

*Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
 When beauty lived and died as flow'rs do now,
 Before these bastard signs of fair were born
 Or durst inhabit on a living brow
 Before the golden tresses of the dead,
 The right of sepulchers, were shorn away,
 To live a second life on second head
 Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:
 In him those holy antique hours are seen
 Without all ornament, itself and true,
 Making no summer of another's green,
 Robbing no old to dress his beauty new;
 And him as for a map doth nature store,
 To show false art what beauty was of yore.*

Shakespeare again shows his ingenuity in creating variations on a theme by taking the substance of Sonnet 67 and changing its atmosphere and emotional impact through stunning imagery. His friend is still the model of classical beauty, but only his cheek is mentioned specifically; the brow and the hair belong to others. The touch of the macabre comes in the focus on wig-making, in which the wig is made an emblem of loss. Wigs are “bastard signs” (l. 3) of beauty. “The golden tresses of the dead” by rights should go to the grave unshorn, not given “a second life on a second head.” (ll. 5, 7) The imagery is ghoulish in its implication of grave robbery. In the octave, the word *dead* appears twice, and *died* occurs once – all in conjunction with beauty. Everything seems faded, shorn of glory, living only in sad recollections.

The sestet begins with “holy and antique hours,” those times when “he” has manifested in true, unornamented beauty. The “summer” of line eleven harkens back to Sonnet 18, cleverly linked now to the false or stolen beauty of “another’s green.” Without specifically labeling this deteriorating world as sinful, Shakespeare makes it seem so, especially when the word *robbing* pops up in line twelve.

When “he” returns in the couplet, the sonnet comes full circle with the idea of the friend (who is not addressed) as a map for Nature to show the difference between “false art” (l. 14) and the true beauty of “days outworn” (l. 1). In Sonnet 67 the friend was Nature’s exchequer--a treasure; now he is subtly diminished from treasure to map.