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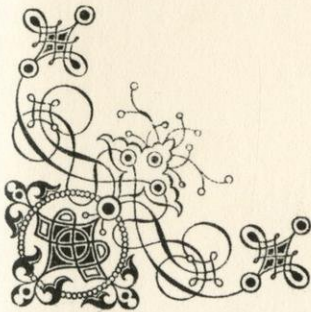
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Fashioned Pleasures



Twenty-Four Poets Play *Bouts-Rimés*
with a Shakespearean Sonnet



Edited by William Thompson

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Foreword

The idea that would be collectively borrowed to generate the sonnets gathered herein occurred to Stephen Cushman when he came upon a photograph of his young son playing “dress-up”: just as the boy had donned someone else’s clothes, so would the poem the picture inspired adorn itself in another poem’s rhymes. Cushman had chosen, then, to play a private round of *bouts-rimés*, whose rules require a new poem to be fitted with a prescribed sequence of rhyme-words. The sequence he assigned for himself came, appropriately enough, from Shakespeare’s Sonnet 20:

A woman’s face, with nature’s own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion—
A woman’s gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women’s fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men’s eyes and women’s souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prick’d thee out for women’s pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love’s use their treasure.

The usual formal demands already make it difficult enough to write a good sonnet; to write one with the rhyme words chosen in advance is rather like escaping from a straitjacket—with no visible signs of struggle. *Bouts-rimés* is indeed a formidable game, rarely played today. The scholar Clive Scott has noted that even the seventeenth-century Parisians who first attempted it found that it “tried the ingenuity of even the most considerable poets.” Fortunately, some contemporary poets, such as those featured in this little book, find a technical challenge hard to resist. The result in this case is an eclectic variety of sonnets, each fashioned around the shaping code of Shakespeare’s invention.

✧ 5

William Thompson

One for the Scrapbook

Lips like those, who cares if they're not painted?
And what of it if the red dress shows a passion
For dressing up in Mother's clothes? Well acquainted
With much stranger things, let's enjoy the fashion
Statement a flowered hat makes and quit the rolling
Of our eyes. So he's a boy. Ten? Eleven? One gazes
At the photograph in shock: no use controlling
The love of beauty. Wow. But what amazes
Even more is how—how has he created,
With long white gloves and crossed bare legs, this doting
On his lowered eyes and face in profile, how defeated
All resistance? My son. He came from nothing
 In the beginning but pulsings of pleasure.
 To think I'd hoped a girl would be my treasure.

Stephen Cushman

Times Square Store, Brooklyn, 1973

The last time I saw Mickey, he'd painted
his cheeks with blush, affected a passion
for opera. My father, unacquainted
with his best friend's son's adopted fashion,
stood, part shipman, part voyeur, words rolling
impotently off his tongue, while the gazes
of our fellow shoppers flashed controlling
signals down the aisle. The heart amazes
itself, in spite of where it's been created.
Hard-knocks in a cowed schoolyard, a doting
mother, the hang-dog look of the defeated
weigh in balance between all and nothing:
those beatings that were his father's pleasure,
the other life that became his treasure.

Daniel Tobin

Fool's Gold

(A Saturday Night Sonnet)

Girls in their nervous freedom, heeled and painted,
Swarm out in teams—oh, bold pursuit of passion!
Geared for the sexual snatch, they seem acquainted
With all the ways and means of pubic fashion.
Who has not seen them, arm in arm, come rolling,
Midriffs agape but fending off all gazes,
Haughty and cool, forbidding yet controlling;
Each breast inflames us, every hip amazes.
Girls, were these parts for other girls created?
Walking exposed, you shrug aside our doting.
Or has the art of dressing been defeated
By skillfulness in wearing nearly nothing?
 If so, put on your clothes and hide our pleasure.
 Bared flesh is fool's gold, wealth is buried treasure.

Anne Stevenson

Jane, Aged Twenty, Takes Tea at the Big House

Ting tang goes the jeweled clock, and the little painted
Lovers bow and turn with graceful passion
On their gilded floor, as if, so long acquainted,
They thought their intricate postures still in fashion.
Beyond, an oriel shows the garden: rolling
Lawns, neat shrubs where a sly satyr gazes
Hunched in the leaves, his stony eye controlling
From lake to quincunx that wide vista—mazes
Of shadow piercing a wilderness created
For delight. But, without more ado, *Ting*
Ting insists Aunt's bell, though, undefeated,
Jane taps her crop against her boot as if nothing
In all that world could prick her natural pleasure
In coming to tea, who is her Aunt's best treasure.

Clive Watkins

She Meditates Among Works of Art

*“Constantly choose rather to want less than
to have more.”*

—Thomas a Kempis

*“The stoical scheme of supplying our wants by
lopping off our desires is like cutting off our
feet when we want shoes.”*

—Jonathan Swift

Lord, teach me to be patient as these painted
figures bound in their frames, whose only passion
is permanence. And let me grow acquainted
with the docility of landscape, fashion
my days and nights to the slow pace of rolling
cornfields lifting to hills where one who gazes
gazes forever. Grant me the controlling
touch of the hand whose reticence amazes,
laying out bread, wine, fruit, until—created
out of the lust for grace, the singular doting
shared by monk and artist, never defeated—
the still life rises and lives, for feeding nothing.
Teach me, Lord, so to want, and call it pleasure,
as to persuade myself want is the treasure.

Rhina P. Espaillat

“Treasure be damned...”

Treasure be damned, the great ones said, and painted
pleasure, before they sculpted, if not passion,
nothing. Nothing, with which they were acquainted,
defeated them, as it defeated fashion,
doting on the delicacies its rolling
created. Nothing, on which no star gazes,
amazes the great ones beyond controlling.
Controlling nothing, the master of mazes
gazes on the pricked nature he created,
rolling on women's soul-hued treasures, doting,
fashion be damned. The great ones were defeated,
acquainted by delicacies with nothing.
Passion wept bright souls when it sculpted. Pleasure
painted nothing its mistress would not treasure.

H. L. Hix

Advice from the Old Model

Artistic license isn't all it's painted:
It's true he sometimes wants to move to passion
Before you've had the time to get acquainted,
But that's just flattery or arty fashion.
Take it from me, you won't spend much time rolling
Across the floor or in his bed: his gazes
Are usually less carnal than controlling,
And after all these years what still amazes
—Well, me at least—is how what he's created
Can look like Lust Incarnate's drooling dotting
And Lust is what he's certain he's defeated.
If you want that, you'll finish up with nothing.
It's painting he gets off on—that's his pleasure;
He'll paint, but probably not want, your treasure.

Dick Davis

Smoke and Nothing

They called him Daub—a crooked man who painted,
Whose Mr. Zig-Zag papers were a passion.
His arty students kept him well-acquainted
With love he couldn't have, their strange fashion
Of forsaking on the quad where he stood rolling
The joint he'd need for work. *Behold, there gazeth*
Eyes thou shalt not kiss, he thought, controlling
The urge to speak aloud. *Her look amazeth*
Like the torment of a perfect day, created
Only for the young. Some god a-doting
On them made sure Daub would be defeated,
His grappling nudes retailed for next-to-nothing.
Smoke and nothing gave him the bitter pleasure
He hauled into his studio like treasure.

David Mason

xx/xy

To play the female parts, an apprentice painted
his cheeks a lead-based white, belying passion;
his boyish hips, his swagger he acquainted
with cinches of Elizabethan fashion;
he glued his hair to keep his wig from rolling
like Anne Boleyn's, before all groundling gazes;
he schooled his labyrinthine voice, controlling
its pitch. A true falsetto still amazes.
For such as he was Juliet created;
Ophelia kept his audiences doting,
till adolescence left his skills defeated,
a sound & fury, signifying nothing.
The stubble of his age, a scribbler's pleasure,
his manhood robbed him of his only treasure.

Mike Alexander

To Melville, Near Death

after reading your letters to Hawthorne

In your fluid script, the image painted
 is of a young man overcome by passion
for an elder writer unacquainted
 with the impulsiveness of youth, its fashion
for overstatement, admiration rolling
 from your pen, your soul stirred as when one gazes
at another, finds oneself, and no controlling
 that blast of recognition that amazes.

Like Ahab, the portrait you created
 overwhelmed; you hadn't foreseen, doting
on each word, you'd be refused, defeated,
 your *eager agitation* brought to nothing,
intentions snuffed by circumstance's pleasure:
 The sailor's tattooed skin?—unrealized treasure.

Christine Casson

Feminine Endings

Picture her photographed, but never painted—
Plainly the object of a common passion
With which more than a few have been acquainted,
And to which some have been true in their fashion.
Some saw her head thrown back, her grey eyes rolling;
Few knew how to avert the gorgon gazes
Through which she saw her way to their controlling.
But more than all of this, what still amazes
Is all the hatred that her looks created.
So many fell into a trance, a doting,
They never knew when they had been defeated
By glances meant for them . . . but good for nothing.
So all of those who'd thought to take their pleasure,
Consoled themselves with spoils, and not with treasure.

Len Krisak

Garboesque

Not Mona Lisa, but Garbo painted
as Sphinx in silence—sublime, the passion
solitude dared inspire. Acquainted
with the ennui behind her eyes, fashion
tempered lithe smolder, as the rolling
camera reeled in audiences gazing
at a mobile face beyond controlling.
Did this Swede slouch forth, loose-hipped, amazing,
or was hers the aloof splendor created
by brooding skies and Svengalis doting
on long lashes, polished shoulders? Un-defeated,
she fled time's mirror and the press, but nothing
more could coax Greta to scowl for our pleasure.
Into New York she plunged, clutching her treasure.

Jacqueline Kolosov

Off Cape San Blas

The storm—far-sighted pointillist—has painted
St. Vincent's churning waters with a passion
lost on us. Our eyes are too acquainted
with details to perceive the picture's fashion.
We're miles from shore, and jellyfish keep rolling
like stray stipples in the waves. Our gazes
skip from each white dot's controlling
presence to the whole. Edgeless, it amazes.

Our captain nets one. The uncreated
light of God congeals there for our doting—
but not our touch. Our relevance defeated,
he sets it back into the water, noting
the late hour, that the day has been his pleasure.
Our eyes keep hoarding jellyfish like treasure.

Peter Estherson

At Sea

It's all wrong, how *to be adored* is painted
wonderful: To drive a man to passion—
that's what they think they want. They're not acquainted
with a force that spins them in the fashion
swimmers know who give themselves to the rolling
violet ocean. What—a man who gazes,
doting, at me? Someone *I'm* controlling?
Someone my merest gesture so amazes
up he bobs like a puppet I've created?
Let me be the one to do the doting.
Flailed in the breakers, keep me there, defeated,
drowning in lungfuls of cold desire, with nothing
firm in my arms—and keep the glittery pleasure
under the scuttling sea-things like a treasure.

Deborah Warren

Twenty Years to Life

Forget the picture the defense team painted—
her schemes were colored more by pride than passion.
Note these two were just recently acquainted,
though he did dump her in a nasty fashion.
Soon, charges for exotic things were rolling
in on his Visa card. Her stalker's gazes
and rage about his calling her "controlling"
turned into a campaign that still amazes
detectives; countless websites she created
portrayed him as a fraud, her as a doting
and loyal lover. Utterly defeated,
he begged for mercy, but she offered nothing.
Whispers about his freak death gave her pleasure
that only psychopaths could truly treasure.

A.M. Juster

A Clear View from the Roof

Up on the roof the workman who by now has painted
All but the last of twenty skylights—PAINT IS OUR PASSION
His van's gilded sign—would like to get acquainted
With one of the girls lunching in the sun. (From the fashion
Of their dress they could be clerks.) He lounges near by, rolling
With awkward fingers a cigarette, lights up and gazes
Past dazzling windows at the view the roof's controlling
Height affords, which on clear days—as today—amazes.
The trim brunette he has his eye on has created
An untidy nest of cushions from which she casts a doting
Glance from time to time, though he, as if defeated,
His wife just dead, stands silent and can think of nothing
When she offers him a grape, ruffling with pleasure,
But far hills, unquiet waters, the wind's glittering treasure.

Clive Watkins

The Usual Trip

Your Uncle Will's old Chevy, freshly painted,
throbs more with octane maybe than with passion,
panting exhaust beside the curb, acquainted
all too well with idling out of fashion.

Still, you might take a spin. You get it rolling,
leave gawkers eating dust. Their startled gazes,
grudging, shift out of jeer: with some controlling,
this is a vehicle that still amazes.

And then? The road you jounce down was created
to string along the lover's timeworn doting
through mire and misdirection till, defeated,
he stalls on his deserted highway. Nothing
will come of nothing? It is the sonnet's pleasure
to turn those wrong turns into jingling treasure.

Robert B. Shaw

Wrecker on a Wrecker

The high plains long last light last night painted
our patio the spanking pink of passion,
sky brushed to a slutty blush, acquainted
with shadows. All summer it had been our fashion
to wait until the stars and Mars came rolling
over before we'd take our cocktail gazes
inside. But an omen was coming on (controlling
our plot) which still the last light's flight amazes:

a wrecker on a wrecker passed, created
a ruckus with the racks, chains, anti-doting
the juniper sedative rest of our rest. Defeated,
we fled the yellow lights, hoping nothing
coming from the warning. Summer's pleasure
over, we buried ourselves in bed like treasure.

John Poch

On the Nearest Pass of Mars in 60,000 Years

War or Strife—yes, you were always painted
Incarnadine, hematic, flushed with passion,
Sanguine—we depicted you acquainted
With ruby hues the rage in mortal fashion.
And yet to see you ever closer, rolling
Elliptical through emptiness, our gazes
Are met now with a gaze past our controlling,
Red as an eyeball through which blood amazes,
And stony blind. Although we have created
Gods and goddesses of loathing, doting,
They neither love nor hate us, are defeated
By telescopes that taper into nothing,
A stare reflecting on itself, a pleasure
Cold and ferric, nothing we can treasure.

A.E. Stallings

Ordinary

When we were small, would either one have painted
A future like today? One time, your passion
Was to travel: a woman explorer acquainted
With valleys near the heavens, and every fashion
Of getting there—pontoon-boat, sledge, or rolling
Howdah. I was the kind of boy who gazes
At secret agents in the movies, dreams of controlling
Masterminds who would subdue us, amazes
With breathless close escapes from traps created
To exquisitely destroy me. But now we're doting
On a glass of table wine, not yet defeated
By a day of tasks that come to almost nothing.
 How did such dailiness become our pleasure—
 My lost pilgrim, your captured spy, our buried treasure?

William Wenthe

The Dwelling

I wish I could unhex this house we painted
with our desire, furnished with our passion
long ago. But I'm too well acquainted
with its past occupants to hope to fashion

a mere abode from it: it is still rolling
in ghosts, shot through with a presence that gazes
on me from every wall and beam, controlling
the mood, invading all rooms.

It amazes,

bewilders: it died hard, what we created.
And it haunts harder, fluttering a doting
eye at me, grinning, not to be defeated
by drink or company, daunted by nothing

I throw at it—a phantom of old pleasure
lost, a mirage, a memory I treasure.

Loren Graham

Passion Reconsidered

We hurriedly picked a four-room flat just painted,
Furnished solely by our youthful passion,
You and I, newly-married, more acquainted
With our bodies than ourselves. The latest fashion
Soon lost its early charm for us as, rolling
Rumpled from bed, we met our newborn's gazes.
How foolish I could be, yet still controlling.
The more we age, the more it still amazes,
The girl I chose, a woman you created!
Life gave us notice: grow, or die as doting
Lovers, you as well as I—defeated—
Had passions overplayed, then left us nothing.
We left behind those maiden rooms of pleasure
That now we gently mock, as well as treasure.

Don Kimball

Nature's Hand

Do you know the place where our wall was painted
without a base or sealant? Summer's passion
scorched her. Now how the trollop strips! Acquainted
with the dizzy-bee-buzz wind, the white-fly season, fashion
of weather, weathered and weathering to a rolling
preference for decrepitude. Her gaze is
tawdry, wood-warped, come-hither, and controlling.
A wall *should* be so simple; while a maze is
a way out, a way in. Frustration in the middle. I do things
with intention, am defeated
by some rebellious detail past my noting.
So I re-take the brush with complex pleasure:
to master this mistress, like me—resistant, tree-sure.

Jenny Factor

The Master-Mistress Replies

Just who is this hermaphrodite you've painted
With such a burst of voyeuristic passion?
Will he, with whom you claim to be acquainted,
Not cringe when you, in none too nimble fashion,
Have praised as "less false" eyes yet false in rolling?
Your own eye blackens that on which it gazes!
It's you who are, in all those hues, controlling,
Your wit, and not its subject, that amazes.
Do you parrot verses that a girl created?
How else can one explain such painful doting
On younger men, that you could feel defeated,
Imagining matches Nature brings to nothing?
The pens that please for play, and play for pleasure,
Should better cherish loves they claim to treasure.

Anthony Lombardy

“A face is a face...”

A face is a face, no matter how it's painted;
Bones, and the deep heart, underlie this passion.
I would be blind if too closely acquainted
With every mood or look features can fashion.
Wise eyes can see that blindness comes with rolling,
And fluttering obscures the warmest gazes;
Wise ears can hear—without silence controlling
A word of it—each word that love amazes.
Our love is free. Habits have not created
Your nature, which can set my heart a-doting,
Woman or man. Nothing in you has defeated
My love, and my love needs to defeat nothing.
Because we've sounded honest depths for pleasure,
They will not hinder us or hurt this treasure.

Annie Finch

Take That, Plato

Obliged to choose between live flesh and painted,
the actor's simulacrum and true passion,
the hero, and his counterfeit acquainted
with nothing military but the fashion
(trendy fatigues that draw the nymphette's rolling,
roving eye, and anchor her fond gazes),
I cannot choose. The claim of truth controlling
my soul, and art's contrivance that amazes;
the fictions made by mind, the God-created,
move me in equal measure, keep me doting
on fact and fantasy—alike defeated,
in time, by time that vetoes both to nothing.
I shall have both, then, while I can, all pleasure
heaping, for soul and sense, its mingled treasure.

Rhina P. Espallat

Contributors

Stephen Cushman is Robert C. Taylor Professor of English at the University of Virginia. In addition to two books of literary criticism and a meditation on the Civil War, he has published two volumes of poetry, *Blue Pajamas* (1998) and *Cussing Lesson* (2002).

Mike Alexander moderates an on-line sonnet workshop at www.sonnets.org and is currently an associate editor for the *Lyric Poetry Review*.

Christine Casson is completing a manuscript of poems and is working on a study of the poetic sequence titled *Sequence and Time Signature: A Study in Poetic Orchestration*. She teaches at Emerson College, and is Executive Coordinator of PEN New England.

Dick Davis is a Professor of Persian at Ohio State University. He has published seven collections of poetry; the most recent is *Belonging* (Swallow / Ohio University Press, 2002; Anvil Press, UK, 2002) that was chosen as a Book of the Year by *The Economist*.

Rhina P. Espallat's books include *Lapsing to Grace*; *Where Horizons Go*; *Rehearsing Absence*; *The Shadow I Dress In*; and three chapbooks, *Greatest Hits 1942–2001*, *Mundo y Palabra/The World and the Word*, and *The Story-teller's Hour*. She and her sculptor husband, Alfred Moskowitz, live in Newburyport, MA.

Peter Estheron lives in Forest, Mississippi, where he breeds Chinese Shar-Peis. "Off Cape San Blas" is his first published poem.

Jenny Factor's first book, *Unraveling at the Name* (Copper Canyon Press, 2002), was a finalist for the Lambda Literary Award. She writes and edits in Pasadena, California.

Annie Finch's books of poetry include *Eve* (Story Line, 1997), *Calendars* (Tupelo, 2003), and *The Encyclopedia of Scotland* (Salt Publishing, 2004). Forthcoming are a translation of Louise Labe's *Complete Poems* (Chicago) and a book of essays, *The Body of Poetry*, in the Poets on Poetry series from University of Michigan Press.

Loren Graham teaches creative writing at Carroll College in Helena, Montana. His first book of poetry, *Mose*, was published in 1994 by Wesleyan University Press. The work published here is from a forthcoming collection of sonnets and prose poems entitled *The Ring Scar*.

H. L. Hix's recent books include *Wild and Whirling Words: A Poetic Conversation*, *as Easy as Lying: Essays on Poetry*, and a poetry collection called *Surely as Birds Fly*.

A.M. Juster's *The Secret Language of Women* won the 2002 Richard Wilbur Award. *Longing for Laura*, his translations of Petrarch, was published in 2001. He has twice won the Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award.

Don Kimball is a retired family therapist living in Concord, NH. He began writing verse nine years ago at the age of 51. His work has appeared in *The Formalist*, *The Lyric*, *Edge City Review*, *Iambs and Trochees*, and various journals around New England.

Len Krisak's two chapbooks, *Midland* and *Fugitive Child*, came out in 1999 from Somers Rocks Press and Aralia Press, respectively. In 2000, his full-length collection *Even as We Speak* won the Richard Wilbur Prize. In 2004, his complete translation of Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* appeared in *PN Review*, U.K., and his new collection, *If Anything*, has just been published by WordTech Editions.

Jacqueline Kolosov has published two chapbooks, *Faberge* (Finishing Line, 2003) and *Danish Ocean* (Pudding House, 2003). Her young adult novel, *Grace from China*, was published in 2004.

Anthony Lombardy's second book of poems, *Antique Collecting*, was published in 2004 by WordTech Editions, which also published an abridged edition of his first collection, *Severe*, with a lengthy essay on poetic craft and theory. He is currently working on a long poem about the 1948 Israeli War of Independence.

David Mason's books include *The Buried Houses*, *The Country I Remember*, and *Arrivals*. He teaches at the Colorado College and lives in the mountains outside Colorado Springs.

John Poch's first book, *Poems*, is published by Orchises Press. He is the editor of *32 Poems Magazine*.

Robert B. Shaw teaches at Mount Holyoke College. His latest collection of poems, *Solving for X*, was published in 2002 by Ohio University Press as winner of the Hollis Summers Prize.

A.E. Stallings is an American poet residing in Greece. Her first book, *Archaic Smile*, won the 1999 Richard Wilbur Award.

Anne Stevenson has published twelve books of poetry, including *The Collected Poems 1955–1995* and, most recently, *Granny Scarecrow. Between the Iceberg and the Ship: Selected Essays*, (1998), was published by the University of Michigan Press.

Daniel Tobin is the author of three books of poems. *Where the World is Made* is a co-winner of the 1998 Katherine Bakeless Nason Prize. *Double Life* (Louisiana State University Press) was published in 2004, and *The Narrows* is forthcoming from Four Way Books in 2005.

Deborah Warren is the author of two poetry collections, *The Size of Happiness* (2003, Waywiser Press, London) and *Zero Meridian* (forthcoming in 2004, Ivan R. Dee). She received the 2001 Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award, the 2002 Robert Frost Award, and the 2003 New Criterion Poetry Prize.

Clive Watkins's collection, *Jigsaw*, was published by The Waywiser Press, London, UK, in 2003. He and his wife live in a small village on the edge of the Yorkshire Pennines.

William Wenthe has written two books of poems, *Birds of Hoboken* (Orchises, 1995, reprinted 2003) and *Not Till We Are Lost* (LSU Press, 2003).



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