

THE PRISON YEARS

THE DEATH OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I

YEAR THREE IN THE TOWER

Sonnet 105 *Never Kept Seat in One* 24 March 1603

*Edward de Vere marks the death of Elizabeth. In the final line, he refers to the "three themes in one" (the family triangle of Elizabeth, Southampton and Oxford) that have "never kept seat in one." That is, they have never sat on the throne within the person of their "one" royal son, Henry Wriothesley (**One for All, All for One**), who should have succeeded her as Henry IX. The sonnet itself is a solemn hymn or prayer to Southampton, the "little Love-God" of Sonnet 154, the "Lord of my love" of Sonnet 26, the "God in love" of Sonnet 110 and "my lovely Boy" of Sonnet 126, a king or god on earth. The verse also complements and demonstrates the "invention" of the Sonnets set forth in Sonnet 76, using the adjectives "fair, kind, and true" as examples of "dressing old words new" and "varying to other words" as part of the special language.*

Sonnet 105

Translation

Let not my love be called Idolatry,
Nor my beloved as an Idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be,
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.

Let not my love for my son be called idolatry,
Nor my divine royal son be seen as an idol,
Since my sonnets to him are all the same,
To him, of him, always such, and forever so.

Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence;
Therefore my verse to constancy confined,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.

My son is of Eliza's blood, always our kin,
Always naturally born with his royal blood!
Therefore my sonnets are confined to him,
Only containing him without ever wavering.

Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words,
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.

His royal, natural truth is my sole topic,
Royal, natural, and true rights, using other words,
And this variation exhausts my "invention" –
Three themes in one heir, giving appearance of great diversity.

Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,
Which three, till now, never kept seat in one.

Three family members have lived separately,
And never sat on the throne in his one person.

(This sonnet correlates with Sonnet 152, the final verse of the Dark Lady series)

Sonnet 105

1 LET NOT MY LOVE BE CALLED IDOLATRY,

MY LOVE = my love for my royal son; “Lord of my love” – Sonnet 26, line 1; **IDOLATRY** = worship of a false god, i.e., of a false god on earth or king; in fact Oxford will end the diary, just before his final farewell, by offering himself in holy sacrifice to his son as a deity: “And take thou *my oblation*, poor but free,/ Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,/ But only *mutual render, only me for thee*” – Sonnet 125, lines 10-12; “But value dwells not in particular will: it holds his estimate and dignity as well wherein ‘tis precious of itself as in the prizer. ‘Tis mad *idolatry* to make the service greater than the god” – *Troilus and Cressida*, 2.2.54-58

2 NOR MY BELOVED AS AN IDOL SHOW,

MY BELOVED = my royal son; “As after some oration fairly spoke by a *beloved prince*” – *The Merchant of Venice*, 3.2.178-179; “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is *my beloved Son*, in whom I am well pleased” – Gospel of Mathew, 3.17; **IDOL** = false god; whereas, on the contrary, Southampton was “the little Love-God” who was born a rightful king, i.e., a god on earth; and he will be a “God in love” in Sonnet 110, line 12

3 SINCE ALL ALIKE MY SONGS AND PRAISES BE

ALL = Southampton; **ALL ALIKE** = emphasizing “all” and “all” for Southampton; **MY SONGS AND PRAISES** = my sonnets, which are hymns or prayers to him

4 TO ONE, OF ONE, STILL SUCH, AND EVER SO

TO ONE = to Southampton; **OF ONE** = consisting of Southampton, about him and filled with his life and royal blood; **STILL** = always; “And you and love are *still* my argument” – Sonnet 76, line 10; **EVER** = E. Ver, Edward de Ver, *Ever or Never*; “Since *every one* hath, *every one, one shade*,/ And you, but *one*, can *every shadow* lend” – Sonnet 53, lines 3-4; “If this be error and upon me proved,/ I *never* writ nor no man *ever* loved” – Sonnet 116, lines 13-14; Booth notes that this line echoes the *Gloria Patri*: “Glory be to the Father, and to the Sonne, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and *ever* shall be: world without end.”

“Shakespeare’s poems, dedications, and Sonnets were all to *one* patron and *one* friend – “To *one*, of *one*, still such, and ever so” – and that *one* was Henry the third Earl of Southampton” - *Charlotte Stopes, 1904*

“Shakespeare was playing upon the Southampton motto” - *T. W. Baldwin, 1950*

5 KIND IS MY LOVE TODAY, TOMORROW KIND,

KIND = related by nature or blood; natural royal child of Elizabeth; “Birth, origin, descent; the station, place, or property belonging to one by birth” – *OED*; “A little more than *kin*, and less than *kind*” – *Hamlet*, 1.2.65; “Be as thy presence is, gracious and *kind*” – Sonnet 10, line 11; “Your most assured and loving brother, as *ever* in mine own affection, in all *kindness* and *kindred*” – Oxford to his brother-in-law Robert Cecil, May 1601; “There she lost a noble and renowned brother, in his love toward her ever most *kind and natural*” – *Measure for Measure*, 3.1.218-220; **MY LOVE** = my royal son; “*My love* looks fresh” – Sonnet 107, line 10, when Southampton emerges from the Tower on April 10, 1603; **TODAY, TOMORROW** = echoing the progress of this diary according to days on the calendar; “tomorrow” also represents the future, when his son’s *kindness* or relationship to the Queen by nature will be known by readers of the Sonnets.

6 STILL CONSTANT IN A WONDROUS EXCELLENCE:

STILL CONSTANT = always and constantly; “In *constant* truth to bide so firm and sure” – Oxford’s sonnet, early 1570s, to Elizabeth, line 9; “*Crowned* with faith and *constant* loyalty” – *Henry V*, 2.2.5; **WONDROUS** = royal; **WON** = *One* = Southampton, *One for All, All for One*; **WONDROUS EXCELLENCE** = glorious royalty, alluding to Your Excellency; “As by your

high imperial Majesty I had in charge at my depart for France, as procurator to *your Excellence*" –
2 *Henry VI*, 1.1.1-3

7 THEREFORE MY VERSE TO CONSTANCY CONFINED,

MY VERSE = The Sonnets; same as "Why is *my verse* so barren of new pride" – Sonnet 76, line 1; **TO CONSTANCY CONFINED** = confined to this single topic, which is the constancy of his royal blood; "*Constant in spirit*, not swerving with the *blood*" – *Henry V*, 2.2.133); "But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,/ And, *constant stars*, in them I read such art/ As truth and beauty shall together thrive" – Sonnet 14, lines 9-11; "But you like none, none you, for *constant heart*" – Sonnet 53, line 14; "In *constant truth* to bide so firm and sure" – Oxford's early sonnet, 1570s, to Elizabeth; "Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy *constancy*" – Sonnet 152, line 10, to Elizabeth; **CONFINED** = a play on Southampton's confinement in the Tower, which now continues after Queen Elizabeth's death; Southampton has been "supposed as *forfeit to a confined doom*" – Sonnet 107, line 4; "Denmark's a *prison* ... A goodly one, in which there are many *confines, wards and dungeons*" – *Hamlet*, 2.2.244-246

8 ONE THING EXPRESSING, LEAVES OUT DIFFERENCE.

ONE = Southampton, *One for All, All for One*; **ONE THING EXPRESSING** = "O know, sweet love, *I always write of you*./ And you and love are *still my argument*" – Sonnet 76, lines 9-10; **LEAVES OUT DIFFERENCE** = leaves out all other topics

9 FAIR, KIND, AND TRUE, IS ALL MY ARGUMENT,

All three adjectives, related to Southampton himself, are interchangeable one with the other as part of Oxford's special language

FAIR = royal; "From *fairest* creatures we desire increase" – Sonnet 1, line 1

KIND = natural by blood; "Shall *kin with kin*, and *kind with kind* confound" – *Richard II*, 4.1.141

TRUE = rightful; related to Oxford, *Nothing Truer than Truth*; "And your *true* rights be termed a Poet's rage" – Sonnet 17, line 11

ALL = Southampton; **ALL MY ARGUMENT** = The argument or topic of my Sonnets is "all" about Southampton, which includes *fair, kind and true* as inextricable from love or royal blood: "O know, sweet love, I always write of you./ And *you and love* are still *my argument*" – Sonnet 76, lines 9-10; "For all my reign hath been but as a scene acting that *argument* ... so thou the garland wear'st successively" – the King to his son the Prince in 2 *Henry IV*, 4.5.197-201

10 FAIR, KIND, AND TRUE, VARYING TO OTHER WORDS;

VARYING TO OTHER WORDS = Using these and other words to express the same thing about him, i.e., always to express his royal blood, but using various words to refer continually to the same topic: "So all my best is *dressing old words new*" – Sonnet 76, line 11, i.e., Oxford uses *fair* to mean "royal" and then he varies this adjective to *kind* or *true*, etc., to create an appearance of variety around a consistently single topic, i.e., around the "love" or royal blood of his son

11 AND IN THIS CHANGE IS MY INVENTION SPENT:

IN THIS CHANGE = by changing one word for another; this is the way I am able to write poetry on the surface while incorporating my message at the same time; **MY INVENTION** = My special language created for the Sonnets; "And keep *invention* in a noted weed" – Sonnet 76, line 6; "For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,/ When *thou thyself dost give invention light*?" – Sonnet 38, lines 7-8; **SPENT** = used up, exhausted; "So all my best is dressing old words new./ *Spending* again what is already *spent*" – Sonnet 76, lines 11- 12

12 THREE THEMES IN ONE, WHICH WONDROUS SCOPE AFFORDS.

THREE THEMES IN ONE = Recalling the Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost; echoing the family triangle of Elizabeth, Oxford and Southampton as "*all one, ever the same*" in Sonnet 76, line 5); **IN ONE** = in Southampton; i.e., all three live through the one royal son; ("subsumed in

one theme; embodied in one person” – Booth); **WONDROUS SCOPE** = marvelous royalty as well as the appearance of amazing variety; scope of royalty; scope of justice, as in: “making your wills the scope of justice” – *Timon of Athens*, 5.4.4-5; “scope” appears in Sonnets 29, 52, 61, 103 and 105; **WON** = *One* = Southampton

13 FAIR, KIND, AND TRUE HAVE OFTEN LIVED ALONE

ALONE = the “all” and “one” of Southampton’s motto; the three members of the family triangle have most often been separated; these three qualities, possessed by Southampton, have never been joined to make him king

14 WHICH THREE, TILL NOW, NEVER KEPT SEAT IN ONE

TILL NOW = up to right now, this moment of the Queen’s death; **NEVER** = Edward de Vere, *Ever or Never*; **NEVER KEPT SEAT** = Never sat on the throne; “With due observance of *thy godlike seat*” – *Troilus and Cressida*, 1.3.31; “Now, by my *seat’s* right royal majesty” – *Richard II*, 2.1.120; “The supreme *seat*, the throne majestic” – *Richard III*, 3.7.117; “the *seat* of majesty” – *Richard III*, 3.7.168; “Methought I *sat in the seat of majesty*” – *2 Henry VI*, 1.2.36; “Have shaken Edward from the regal *seat*” – *3 Henry VI*, 4.6.2; “Think’st thou that I will leave my *kingly throne*, wherein my grandsire and my father *sat*?” – *3 Henry VI*, 1.1.128-129

“I told you my *seat* has been the *seat* of kings, and I will have no rascal to succeed me; and who should succeed me but a king?”

- Elizabeth to Lord Admiral Howard in January 1603

IN ONE = In the person of Southampton (“one”) as successor to the throne and crowned king; “Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,/ Who *all in one, one* pleasing note do sing” – Sonnet 8, lines 11-12

NOTE: The parallel Dark Lady series ends now (upon the Queen’s death) with Sonnet 152, in which Oxford also refers to love, kindness, truth, and constancy: “And all my honest faith in thee is lost./ For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep *kindness*./ Oaths of thy *love*, thy *truth*, thy *constancy*./ And to enlighten thee gave eyes to blindness” – Sonnet 152, lines 8-11