

*Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
 But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
 How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
 Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
 O how shall summer's honey breath hold out
 Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days
 When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
 Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?
 O fearful meditation: where, alack,
 Shall time's best jewel from time's chest lie hid?
 Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
 Or who his spoil or beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright.*

It should be no great surprise now that in Sonnet 65 the paradox of black ink making love shine bright returns, wave-like, as a re-incarnation of the black lines of Sonnet 63, which preserve the lover's perpetual green. The famous opening, "Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea" carries over three images from Sonnet 64 and combines them with *stone* to give exceptional strength to the stressed syllables. The "mortal rage" of Sonnet 64 is echoed in the rage of "sad mortality" in lines two and three of Sonnet 65. As a dramatic contrast, Shakespeare introduces the flower as the last word in the first quatrain. Note that the word *flower* puts a weak syllable at the end of the line; "a rose" would not have the same touch of pathos. It also gives a strong contrast to the rhyming word *power*.

In the second quatrain, "summer's honey breath" (an allusion to Sonnet 18) is at war with "batt'ring days," a parallel to the war between land and sea in Sonnet 64. The phrase "rocks impregnable" is given weight by the trisyllabic word and occurs in the same position as "sad mortality" in line two, thus creating another subtle parallel to the imagery of warfare. "Wrackful siege" and "batt'ring days" are resisted by "gates of steel," but there is no contest. The quatrain closes with the triumph of mortality: "Time decays" everything. (l. 8) All four phrases have the same syllabic rhythm: stressed, unstressed,

stressed — a kind of counterpoint to the iambic meter.

The sestet begins with the speaker's fear: his friend ("time's best jewel") is under threat from time, the athletic thief of life, whose spoil is beauty. This time nothing can save the friend from death, unless there is a miracle. Once more the ink is black, but now it may preserve the light of love. The threat, though the same as that in Sonnet 64, seems stronger. However, the reward of the miracle is love's untarnished and imperishable glory. After the five questions in the body of the poem comes something resembling hope.