

*Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
 And all my soul, and all my every part;
 And for this sin there is no remedy,
 It is so grounded inward in my heart.
 Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
 No shape so true, no truth of such account,
 And for my self mine own worth do define,
 As I all other in all worths surmount.
 But when my glass shows me my self indeed,
 Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity,
 Mine own self-love quite contrary I read;
 Self so self-loving were iniquity.
 'Tis thee (my self) that for my self I praise,
 Painting my age with beauty of thy days.*

The opening of Sonnet 62 gives the reader a jolt. Where has the speaker's humility gone? He begins by confessing the sin of self-love, the same sin he chided the youth for in Sonnet 1. At first the tone seems to have darkened since it has carried over from Sonnet 61. The sin he imputes to himself has no remedy because it is grounded in the heart—the seat of true emotion—as opposed to the eyes. But the serious self-indictment of the opening, which ends in despair and elicits pathos, suddenly turns in the next quatrain to braggadocio quite out of character. Can it be that he really believes no face or shape to be as gracious as his own? The reader begins to tumble to the comic usurpation of the friend's virtues, especially when he declares at the end of the octave that the worth he sees in himself surmounts that of everyone else. The hyperbole of his self-description is too absurd to be believed.

The third quatrain gives the sonnet another twist by reverting to the speaker's previous insistence on his age and its attendant decay. (This, by the way, is the traditional pose of Elizabethan sonneteers, no matter what their ages.) His mirror now shows his true self. His face is dramatically described as "Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity." (l. 10) Therefore the speaker reverses his opinion of himself as a paragon. His self-love now becomes an "iniquity." (l. 12)

The couplet takes a final turn by making the youth—now wittily

addressed as “my self”—the object of praise. The visual effect on the reader is almost comic: In the final line the speaker repairs the ravages of time on his face by “painting” it with his friend’s youthful beauty. The tours de force of this sonnet are clever in their use of the four-part structure, but even more so in the dramatic portrayal of the speaker, who fuses self-love and self-deprecation but returns to the continuing adoration of his idol. Adonis is back on his pedestal.