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OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

The Complete Sonnets
and Poems

Edited by
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- 1 a summer's day was proverbially perfect (cf. Dent S967).
- 2 temperate (a) moderate, even-tempered; (b) 'neither too hot nor too cold; of mild and equable temperature' (OED 3a)
- 4 lease temporary period of legal possession, limited by a *date*, or period of expiry. See 13, 5 and 6 nn.
- 6 complexion (a) 'Countenance, face' (OED 4c); (b) 'Colour, visible aspect, look, appearance' (OED 5 *transf.*), as in *Richard II* 3.2.190-1: 'Men judge by the complexion of the sky | The state and inclination of the day.'
- 7 fair from . . . declines every beautiful thing loses its beauty; playing on the 'fairness' of the sun's *gold complexion*.
- 8 untrimmed 'deprived of trimness or elegance; stripped of ornament' (OED 1; first cited usage). Cf. *K. John* 3.1.134-5: 'the devil tempts thee here | In likeness of a new untrimmèd bride', where it has been suggested that the term means 'undevirginated' (Partridge) or 'recently divested of her wedding-gown' (Schmidt). 'Deprived of the ornaments of youth' would fit both contexts, as well as tallying with the influential passage from Revelation 21: 2: 'And I John saw the holy city new Jerusalem come down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride trimmed for her husband.'
- 10 lose possession . . . ow'st Nor will you lose

control over the beauty which you own absolutely and for ever. This contrasts with the impermanent *lease* of l. 4 above, and does so by emphatically linking *possession* with ownership. These terms are not synonymous in law. *Possession* (especially when applied to land or property) means occupancy or enjoyment of a piece of property in a manner which brings with it the right to exercise control over it, but it does not necessarily imply ownership; hence to enjoy something fully one must have both ownership and permanent possession of it.

- 11 wand'rest . . . shade alluding to Psalm 23: 4: 'Yea, though I should walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me'.
- 12 eternal lines 'enduring lines of verse' and 'perpetual genealogical descent'; see 16.9 note.
- to time thou grow'st you become a living part of time. To *grow to* is 'to be an organic or integral part of' (OED 3b), as in 2 *Henry IV* 1.2.85-90: '*Ser.* I pray you, sir, then set your knighthood and your soldiership aside . . . *Fal.* I lay aside that which grows to me?' See *Venus* l. 540. The addressee of the poem is like a shoot grafted into time's substance, and continues to live through either the poet's *lines* or his own *bloodline*.
- 14 this 'this sonnet'

18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
 And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
 Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
 And every fair from fair sometime declines,
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed:
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
 Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.