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The Breeding Sonnets

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The Breeding Sonnets

Jack Bylund, Sierra Copeland, Wade Evenson, Deidra Hall, Sarah Lueckler

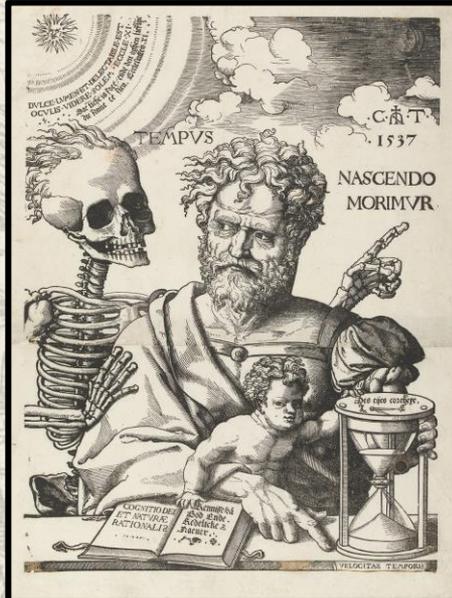
Shakespeare's Sonnet 12

When I do count the clock that tells the time
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night,
When I behold the violent past prime
And sable curls all silvered o'er with white;
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves,
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard;
Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
And die as fast as they see others grow
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defense
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

As the narrator observes the clock and the decay of various living things to death, he accepts that the young man's physical beauty, which he admires, will be destroyed by Time's scythe. Only having children will preserve the young man's beauty.

Themes of the Breeding Sonnets

Cycles: Rising to ripeness, falling to decay | Day and Night | Doublesidendess of Time | Death | Beauty's Effect | Sense of Sight | Nature | Seasons | Immortality of Art | Need to Breed | Repetition | Gender Constructs | Inadequacy |

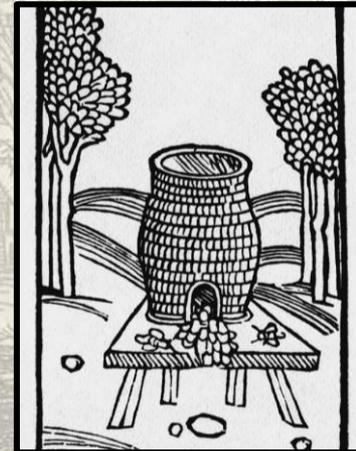


The Transience, Cornelis Anthonisz,
1537

While Shakespeare expressed intense passion in convincing the fair young man of his need to breed, he does eventually come to the conclusion that the beloved will be eternally preserved through the sonnets. This course of thought is surely the result of the beloved's resignation towards rearing children, and the poet's need to preserve the beauty he is so enamored with.

Summary of The Breeding Sonnets

The twenty (sonnets 1-20) breeding sonnets universally focus on the narrator's worry that the beauty of the fair young man will pass away with time. The narrator urges him to reproduce, often scolding him for not doing so. Shakespeare writes through a series of natural metaphors to exemplify the passing of time, describing the beloved in the spring quickly approaching the inevitable aging of winter. He finds it imperative to explain to his love the fleeting nature of his youth and beauty, and the duty he has to apprehend this injustice through children.



Bees in a bee-hive,
Petrus de Crescentiis,
circa 1490-1495



Death with a Scythe,
Anonymous, 1489