

*No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change!
 Thy pyramids built up with newer might
 To me are nothing novel, nothing strange;
 They are but dressings of a former sight.
 Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire
 What thou dost foist upon us that is old,
 And rather make them born to our desire
 Than think that we before have heard them told.
 Thy registers and thee I both defy,
 Not wond'ring at the present, nor the past;
 For thy records and what we see doth lie,
 Made more or less by thy continual haste.
 *This I do vow, and this shall ever be:
 I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.**

The sudden negative address to Time is a dramatic shift from the intimate memories of the speaker's friend in Sonnet 122. Both poems are concerned with records of the past, but on different scales and in different tones. The power of Time is now slighted, even threatened; this is quite the opposite of the opening sonnets of the sequence (numbers 2 and 19, for example), though the seeds of defiance are sown there, too.

The speaker vows that he will not change. Time, he says, has built new pyramids mightier than the old, but not better. (This may refer to actual structures built in London, but the important point is that these monuments, no matter how grand, are imitative.) They may seem novel to the world (l. 3), but Time is simply passing them off as such. In actuality they are "dressings" of former buildings. (l. 4) In the second quatrain the speaker argues that because our lives are short we (the world) admire what is foisted off on us as old (l. 6), instead of making things "born to our desire." (l. 7)

The sestet is a cry of defiance. The speaker is not in love with Time's old records ("registers," l. 9) nor is he in awe of things present. All that Time has done lies because it is made greater or less by his haste, which constantly changes everything. Whatever we may think of this causality and the speaker's logic, we can understand his skepticism, which seems to be deepening.

In the couplet, the speaker loops back to his loved one. No matter how Time's sharp scythe may threaten, the speaker will be true. Or so he believes at this point. How true has *he* been?