

*Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
 Is lust in action, and till action, lust
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight;
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had,
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad.
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof and proved, a very woe;
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows yet none knows well,
 To shun the heav'n that leads men to this hell.*

While Sonnet 128 depicts a civilized, intimate situation in which thoughts of sex play a pleasant part, Sonnet 129 dramatically denounces lust in its rawest state. Together they portray the extremes of controlled and lawless sensuality, emblemized by music and sweet concord on the one hand and brainless savagery on the other. In Sonnet 129, "lust in action" is defined as the expenditure of "spirit," (vital power, in general; semen, specifically) in a "waste of shame" (l. 1). This is a wild contrast to the acceptable touching and the wished-for kisses in Sonnet 128.

Next comes a helter-skelter outpouring of negative adjectives to describe the chaos bred by instinct. (ll. 3-4) The first is *perjured*, which denotes breaking an oath—a form of betrayal—and implies general corruption. For emphasis, the idea is recapitulated in the last phrase of the list: "not to trust." Lust also gives great promise, but as soon as it is enjoyed it betrays its promise of complete satisfaction and is "despised straight." (l. 5)

Lust is also irrational and acts like a poison, a "swallowed bait" (l. 7) taken by an animal who is trapped by an unknown hand—a devilish design. Always mad, whether in pursuit or in possession, it is also extreme, never moderate as virtue should be. The list of lust's attributes closes with two before-

and-after contrasts: the bliss of the act versus the woe of the result and the joy of expectation versus the shattered dream of its aftermath.

In probably the most intensely dramatic of all the couplets, the speaker reaches the highest pitch of his denunciation with a warning. It is "the world" that knows the right path, but it forever fails to follow its own advice: "to shun the heaven that leads men to this hell." (l. 14) This self-betrayal is inevitable, and the last word *hell* reminds the reader that lust is one of the Seven Deadly Sins.