

*Ah, wherefore with infection should he live,
 And with his presence grace impiety,
 That sin by him advantage should achieve
 And lace itself with his society?
 Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
 And steal dead seeing of his living hue?
 Why should poor beauty indirectly seek
 Roses of shadow since his rose is true?
 Why should he live, now nature bankrupt is,
 Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins?
 For she hath no exchequer now but his,
 And proud of many, lives upon his gains.
 O him she stores to show what wealth she had
 In days long since, before these last so bad.*

The tirade against the world and the times intensifies in Sonnet 67. Immediately the tone is darkened by the word *infection*, which applies primarily to morals. The speaker's weariness shifts to vigorous denunciation of corrupt society and his friend's taking part in it. Still defending his friend, the speaker claims that the world has gained an advantage by his friend's gracious presence. Fashionable society tries to imitate the young man's ideal beauty, which is real, by using cosmetics, but it only manages to apply to its cheeks roses that look dead – hence “roses of shadow” (l. 8)

Each quatrain is an indignant rhetorical question, throwing the blame not on the speaker's friend but on the world's impious behavior. The third quatrain, however, shifts attention to the unique position of the friend and Nature. Now that the friend is lost to social predators, Nature is bankrupt; there are no more like him and there are no resources in Nature's treasury beyond his existence. There is no point in letting him expire if he cannot be replaced. Therefore Nature keeps him back, storing him to prove that she owned his beauty (her wealth) in past times.

Once more, Shakespeare employs hyperboles, fantasies and rhetorical questions to praise the young man's beauty and condemn the sinful world, now in a struggle with Nature to own his ideal beauty. Note that the friend may be the victim, more of an icon to be stolen by false society than the true individual he is. In brief, this poem takes a long step into the realm of complete disillusion.