption? How can we hope to attend to either the transcendent or the cynical reading of the poem’s movement if we do not take seriously its visually unified, monumental presentation? The poem rests at the bottom of its page with the last figure (“men”) crowding its way onto the field of the page in a way that suggests a compositor laboring to maintain the poem as a whole. How might this poem “mean” if instead the final couplet had been shifted across to the opening’s recto? Would the monument that the poem offers be then broken or mediated? The material presentation of 81 seems both entirely germane to and utterly provocative for a poem that meditates on yet remains ambivalent about the permanence of poetry.²³

Having begun to consider how material form enables and in important ways produces Q’s thematic engagement with issues of monumentality, permanence, and unity, let us now turn to the decidedly aconventional breaks that occur on nearly every page of the 1609 quarto. Given limited space in my pages, I will

FIG. 19

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Sonnets (1609) B4v.
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SHAKE-SPEARES

Though yet heauen knowes it is but as a tombe
 Which hedes your life, and shewes not halfe your parts:
 If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
 And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
 The age to come would say this Poet lies,
 Such heauenly touches nere toucht earthly faces.
 So should my papers (yellowed with their age)
 Be scorn'd, like old men of lesse truth then tongue,
 And your true rights be termed a Poets rage,
 And stretched miter of an Antique song.
 But were some childe of yours alieue that time,
 You should liue twise in it, and in my rime,

18.

Shall I compare thee to a Summers day?
 Thou art more louely and more temperate:
 Rough windes do shake the darling buds of Maie,
 And Sommers lease hath all too short a date:
 Sometime too hot the eye of heauen shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
 And euery faire from faire some-time declines,
 By chance, or natures changing course vntrim'd:
 But thy eternall Sommer shall not fade,
 Nor loose possession of that faire thou ow'st,
 Nor shall death brag thou wandr'st in his shade,
 When in eternall lines to time thou grow'st,
 So long as men can breath or eyes can see,
 So long liues this, and this giues life to thee,

19

Deuouring time blunt thou the Lyons pawes,
 And make the earth deuoure her owne sweet brood,
 Plucke the keene teeth from the fierce Tygers yawes,
 And burne the long liu'd Phænix in her blood,
 Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
 And do what ere thou wilt swift-footed time
 To the wide world and all her fading sweets:
 But I forbid thee one most hainous crime,

①

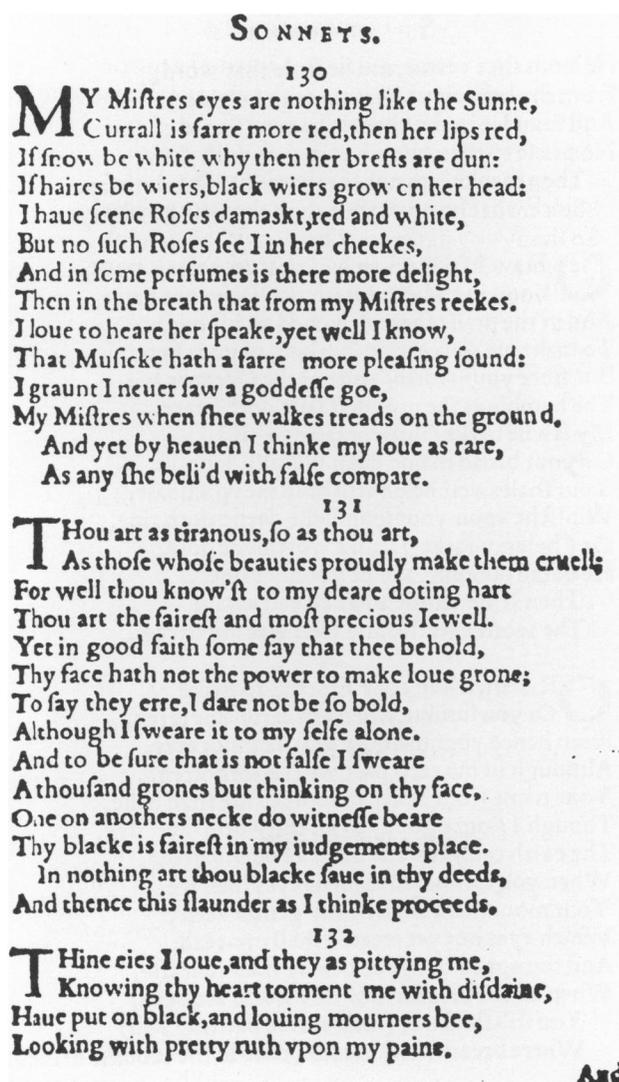


FIG. 20

Shake-speares
Sonnets (1609) H4r.
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FIG. 21

Shake-speares
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SHAKE-SPEARES

He lends thee vertue, and he stole that word,
 From thy behauiour, beautie doth he giue
 And found it in thy cheeke: he can afford
 No praise to thee, but what in thee doth liue.
 Then thanke him not for that which he doth say,
 Since what he owes thee, thou thy selfe doost pay,
 80

○ How I faint when I of you do write,
 Knowing a better spirit doth vse your name,
 And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
 To make me tounge-tide speaking of your fame.
 But since your worth (wide as the Ocean is)
 The humble as the proudest saile doth beare,
 My sawtie barke (inferior farre to his)
 On your broad maine doth wilfully appeare.
 Your shallowest helpe will hold me vp a floate,
 Whilstt he vpon your foundleffe deepe doth ride,
 Or (being wrackt) I am a worthlesse bote,
 He of tall building, and of goodly pride.
 Then If he thriue and I be cast away,
 The worst was this, my loue was my decay.
 81

○ R I shall liue your Epitaph to make,
 Or you suruiue when I in earth am rotten;
 From hence your memory death cannot take,
 Although in me each part will be forgotten.
 Your name from hence immortall life shall haue,
 Though I (once gone) to all the world must dye,
 The earth can yeeld me but a common graue,
 When you intombed in mens eyes shall lye,
 Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
 Which eyes not yet created shall ore-read,
 And toungs to be, your beeing shall rehearse,
 When all the breathers of this world are dead,
 You still shall liue (such vertue hath my Pen)
 Where breath most breaths, euen in the mouths of men.
 I grant

simply gesture toward a series of more or less representative interruptions, before closing with an extended reading of monumentality interrupted in 55. First, the quarto interrupts at least three sonnets at their turns: 2, 14, and 110. In the latter two poems, the interruption forces the reader across the divide of facing pages. More emphatically, the interruption of 2 forces the reader to turn over a page (B1r) to reveal both page B1v and the poem's resolution. We turn a page to turn the sonnet (figs. 16 and 17). In all three of these examples, interruptions reinforce and yet also complicate the nature of the conventional sonnet turn. Yes, the interruption of or at the turn emphasizes the shift in tone and rhyme scheme that occurs between each poem's three quatrains and its rhyming couplet, effecting a material caesura that forces readers to pause as their gaze moves from page to page. At the same time, these interruptions of or at the turn also effect a sort of attentive slippage in which the reader's visual and interpretive gaze is displaced, delayed, and deferred. Such a slippage functions then as a sort of material enjambment. Poetic enjambment can be characterized as a "run[ning]-on" or "striding over" in which "the pressure of the incompleting syntactic unit toward closure carries on over the end of the verse-line" (Abrams 163). Thus Q's material enjambment might be thought of in terms of the pressure toward closure that the poem carries over the fold or, more dramatically, over the turn of the page. The effect of a poem's resolution running on to another page cannot be overstated. In addition to rupturing the continuity of the strict sonnet form, this enjambment also momentarily disappoints readerly expectations of poetic denouement and closure. One might think here of Spiller's three-part rubric and ask: If the turn is displaced, delayed, or deferred, is this poem still a sonnet? What must the reader do to recognize this fractured poem as a sonnet?

In addition to these ruptured turns, Q also presents a series of poems whose the-

ematics seem grounded on or implicated in their interrupted representation on the page. For instance, 108, one of the quarto's most self-reflexive poems, appears as a palimpsest printed on both sides of page G3r (figs. 22 and 23). To read this poem in Q is to attend to a doubled writing, its figurative traces, and material bleeding of "Inck" through porous paper. Locally, line 12's reference to "page" changes significantly when we read this figure against the material presentation (an "outward forme") of a single poem printed on two sides of a page. Likewise, 36 engages a theme of unity between two seemingly autonomous subjects: "we two must be twaine." The poem also appears palimpsestically, but it is interrupted at a crucial moment: "In our two loues there is but one respect, / [page break] Though in our liues a feperable fpight" (lines 5–6). What is the effect of placing a conjunction ("Though") immediately after a severe page break? Does this placement support or undermine the unity that the poem offers its subjects?

Finally, there is 126 (fig. 24)—with its excised lines and final encomium to the "louely Boy," perhaps the quarto's most deviant poem. Number 126 is often posited as the linchpin or pivot point for what many critics consider to be the sonnets' two narrative strains. While Joel Fineman and numerous others read these strains in terms of gender and sexual difference, Margreta de Grazia reads the strains in terms of racial and class difference ("Scandal").²⁴ Yet despite concurring that 126 marks the end of narrative strain one, neither camp has attended to the material presentation of the poem relative to the poems that accompany it. Even a cursory glance at 126 in the quarto tells us that the poem rests conspicuously at the center of its page, bridging 125 (narrative strain one) and 127 (narrative strain two) within the field of a single page.²⁵ Thus 126 becomes monumentalized on page H3r, but at a cost: both 125 and 127 are interrupted. Again, what are we to make of this rather fortuitous material fact? Is it

coincidence? Or, does it encourage us to read a narrative into the poems? Imagine a reader opening *Shake-speares Sonnets* to pages H2v–H3r. What would catch the eye? Perhaps the “structural peculiarity” of 126 (Booth, “Commentary” 430)? If so, that reader would find only one unified, whole poem on H3r. If one wished to read the poems that frame 126, one would be forced to read back across the fold to page H2v or over to H3v. Such a material presentation forces readers to move their field of vision out from 126 back or forward across Q’s pages. The materiality of such a presentation constructs an eerily perfect visual bridge between these two narrative strains.

Poem 126 represents a crux; importantly, a crux through which critics have in fact paid attention to the materiality of Q. In considering the present absence of lines 13–14 and the brackets that seem to extend the quietus of line 12, critics have shown how visual presentation produces poetic meaning in this sonnet. In short, these blank lines maintain or project a poetic structure without a concomitant poetic content, frustrating readerly expectations of content while meeting readerly expectations of form.²⁶ For Booth, 126, “composed of six rhymed iambic couplets, is not a sonnet in any technical sense.” Given the poem’s “structural peculiarity,” Booth concedes that “there is therefore some basis for the widespread critical belief that sonnet 126 is intended to mark a division” between the narratives that de Grazia, Fineman, and others chart (“Commentary” 430). Yet in view of Q’s various “structural peculiarities”—all those broken sonnets and delayed turns—other poems in the volume might be similarly deemed not sonnets in any technical sense.

By way of closing this discussion of Q’s monuments and interruptions, I consider 55, a poem that promises monumentality but whose material presentation breaks that promise (figs. 2 and 3). In many important ways 55 mirrors 81, both in its thematics and in several of its tropes. Poem 55 begins,

however, with a more emphatic rejection of physical permanence: “Not marble, nor the gilded monument, / Of Princes shall outlive this powrefull rime. . . .” Echoing the truth-distilling “verfe” of 54, 55’s “powrefull rime” thus promises to outlive or out-endure several sites of physical permanence. Indeed, “you” (now transubstantiated into a written subject) is opposed to “vnfwep[te] stone” and “Statues ouer-turne[d].” All this builds to a crescendo as line 8 announces the “contents” and stakes of the “rime”: “The liuing record of your memory.” But as Booth points out, “Even as they assert the immortality of the poem [lines 7–8] remind a reader of the flimsiness and vulnerability of anything written on paper” (“Commentary” 229). Booth is no doubt thinking here of the figures “Mars,” “quick fire,” and “[h]all burne,” all seeming threats to the paper on which the speaker would write this “liuing record.” Yet this reference to the flimsiness and vulnerability of paper forces us to confront the material presentation of this poem, to think of this vulnerability in terms of the very paper on which 55 is printed. After line 8, Q readers must turn over the page, thus taking fragile paper into their hands. Here the thematic that Booth identifies is underscored by both the material presentation of the poem (i.e., the page break after line 8) and its staging of a physical reader-text interaction (i.e., the actual touch or contact between reader and quarto). Through this touch, metaphoric paper materializes.

Before turning the page, however, we would do well to put pressure on the punctuation mark that ends line 8. The period that follows “memory” ensures that line 8 is not enjambed onto page D4v. Thus 55’s page break enacts more of a material caesura than a material enjambment. However, this break fractures the poem into two nearly autonomous poetic units. Although there are several resonances between the two, one could think of these units as being somewhat distinct. As such, does this fracture fragment the poem?

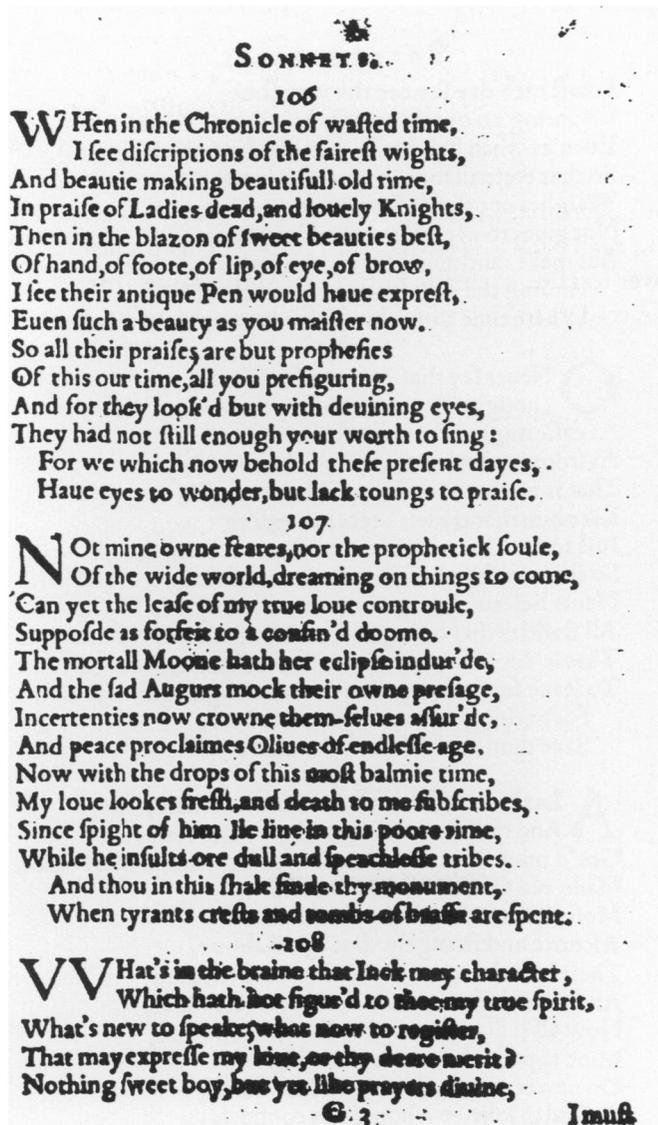


FIG. 22

*Shake-speares
 Sonnets (1609) G3r.*
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FIG. 23

Shake-speares
Sonnets (1609) G3v.
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SHAKE-SPEARES:

I must each day say ore the very same,
 Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
 Euen as when first I hallowed thy faire name,
 So that eternall loue in loues fresh case,
 Waighes not the dust and iniury of age,
 Nor giues to necessary wrinkles place,
 But makes antiquitie for aye his page,
 Finding the first conceit of loue there bred,
 Where time and outward forme would shew it dead.

109

Neuer say that I was false of heart,
 Though absence seem'd my flame to quallifie,
 As easie might I from my selfe depart,
 As from my soule which in thy brest doth lye:
 That is my home of loue, if I haue rang'd,
 Like him that trauels I returne againe,
 Iust to the time, not with the time exchange'd,
 So that my selfe bring water for my flaine,
 Neuer beleue though in my nature raign'd,
 All frailties that besiege all kindes of blood,
 That it could so preposterouslie be stain'd,
 To leaue for nothing all thy summe of good:
 For nothing this wide Vniuerse I call,
 Saue thou my Rose, in it thou art my all.

110

Las'tis true, I haue gone here and there,
 And made my selfe a motley to the view,
 Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most deare,
 Made old offences of affections new.
 Most true it is, that I haue lookt on truth
 Asconce and strangely: But by all aboue,
 These blenches gaue my heart an other youth,
 And worse essaies prou'd thee my best of loue,
 Now all is done, haue what shall haue no end,
 Mine appetite I neuer more will grin'de
 On newer prooffe, to trie an older friend,
 A God in loue, to whom I am confin'd.

Then

FIG. 24
Shake-speares
Sonnets (1609) H3r.
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SONNETS.

Or layd great bafes for eternity,
Which proues more fhort then waft or ruining?
Haue I not feene dwellers on forme and fauor
Lofe all, and more by paying too much rent
For compound sweet; Forgoing fimple fauor,
Pittifull thriuors in their gazing fpent.
Noe, let me be obfequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblacion, poore but free,
Which is not mixt with feconds, knows no art,
But mutuall render. onely me for thee.
Hence, thou fubbornd *Informer*, a trew foule
When moft impeacht, ftands leaft in thy controule.

126

O Thou my louely Boy who in thy power,
Doeft hould times fickle glaffe. his fickle, hower:
Who haft by wayning growne, and therein thou'ft,
Thy louers withering, as thy sweet felfe grow'ft.
If Nature (foueraigne miferes ouer wrack)
As thou goeft onwards ftill will plucke thee backe,
She keepes thee to this purpose, that her skill.
May time difgrace, and wretched mynuit kill.
Yet feare her O thou minnion of her pleasure,
She may detaine, but not ftill keepe her trefure!
Her *Audire* (though delayd) answer'd muft be,
And her *Quierus* is to render thee.

()

127

I N the ould age blacke was not counted faire,
Or if it weare it bore not beauties name:
But now is blacke beauties fucceffrue heire,
And Beautie ftanderd with a baffard shame,
For fince each hand hath put on Natures power,
Fairing the foule with Arts faulfe borrow'd face,
Sweet beauty hath no name no holy boure,
But is prophan'd, if not liues in difgrace.

H 3

Therefore

To ask that question, we must first ask where the sonnet's turn occurs. Is it, *pace* the conventions of the "Shakespearean sonnet," after line 12, or, following a Petrarchan tradition, after line 8?²⁷ If the turn occurs after line 12, then it seems that the fracture does indeed fragment the poem. If after line 8, then the fracture accentuates in dramatic ways the sonnet's turn. Both sets of questions are integral to an interpretation of this poem, especially given the sonnet's couplet: "So til the iudgement that your selfe arife, / You liue in this, and dwell in louers eies." While the final phrase, "louers eies," resonates strongly with 81's "mens eyes," here "You liue in this" proves far more complicated than 81's similar occupancy of verse: "Your monument fhall be my gentle verfe." The space substantiated by "this" proves fractured and fragmented in 55. Given the page break discussed above, one must ask, would the poem's addressee want to "liue" in a space jeopardized by its own materiality? Can a poem written on paper in fact "out-liue" "marble"? More urgently, what is the status of a poem that promises permanence but is already fractured and fragmented?

Reading Past the Page

Thus far a spectral presence has haunted the margins of this essay—and not, fortunately, Auden's "horrified" Shakespeare. As the essay has progressed, it has made increasingly urgent apostrophes to a fictive reader who might find him- or herself confronting the materiality of *Shake-speares Sonnets*. As these repeated invocations suggest, this fictive reader is essential to the reading practice advocated herein. It is this reader who will or will not recognize these poems as sonnets, who will or will not read across an opening, who will or will not tear out a page of the quarto. With its final section, this essay will home in on an instance of the early modern scene of reading and ask, speculatively, What might an early modern reader have done with *Shake-speares*

Sonnets? While such a consideration will stop short of a phenomenology of early modern reading practices, it will begin to account for what Tony Bennett has dubbed a "reading formation": "a set of discursive and intertextual determinations that organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another by constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways" (66). The challenge of the reading practice this essay espouses lies in reconstructing the "specific" or "particular" ways early modern readers oriented themselves physically, visually, and hermeneutically to their objects-to-be-read.²⁸

While the proliferation of sonnet sequences in early modern England may tell us much about the literary marketplace of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this proliferation tells us next to nothing about how those sequences were read or experienced. For instance, did the early modern reader approach Q linearly (i.e., beginning with the first poem and then proceeding, in order, through to poem 154) or indexically (i.e., skimming the volume more or less at random)? Latter-day literary critics often impose a desire for linear reading and narrative development onto the sonnets, without asking if this imposition is consistent with early modern reading formations. More broadly, how would an early modern reader have received a fractured or fragmented poem? Would such fragmentation have alienated the reader, or would it have been experienced in concert with an indexical reading practice?²⁹ One notorious seventeenth-century reader of Q, John Benson, may help us to approach these questions. Benson's 1640 edition of *Poems: Written by Wil. Shake-speare, Gent.*—largely based on the text of Q—has been maligned by generations of scholars for being "outrageously piratical and misleading" (Duncan-Jones, Introduction 42), a work of base editorial "chicanery" (Rollins

22). At stake in such a lambasting is Benson's decision to omit from his edition sonnets 18, 19, 43, 56, 75, 76, 96, and 126; to conflate and reorganize 115 of the remaining sonnets into longer poetic units made up of between two and five sonnets; to give the resulting poems titles such as "Loves crueltie"; to include in his edition poems from the apocryphal collection *The Passionate Pilgrime* (1612); and, most famously, to change many of the sonnets' masculine pronouns to feminine ones, radically revising Q's gender and sexual politics.³⁰

While Benson's pronoun shifts have received the lion's share of critical attention, his conflation and reorganization of sonnets demands more careful explication. In her important reconsideration of Benson, de Grazia speculates that in such a conflated form it is "possible that readers could not recognize the sonnets as such when they were combined to form longer poetic units" (*Shakespeare Verbatim* 164). Here again we encounter the problem of readerly recognition. Would Benson's readers have recognized these longer poetic units as being conflated sonnets? (Again, Benson drew the text of his 1640 edition largely from Q, a volume whose page breaks already pose a number of problems of readerly recognition.) In Benson's edition, Q's sonnets were, Rollins fumes, "jumble[d] together in a new, unauthorized, and deceptive order" that gave them a "totally unfamiliar appearance" (20). Yet Benson's conflation evinces an editorial logic that has gone all but uncommented on: nearly every poem in the 1640 edition conflates sequential sonnets—sonnets, that is, that appeared on the same page, page opening, or leaf of Q: sonnets 67–69, 53–54, 92–95, 153–54, and so forth. For instance, the poem "Love-sicke" (D3v–D3r) conflates sonnets 80 and 81, whose dual monumental status is discussed above. Likewise, sonnets 2, 14, and 110, whose turns are interrupted by page breaks in Q, are conflated with adjacent sonnets in Benson's edition: 1–3, 13–15, and 109–10. The implications for such reorganization are significant.

In these examples, two monumental Q sonnets have been collapsed together, and three sonnets with delayed turns have been subsumed into longer poetic units in which their interrupted turns would be less conspicuous.

In all these examples, the confluations seem sensitive to Q's page breaks—even as Benson imposes new page breaks. Indeed, given the sequential logic of the reorganization, such confluations necessarily respond to the presence and absence of page breaks, regardless of editorial intentionality. Had Benson conflated a series of universally monumental sonnets—sonnets sans page breaks—we could perhaps describe his editing as a piece of "misleading" "chicanery." However, Benson edited a series of sonnets already broken by recurrent page breaks. The poetic units he found in the 1609 quarto were already "jumbled," riddled with indeterminate turns, widowed couplets, and broken monuments. Especially when read sequentially, two to three pages at a time, Q's breaks may have suggested connections between adjacent poems that would not have been visible had Q followed the lead of so many of its peer sonnet sequences and presented its sonnets as visually unified poetic units. As such, Benson's act of editorial "chicanery" may well have been "authorized" by the abnormal materiality of Q. In Benson we find then a reader who engaged the sonnets in sequential but nonnarrative and nonlinear ways; a reader with a seemingly fluid sense of poetic form, who may have made the most of Q's fractured and fragmented poems: editing them together into longer poetic units. Benson's edition grants us at least partial access to a seventeenth-century reading practice in which page breaks made legible or possible linkages between individual sonnets. If nothing else, Benson's much maligned editorial decisions force us again to take seriously Q's page breaks and to consider the ways those breaks have haunted the Shakespearean editorial tradition.³¹

Shakespeare studies has long used the rhetoric of scandal to discuss Q. Given the

recurrent, seemingly diurnal outpouring of scholarly articles and books about the sonnets, it is a minor scandal that no one has tended to this remarkable aspect of Q's materiality. It might make for a more significant one were it not that, historically, little attention has been paid—by literary critics, historians of the book, bibliographers—to the page break as a unit of meaning. While contemporary bibliography and literary criticism does well to tend to the most minute of textual elements, we have as yet been unable to find a language with which to discuss that most primary of textual units, the page. Metacritically, we even lack bibliographical notation for the page break. Why is it that critical convention so carefully registers line breaks but has no conventional impetus toward, or symbol for, representing page breaks: “Canst thou O cruell, fay I loue thee not, / When I againft myselfe with thee pertake : / [page break] Doe I not thinke on thee when I forgot / Am of myselfe, all tirant for thy fake?” (poem 149)?³² We will tend to the ways a line break helps effect a given rhyme (e.g., “not” and “forgot”) but ignore how a page break helps effect a given theme. (In this example, the page break elegantly complements the self-divisions the poem laments: “I . . . myselfe,” “thee,” “pertake”).

Page breaks have implications for all forms of lyric poetry, not simply the sonnet. In his criterion study *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, Paul Fussell underscores not only the relation between form and meaning but also the relation between “typographic shape” and meaning (128). Fussell observes, “And now that we are fully accustomed to using printed texts for apprehending poems, our sense of stanzas has become a very complex act of mediation between what our eyes see and what our inner ears hear” (128). (This essay has shown in some detail the complexity of such mediation.) Particularly in his chapter “Some Critical Implications of Stanzaic Forms,” Fussell acknowledges that “the white space between stanzas means something,”

since such space forces readers to ask, “Why is that white space there, and what am I supposed to do with it?” (155). No doubt Fussell is thinking here of intentional stanza breaks, not potentially incidental page breaks. However, his insistence on the interpretative possibilities and critical responsibilities that attend such typographic forms necessarily comprises page breaks. If, as Fussell argues, readers “expect every short poem to justify its form and to lay upon its form the obligation of speaking an appropriate part of its meaning” (158), why do not the same readers ask, “Why is that page break there, and what am I supposed to do with it?”³³

Not reading page breaks is itself a reading practice, a historically specific, socially determined act in which certain elements of materiality are granted attention and authority while others are not. When, following critical convention, we read past the page, we return to an earlier definition of textuality in which the page is transparent, a “clean and familiar textual surface [that] allows reading to proceed unencumbered past matter and into the heart of the matter—into Shakespeare’s ‘meaning’” (de Grazia and Stallybrass 280). Espousing instead an approach to the materiality of *Shakespeare’s Sonnets* that would take seriously the matter of Q’s page breaks, this essay has understood the page and the page break to be units of meaning with urgent implications for the recognition of poetic form and for the interrelations between a history of the book and the idea of literature. Given that the essay has put pressure on issues of authorship and authority, this closing emphasis on the reader and not the author—on the matter rather than the heart of the matter—supports both Barthes’s contention that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (148) and Foucault’s suggestion that the author is “the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning” (118). In the absence of a disciplining authorial figure—no horrified Shakespeare need lurk over the quarto

reader—the book known as Q authorizes readers to open the multiplicity or “proliferation of meaning” to and at the level of materiality and to ask after those quiet but obtrusive breaks we find in every book we read.

NOTES

This essay has benefited in innumerable ways from incisive and appropriately skeptical readings by Lisa Freinkel, Carol Thomas Neely, Jay Grossman, Hunt Howell, Christopher Lane, Glenn Sucich, and Wendy Wall. My thanks go first and foremost, however, to Jeffrey Masten for his encouragement and example.

1. See, e.g., Giroux.

2. I emphasize *seemingly* arbitrary. There is at work in Q a precise logic as to where these breaks occur: the pages that contain sonnets 22–93, 106–17, and 142–53 break their poems in a five-page pattern that finds the following number of lines from fractured sonnets at the bottom of each page: 5, 11, 2, 8, and 0. The remaining sonnet pages differ only slightly from this pattern. Such a pattern suggests precision and care in composition, as if some agent were, for instance, laboring to fit as much print as possible onto each page. I am grateful to Carol Thomas Neely for helping me to articulate the unarbitrariness of these breaks. For a discussion of the care with which later seventeenth-century compositors “cast off copy,” see Moxon 239–44 and Gaskell 41. For a related discussion of the “relatively arbitrary nature of [Q’s typographical] distinctions,” see Freinkel 226–36.

3. Cloud’s essay on Herbert’s “Easter-Wings” takes seriously the representation of a shape poem across the openings of a book. See also Targoff; McLeod, “Gerard Hopkins.”

4. In the *Arden* edition of the sonnets, Katherine Duncan-Jones follows Vendler in re-presenting the poems as visually unified objects, despite assuring the reader that in “wording, format and punctuation, Q has been followed more closely than in any previous modernized edition” (Introduction 103; my emphasis). That an editor as sensitive to the materiality of the Shakespearean text as Duncan-Jones neglects to include these page breaks in her modern edition speaks to the transparency and pervasiveness of a reading practice that would ignore page breaks.

5. See also Duncan-Jones, “What.” It should be noted that Q evinces several forms of “contextual pressure,” chief among these the use of oversized first-letter capitals and the indentation of the first and final couplets of each poem. While several of Q’s peer sequences mark the beginning of their sonnets with large capitals, Q uses a particularly big font to do so. Likewise, while several other sequences indent couplets, only two others indent their

final couplets, and neither of those uses large-font first letter capitals (see figs. 4–15). It seems likely that these unusual material elements would have indeed applied some contextual pressure, perhaps helping readers to recognize the beginning and end of each sonnet and mitigating the disruption caused by Q’s page breaks. One would also do well to consider the pressure applied by the catchwords that appear at the bottom of every page. Though common in early modern books, these too help to mitigate individual page breaks, cuing the reader to read past page breaks, even if this was not their original or practical purpose. To acknowledge such pressures is not, however, to accede to them. That such pressures would be necessary for a reader to recognize these poems as sonnets speaks to the hermeneutic disruptions these page breaks may have caused.

6. See also Duncan-Jones, “Unauthorized” 155 and Introduction 46.

7. In counting fourteen sequences, I follow Wall and Kuin in excluding collections of various verse forms (e.g., John Davies’s *Wittes Pilgrimage*), which Spiller includes in his count. My count also elides multiple editions or printings of the same sequence, for instance Daniel’s six editions of *Delia* and Drayton’s nearly compulsive reissues of *Ideas*—though the iteration of the form in succeeding editions also supports my point. Tellingly, the first two poems in *The Passionate Pilgrime*—poems that appear, revised, as Q sonnets 138 and 144—are also monumentalized, as are all of Thomas Watson’s one hundred “passions” in *The Hekatompathia*, the 1582 collection that predated Philip Sidney and anticipated the 1590s sonnet sequence craze. Regrettably, I am not able to reproduce images of William Smith’s *Chloris* and Barnabe Barnes’s *Parthenophil and Parthenophe* because the British Library was not willing to grant permanent permission for electronic reproduction.

8. Interestingly, Sidney’s 1591 sequence also interrupts its sonnets. By 1598, however, the sonnets appear (mostly) as unified, monumental visual objects. See Wall 72. Wall addresses these differing arrangements of *Astrophel and Stella* as an “evolution into a more ordered form” (70). While Wall’s discussion is persuasive and while Barnes’s sequence raises several questions about genre, I do not want to dismiss these sequences and their interruptions too quickly. The heuristic or reading methodology this essay advocates forces us to consider how the breaks in *Parthenophil* and the 1591 *Astrophel* might also matter.

9. For example, Marotti is interested in the peculiar naming of Q: “rather than [having] a title alluding to a love object . . . or to a fictional amorous relationship,” Q bears the name of its author (“Shakespeare’s Sonnets” 154). See also Duncan-Jones, “What,” and, on the gender indeterminacy of the beloved, de Grazia, “Scandal” 39–40. For instances of mislabeled catchwords and page signatures, see Rollins 4. Duncan-Jones draws attention to variations in the fonts and font sizes of the capital letters W, H, S, and O and to the sonnets’ thirty-three italicized words (Introduction 39). See also Freinkel 226–36. Given the reading

practice I am advocating here, these equally abnormal aspects of Q's materiality are worthy of attention in their own right, since they too have influenced the processes of meaning making that have informed Q's reception.

10. The number of studies that would distance Shakespeare from *Shake-speares Sonnets* is staggering; a representative example is that of Robert Giroux, who intimates that William Shakespeare "apparently had nothing to do with the production of Q, because, among other reasons, it was so badly proofread" (8). Giroux underscores several "absentminded" and even "blatant" "mistakes," "gaffes," and "errors" in the text of the poems (8–10). Instead of attending to how those "mistakes" might either matter or themselves be intended, Giroux blames these textual cruxes on sloppy or meddling compositors; see Jackson. For a critique of compositor study, see McKenzie; Masten, "Pressing Subjects"; and de Grazia, "Essential Author." Giroux goes on to count between fifty-three and eighty-four "errors" (11). This startling variance—a range of fifty-three to eighty-four being remarkable—betrays the subjective, arbitrary nature of such author-centric methodology; the inability to determine what is and what is not a mistake or error undermines the claims to truth to which Giroux's study aspires. Especially given the complexity and indeterminacy we so often associate with poetic discourse, what looks like a sloppy compositor error to one reader might look like a deft poetic effect to another. See also Rollins; McLeod, "Unemending"; and Duncan-Jones, Introduction.

11. The literature that treats sexuality in Q is enormous. Recent studies include: Bredbeck 167–80; Pequigney; Sedgwick 28–48; Bruce R. Smith 228–70; and Stallybrass.

12. Recent criticism has troubled readings such as Auden's. Putting pressure on several governing terms (e.g., "authorized," "literary property") and paying close attention to the materiality of the Shakespearean text, critics such as Marotti and de Grazia have rendered anachronistic our concern for authorization, book contracts, proprietary claims, and authorial proofing. See also Tribble; Roberts.

13. The most recent example: Duncan-Jones devotes some seventeen pages of her *Arden* sonnets introduction to the issue of Q's authenticity and authorization (Introduction 29–45). See also Duncan-Jones, "Unauthorized."

14. Freinkel goes on to offer readings of the "self-trespassing poetic authority that unites—authorizes" Q (189).

15. For a discussion of such a complex network of agents and intentions, see de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim* 169; Kastan 5; Marotti, "Shakespeare's Sonnets" 143, 165–66; McGann; and Masten, "Textual Deviance."

16. All references to Q are to the Huntington Library's Chalmers-Bridgewater copy of the Aspley imprint, which is reproduced in facsimile in Booth, *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1–133). For a discussion of the "small variations" between the extant copies, see Rollins 5.

17. See Moxon 242–43; Gaskell 41; and Blayney 12–14.

18. See also Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies* 4–5.

19. Elsewhere Marotti suggests that "short quarto pamphlets of poetry or drama [were] among the most perishable of printed words" (*Manuscript* 286), often "literally read out of existence" (Hyder Edward Rollins, qtd. in Marotti, "Shakespeare's Sonnets" 158).

20. On the circulation of these poems in manuscript, see Taylor.

21. Likewise, twenty-four of the thirty-two sonnets included in the *Longman Anthology* (Damrosch et al.) are monumental in the 1609 text. A more comprehensive statistical study than I am able to undertake here would be required to support or refute the speculation that poems that appear as unified objects on the quarto page have fared better with critics than those that were broken. For now, the interrelations between quarto and anthology simply allow us to posit page breaks as yet another "contingency of value" that affects how and which poems enter our critical canon (Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Contingencies*).

22. On Shakespeare's troubling couplets, see Dubrow, "Monologues" 62, and Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Poetic Closure* 142–45.

23. Similarly, it seems telling that a poem that declares "Let me not to the marriage of true mindes / Admit impediments" (poem 119) would appear without material impediments, resting unified and unbroken near the center of its page.

24. On the difficulties of such "narration," see Dubrow, "Uncertainties."

25. A similarly conspicuous center-of-the-page placement attends two of Q's other "structural[ly] peculiar" poems: 99 and 145. Poem 99 is composed of fifteen lines; 145 is rendered in tetrameter rather than pentameter.

26. Numerous readers have commented on this aspect of the poem, many even deploying the quietus as evidence of a meddling compositor. See Giroux 8–9 and Booth, "Commentary" 430.

27. Duncan-Jones affirms that Shakespeare was "fully aware of the Italian form" (Introduction 96).

28. On the early modern reader as a daunting and a promising subject of study, see Zwicker 11 and Roberts 4. Roberts's study tends admirably to the "composite" nature of Q, reading the intra- and intertextual relations between "Shake-speares Sonnets" and "A Louer's Complaint"—regrettably, something this essay neglects entirely.

29. On the presence of the fragment in early modern humanistic pedagogy, see Bushnell 135–38.

30. For important recuperations of Benson, see Marotti, "Shakespeare's Sonnets"; and de Grazia, "Scandal."

31. On the importance of Benson's edition to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception of Shakespeare's sonnets, see Marotti, "Shakespeare's Sonnets" 163; and de Grazia, *Shakespeare Verbatim*, 132–76.

32. See Gibaldi 111–12.

33. In his 1968 collection *Incarnations*, Robert Penn Warren attempted to answer that question for his readers. Throughout the volume Warren uses a symbol to “indicate a space between sections of a poem wherever such spaces are lost in pagination” (2).

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