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Surveying the Afterlives of Shakespeare's Poetry in the Arden Shakespeare's *On Shakespeare's Sonnets*[*]

Arden Shakespeare'in *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* Eseri'nde Shakespeare'in Şiirlerinin Sonraki Hayatlarına Genel Bakış

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Abstract

The Arden Shakespeare published a poetry collection titled *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* in 2016 in which several contemporary poets have responded to one Shakespearean sonnet of their choice. Most of the themes in the sonnets such as the transience of earthly life, the endurance of love, and the procreation of beauty are retained in their modern versions. However, recent approaches to these themes do not follow the sonnet tradition due to the poets' adherence to modern topics, as seen in the poems of Douglas Dunn, Jackie Kay, and Andrew Motion, and an emphasis on realism instead of the romanticised exaggerations in the sonnet genre, as observed in the poems by Alan Jenkins, Carol Ann Duffy, and Elaine Feinstein. In some of these poems, love for the beloved, for instance, is treated alternatively as a temporary feeling that cannot endure the passing of time. The platonic ideal of love for the beloved is reconstituted with a mother's compassion for her son. The idea of the procreation of beauty is replaced with an adoration of the regenerative power of nature. In some others, the influence of the contemporary context is evident with indications of urban images such as traffic, technology, and shopping malls. Through such examples, this paper aims to discuss some of the rewritten versions of Shakespeare's sonnets to explore the idea that recontextualisation and subversion of the source text are central to the practice of Shakespearean adaptation despite the initial tenet of the production of this particular collection, which is to celebrate Shakespeare's literary heritage.
Keywords: *On Shakespeare's Sonnets*, The Arden Shakespeare, Douglas Dunn, Jackie Kay, Andrew Motion, Alan Jenkins, Carol Ann Duffy, Elaine Feinstein, adaptation.

Öz

Arden Shakespeare Yayınları 2016 yılında bazı çağdaş şairlerin kendi seçtikleri bir Shakespeare sonesini yeniden yazarak katkıda bulundukları *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* başlıklı bir şiir koleksiyonu yayımlamıştır. Sone geleneğinde gözlemlenen yaygın temalar olan bu dünyanın geçiciliği, aşkın kalıcılığı, güzelliğin türetilmesi gibi birçok konu bu yeni şiir versiyonlarında da kullanılmıştır. Ancak, Douglas Dunn, Jackie Kay ve Andrew Motion gibi çağdaş şairlerin modern konulara bağlılığının ve Alan Jenkins, Carol Ann Duffy ve Elaine Feinstein gibi şairlerin adaptasyonlarının sonelerde görülen romantik ve abartılı söylem yerine benzer temalara realist yaklaşımlarının gösterdiği üzere, bu çağdaş şiir adaptasyonları sone geleneğinden oldukça farklıdır. Örneğin, bu şiirlerden bazılarında sevgiliye duyulan ölümsüz aşk, zamana karşı direnemeyen geçici bir duygu olarak ele alınır. Platonik aşk ideali, bir annenin oğluna duyduğu sevgi ile yer değiştirir. Güzelliğin yeni kuşaklarla devam ettirilmesi teması, doğanın yenileyici gücüne olan hayranlık fikriyle yer değiştirir. Bazı örneklerde çağdaş yaşamın kaçınılmaz etkisi, trafik, teknoloji ve alışveriş

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merkezleri gibi şehirlilikle ilgili sembollerle hatırlatılır. Arden Shakespeare'in bu yayınla güttüğü amacın Shakespeare'in edebî mirasını kutlamak olduğu bilinmektedir. Bu makalenin amacı ise bu koleksiyondaki Shakespeare sonelerinin yeniden yazım örneklerinden bazılarını incelemek ve kaynak eserleri yeni bir bağlamda değerlendirmenin ve onlara yıkıcı bir biçimde yaklaşmanın Shakespeare adaptasyonlarında esas olduğunu tartışmaktır.
Anahtar sözcükler: *On Shakespeare's Sonnets*, The Arden Shakespeare, Douglas Dunn, Jackie Kay, Andrew Motion, Alan Jenkins, Carol Ann Duffy, Elaine Feinstein, adaptasyon.

Introduction

Sing immortal Shakespeare's praise!
The song will cease, the stone will decay,
But his Name
And undiminished fame,
Shall never, never pass away.
(Garrick as cited in Holderness, 1988, p. xi)

In 2016, Bloomsbury Publishing's Arden Shakespeare printed a poetry collection titled *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* in which thirty popular contemporary poets responded to various Shakespearean sonnets of their choice. 2016 marked the quatercentenary of Shakespeare's death as a result of which a diversity of events and celebrations were held around the world to reiterate Shakespeare's career as a poet and playwright. Therefore, many institutions in the UK associated with Shakespeare's heritage such as the Globe Theatre, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, the Shakespeare Institute, Hogarth Shakespeare, and Royal Shakespeare Company organised events and productions related to his works. Such use of Shakespeare's texts by leading institutions in the country reminds one of Mark Fortier's (1996) comments on materialist uses of the poet as a cultural artefact: "Shakespeare is not only the name of a dead cultural worker, but also the name given to an ongoing sociocultural network and late capitalist industry" (p. 16). Similarly, the Arden Shakespeare published this collaboration of poets and contributed to a discussion of Shakespeare not only as a dramatist but also a sonneteer.

Most of the Shakespeare adaptations produced in this period share a common tenet: to justify the age-long claim regarding the universalism of Shakespeare's works. Shakespeare holds an unprecedented place in world literature with numerous rewritings and adaptations of his works on a global scale. Novels, dramatic compositions, movies, and even TV series have been produced worldwide as adaptations of his works. While some of these adaptations replicate the source texts without any clear critical agenda, some of the revisionary adaptations change the source to a significant extent, which shows that a new interpretation of the ideas embedded in Shakespeare's texts is essential. Such alternative approaches help uncover some of the critical and ideological matters in the source texts as well. Drawing on the Marxist interpretation of literary texts that pays attention to their socio-political connotations, Shakespeare's works also lend themselves to be interpreted from various ideological points. Adaptations are functional in this respect as they help us reconsider the ideological aspects of source texts by altering critical points in the sources. Such revisionary approaches to Shakespeare's works are more widespread in dramatic adaptations. While there are many dramatic and prose reworkings of Shakespeare's works, the Arden Shakespeare's *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* is the only publication in this period that includes adaptations of Shakespeare's poetry. This poetry collection does not hold an obvious reverential or a critical stance towards Shakespeare's sonnets. However, it is published in memory of Shakespeare to celebrate his literary heritage as is also evident in the subtitle of the collection: "A Poet's Celebration." Some of the poets like Roger McGough and Nick Laird also accept the claim of Shakespeare's superiority in their versions. The most observable difference in the majority of the poems included in this collection from the source texts is that these poems do not follow the Shakespearean sonnet structure and they use most of the conventional sonnet themes for different purposes. In light of this observation, this study aims to analyse several poems from *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* and to argue that regardless of the poets and editors' initial purpose, this work, as an

adaptation, illustrates that Shakespeare's sonnets are no longer relevant to the contemporary age as they are, and they need to be rewritten to make the ideas embedded in them more resonant with the concepts of the current moment. David Lane (2010) rightly observes that "[w]riters have a long history of appropriating source texts and using them to satisfy their own needs, taking the raw dramatic material and sculpting from it something that will speak to the audience of their own time" (p. 160). This tendency is seen in this collection with poems that are meant to comment on today's world, rather than that of Shakespeare, to appeal to today's readers. As a result of this analysis, it is concluded that, contrary to the common belief, even adaptations that are not produced with a critical idea reveal that Shakespeare's sentiments are neither transhistorical nor transcultural. This analysis also makes it possible to provide an alternative answer to the question of Shakespeare's universality. To remember John Drakakis's (1985) words concerning the problem of Shakespeare's universalism, "Shakespeare can never be 'our contemporary' except by the strategy of appropriation" (p. 24). As observed in such adaptations, his works are universal only as much as they are transformed to speak to the problems and issues of subsequent periods.

Main Body

Certain subjects and themes repeatedly occur in Shakespeare's sonnets such as the cruelty of time, the transience of earthly life, the endurance of love, and the procreation of beauty. Most of these themes also appear in the modern versions collected in the Arden Shakespeare's publication. However, poets such as Bernard O'Donoghue, Kevin Crossley-Holland, and John Burnside do not prefer to write in the sonnet style. Another difference observed in the new versions of poems is that there is an emphasis on realism instead of the romanticised exaggerations seen in the sonnet genre. For instance, in Alan Jenkins's "Salvage," Carol Ann Duffy's "CXVI," and Elaine Feinstein's "Betrayal," "love for the beloved," as a common theme of sonnet tradition, is treated as a temporary feeling rather than as an eternal sentiment that can endure the passing of time as it is often mentioned in Shakespeare's sonnets. Another prevalent topic in the sonnet tradition, "the platonic ethos of denial," meets an alternative equivalent in Alan Jenkins's "Salvage" in the form of the beloved's lack of interest in the persona's admiration towards her. Similarly, an emphasis typically seen in Shakespeare's sonnets is on the idea of the procreation of beauty. For instance, in Paul Farley's "Gentian Violet," this idea is transformed into an adoration for the regenerative power of nature. Poems like Jo Shapcott's "2014/2015" and P. J. Kavanagh's "Dream" also indicate the inevitability of the change of time with implications of urban images such as references to traffic, technology, and shopping malls. As seen in such transformations, common themes of Shakespeare's sonnets are handled in different manners by contemporary poets. While the producers of this collection assume that they contribute to the celebrations of Shakespeare's literary heritage, they actually produce very different poems that explain the ideas and concerns of the contemporary period better. In transformations of Shakespeare's works, his texts are frequently recontextualised and modernised, and most of the popular ideas embedded in them are subverted. The Arden Shakespeare's sonnet rewritings collection is no exception in this regard as these recent poems are more related to the issues of the period in which we live, rather than being mere repetitions of Shakespeare's sonnets.

The fact that this collection's initial purpose is to honour Shakespeare's literary career is evident in the Foreword and Preface parts of the publication. The editors, Hannah Crawforth and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, apparently found it necessary to justify their attempt to recreate Shakespeare's works. Therefore, in the Foreword and Preface of the collection, there is a note stating that rewriting was also a practice Shakespeare used to compose his works. This statement justifies their act of adapting Shakespeare's sonnets and shows that it is not an act of disrespect for his literary creativity or any contrary act against claims of genuineness and universality of his works. On the contrary, this remark, together with some reverential poems in the collection, illustrate that the editors do not have a critical purpose while rewriting Shakespeare's works. Rather, they would like to contribute to the idea of exalting Shakespeare even more by reminding the readers about the permanence of his sonnets even centuries after. For instance, Roger McGough's opening poem titled "What poverty my Muse brings forth" functions as a note of acceptance of Shakespeare's alleged superiority and as an apology for attempting to rewrite his poetry. McGough's poem

consists of a bricolage of lines borrowed from various Shakespeare sonnets. The addressee in Shakespeare's sonnets is either the Beauteous Youth or the Dark Lady as a character to be adored (the Beauteous Youth) or to be mocked (the Dark Lady). In this poem, however, McGough uses Shakespeare as his subject and introduces him as an inimitable poet. Exemplifying a viable example of bardolatry, the choice of lines borrowed from Shakespeare's sonnets illustrates the contemporary poet's so-called incompatibility compared to Shakespeare. Lines used in this poem such as "O from what power has thou this powerful might" (2016, p. 1), "O how I faint when I of you do write" (2016, p. 1), and "thou art too dear for my possessing" (2016, p. 1) help the poet express his apology to Shakespeare rather than rewrite a specific sonnet of him. To emphasise his modesty in comparison to Shakespeare, McGough even writes a fictional apologetic letter to Shakespeare which reads as follows: "Dear Mr. Shakespeare, (or Will, if I may), All my attempts to compose a sonnet in your honour failed, so taking 14 opening lines from your corpus, I assembled them to reflect my own inadequacy" (2016, p. 84). This poem exemplifies the widespread tendency of revering Shakespeare in the following ages. The dominant conservative notion holds Shakespeare above any other writer and accepts his works as timeless without questioning the universalism and originality of his works. As Shakespeare's poet speaker, in sonnet 60, hopes that "my verse shall stand" (1999, n.p.), it is mostly considered that Shakespeare's works have outlived his time and they will continue to appeal to following generations of readers. Therefore, the editors of the publication and some of the poets included in the project state their idolising stance from the beginning, and they beg for forgiveness, as it were, for attempting to rewrite Shakespeare.

Nick Laird's "After Sonnet 38" is another poem in the collection that tries to pay homage to Shakespeare's poetry by comparing his works with that of the modern poets. As it is obvious in the title, Laird's poem is a response to Shakespeare's sonnet 38 in which the speaker as the sonneteer has no difficulty in writing as long as his beloved continues to inspire him. He says, "How can my Muse want subject to invent / While thou dost breathe" (2016, p. 26) and promises he shall use his poetry to praise the beauty of the beloved: "The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise" (2016, p. 26). Poetic creation is ordinarily referred to as a service to the beloved in the sonnet tradition. Accordingly, Shakespeare's sonnet stresses the beauty of the beloved as inspiration for poetic composition. In Laird's poem, however, there is no such emphasis on poetry as a means of praising the beauty of a lover as inspiration. Rather, much more realistically, the poet mentions the difficulty of literary production as a typical problem among young contemporary poets who are not in any way talented enough to create poems like those of Shakespeare. First, Laird calls the sonneteers of the current period "fabulous liars" (2016, p. 27) and comparing them to the creative writers of the past – specifically Shakespeare – he criticises them for not being able to write a line even if they were given "goose quills, rolls of papyrus or vellum sheets, or slates, or MacBook Airs [disabled from the wifi]" (2016, p. 27). There is an obvious change in Laird's poem in terms of the function of poetry as seen in Shakespeare's sonnet. In sonnet 38, Shakespeare acknowledges that writing poetry is natural and instinctual as his beloved provides endless inspiration as is seen in the words, "who's so dumb, that cannot write to thee, / When thou thyself dost give invention light?" (2016, p. 26). Laird, on the other hand, stresses that it is not easy to compose poetry as it seems in earlier times regardless of the technical improvements in the modern age. In this respect, the contemporary poet emphasises a realistic condition and moves away from the romanticised poetic creation in sonnet writing. However, while stating the different conditions of the past and the present, Laird still praises Shakespeare as he finishes the poem with a comparison of contemporary poets and Shakespeare. According to him, even if these new poets tried to write "for years and years – they could not start to get down half your ways" (2016, p. 27), suggesting the idea that even though recent poets are equipped with more material, they would not be compatible with Shakespeare. Whether Laird is ironic in his comparison here is uncertain; however, his poem both questions the validity of the sonnet form to convey love in the modern period and criticises the new generation of poets who cannot produce valuable poems even though they have more material with which they can work. This kind of idolising does not dominate the collection. Most of the poems approach Shakespeare's sonnets not in such an honorific manner, and they suggest that Shakespeare's poetry is not transhistorical as is often thought. A majority of poets in this collection treat Shakespeare as "author-function," to use Christy Desmet's terms (2013, p. 5). Many reproductions of Shakespeare are created with a certain group of readers

in mind that would be ready to read anything simply because it is written by or about Shakespeare. In this collection as well, the poems could be read and interpreted as works on their own right. However, since they are compiled under the title of adaptations of Shakespeare's sonnets, there is a need to relate these poems to Shakespeare. Seeing works of older poets, metaphorically speaking, as "a source of inspiration and a shadow any writer must step out of" (Crawforth and Scott-Baumann, 2016, p. xv), and particularly Shakespeare as "perhaps the longest shadow of all" (Crawforth and Scott-Baumann, 2016, p. xv), some of the poets in this collection show that it is essential to produce fresh meanings by using Shakespearean material and to make them more relevant to the current age than earlier periods. The themes that are repeatedly employed by the contemporary poets that share an affinity with Shakespeare's sonnets are "loss, grief, the passing of time, mortality, and posthumous remembrance" (Crawforth and Scott-Baumann, 2016, p. xiv). Although contemporary poets make use of Shakespearean themes, their versions of the poems question the claimed durability of the Shakespearean sonnet tradition in the contemporary period either with their alternative approaches to these ideas or transformations in form and style. As Julie Sanders states, "[t]he adaptation of Shakespeare invariably makes him 'fit' for new cultural contexts . . . different from those of his age" (2015, p. 58). An example of this practice is possible to see in this poetry collection in which his sonnets are transformed and thereby made more suitable for the discussion of topics that concern the contemporary times.

A poem that approaches Shakespeare's sonnets from a more realistic perspective to refer to the concerns of ordinary people is Alan Jenkins's "Salvage," a rewriting of Shakespeare's sonnet 80. This poem makes use of the themes of rivalry and poetic creativity already mentioned in Shakespeare's sonnet that opens with the words: "O how I faint when I of you do write, / Knowing a better spirit doth use your name" (2016, p. 50). In Shakespeare's sonnet, the speaker feels inferior to a rival poet who presumably expresses his love in better words. Different from mentioning poetic composition as a reason for conflict among rival lovers as Shakespeare does, Jenkins writes about a man who feels inferior to a rival lover as he is at a disadvantage in economic terms. This time, the reason of rivalry is not writing in the best possible manner to please the beloved but being unable to please her due to disadvantageous socio-economic circumstances as a more relevant and realistic social problem in modern times. As the speaker mentions, this rivalry goes back to earlier school days: "compared to him I was a schoolboy playing deck-quoits, /. . ./ He was a lord of language, I a saloon-bar scrounger" (2016, p. 51). He is aware that his rival is more likely to offer his beloved a more desirable future compared to himself. He states this concern with the following words: "If one day, on a whim / You had a go with me, you'd be a mere bargess / To my bargee – and who would want that really?" (2016, p. 51). Clearly, in this particular poem, the idea of rivalry in poetic creativity dedicated to the better representation of love is illustrated more realistically, without any romantic purpose. Another idea Jenkins draws from Shakespeare and uses in an alternative manner in this poem is the sailing discourse in sonnet 80. Shakespeare's persona metaphorically mentions the worth of the beloved as "wide as the ocean is" (2016, p. 50) and sees himself as "a worthless boat" (2016, p. 50). Referring to these words in the source text, Jenkins introduces his speaker as a sweeper of sea-floors (2016, p. 52) who always sinks when his beloved and rival go up high: "Though I know you both hold that it's sink or swim - / Why it should be me who's going under" (2016, p. 52). This comparison also contributes to the feeling of inferiority in Jenkins's persona. The parallels in Jenkins's poem with Shakespeare's sonnet might be interpreted as the continuation of the same sentiments handled in Shakespeare's poetry. However, what continues or remains is, alternatively, the sentiments of rivalry and jealousy. How Shakespeare mentions these emotions is different from that of a contemporary poet who is more concerned about representing an ordinary person's feelings in a more realistic manner than a traditional sonnet speaker.

Another popular contemporary poet, Douglas Dunn, also contributes to this collection with a rewriting of Shakespeare's first sonnet which deals with one of the most common themes of the sonnet tradition: the transience and procreation of beauty. Shakespeare's sonnet 1, which is presumably devoted to the Beauteous Youth, expresses a fear of the passage of time as it renders his beauty a temporary concept. As a result, Shakespeare's sonnet speaker demands: "From fairest creatures we desire increase, / That thereby beauty's rose might never die" (2016, p. 2). Procreation is offered as an alternative to the cruelty of the passing time as the speaker believes that if the handsome lover multiplies, he will continue living in

posterity regardless of the passing of time. Again, according to the sonnet tradition, Shakespeare's sonnet approaches time as a cruel concept and tries to offer ways of conquering it. Portraying a much more realistic perspective, Douglas Dunn, in his poem titled "Senex on Market Street," also employs the theme of the cruelty of time, but from the perspective of an elderly man who observes young people ignorant of the passing of time with critical eyes:

> In handsomeness, with confidence, they walk
> Towards exams, and don't know how it feels
> To hear the fateful tick-tock of the clock
> Young women, and young men, I, too, was young –
> Believe that if you can! – but years go by
> Until, one day, you find your songs are sung. (2016, p. 3)

The experienced aged speaker once again reminds the reader of the transience of life by mentioning a woman he loved in the past who "dressed as well as you" (2016, p. 3). Considering Shakespeare's sonnet 1 and Dunn's response in comparison, both poems hinge on the theme of the passing of time and question what remains behind. However, their treatment of the issue is different as Shakespeare treats time as a conquerable concept through procreation while Dunn is sceptical about the ability of human beings to conquer such a powerful concept. While Shakespeare fantasises about the possibility of endurance against the passing of time through procreation, Dunn is realistic as he compares the youth and the elderly in terms of their appreciation of the concept of time. As seen in Dunn's poem, time is only a problematic concept for the elderly as the young are more careless about spending it fully. In compliance with the conventions of sonnet writing, Shakespeare refers to time as a cruel rival that is weaker than the beloved's beauty. As the more contemporary version illustrates, romanticising the human being's power against time, as in the sonnet tradition, is no longer a viable idea, but getting old and reminiscing the past is a more realistic experience of an ordinary modern individual.

Similarly, Wendy Cope's poem simply titled "Sonnet" subverts the concept of time in the sonnet tradition by presenting a more realistic approach from an aged man's perspective. The speaker of Cope's poem is an old man for whom the passage of time resulted in physical decay rather than loss of beauty as in the sonnet tradition. Apparently, Cope presents an alternative poetic composition to the sentimental treatment of the same concept as a cruel tyrant just like love itself in the sonnet tradition. While Shakespeare's speaker attempts to defy old age in sonnet 22 with the words, "My glass shall not persuade me I am old" (2016, p. 18), the speaker of Cope's poem states he does not see himself old. He says he has "[a]rthritic fingers, problematic neck" (2016, p. 19) and he has turned into "an ancient wreck" (2016, p. 19). In an attempt to negate the denial of old age in Shakespeare's poetry, the speaker in the recent poem complains, "when I try to get up from a chair / My knees remind me they are past their best" (2016, p. 19). As the last two examples by Douglas Dunn and Wendy Cope illustrate, the idea of the destructive nature of time in Shakespeare's sonnet is conveyed more realistically in certain adaptations. By using much more elderly figures as speakers as an alternative to Shakespeare's rather emotional speaker voiced by a hopeful youth, these poems attempt to provide a more realistic portrayal.

A final poem in the collection that subverts Shakespearean sonnet in terms of its treatment of time as a dominant theme is Andrew Motion's "Rhapsodies." Motion's poem is a variation of Shakespeare's sonnet 12, which juxtaposes the degenerative aspect of time and the power of regeneration. Emphasising that procreation is the only means one can overcome the passing of time, Shakespeare's sonnet ends with the words: "And nothing 'gainst time's scythe can make defence / Save breed to brave him, when he takes thee hence" (2016, p. 6). The point made in the poem is that like all other natural elements bound to change and die with the change of seasons, the beauty of the beloved is supposed to fade, and it is only possible to let that beauty live through the begetting of offspring. Different from Shakespeare's sonnet devoted to the expression and defence of the beloved's beauty, Motion turns the focus of the poem towards an individual's personal and psychological quest. Rather than the fading beauty of some other being, this poem emphasises the feelings of isolation and loneliness the speaker goes through as seasons change and clocks are moved

back. Obviously, in Motion's version, the idea of time is retained; however, it is treated from a different perspective. The speaker is not concerned about the cruelty of time but about the fact that he feels lonely and isolated on his way home "in darkness" (2016, p. 7). In these hard times, the speaker seems to find consolation in the presence of his significant other at home and hence states the importance of forming a bond with another being and with the self. Providing yet another example of the function of adaptation to recontextualise Shakespeare's works, Motion's version employs the concept of time differently to express the sentiments commonly felt and expressed by an ordinary individual.

Romantic love is possibly the most commonly employed subject matter of the sonnet tradition, which has also been handled by some poets in this collection. For instance, Jackie Kay's rewriting of sonnet 11 provides a realistic response to Shakespeare by subverting the theme of romantic love. The object of love in the sonnet tradition is the beloved lady or a handsome young man as in the case of Shakespeare's unconventional sonnets. In Jackie Kay's poem in the volume, such romantic love is subverted with familial love, specifically a daughter's love for her mother. Repeating the themes of other sonnets, the dominant idea in Shakespeare's sonnet 11 is the procreation of beauty:

> Let those whom nature hath not made for store,
> Harsh, featureless and rude, barrenly perish;
> Look whom she best endowed, she gave the more,
> . . .
> She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby
> Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die. (2016, p. 4)

Shakespeare's speaker urges the beloved to multiply so that the beauty of the young man will overcome the pressures of the passing time. Alternatively, Kay's poem "Thirty-Five" applies the theme of love reflecting a selfless strong bond between the mother and the daughter: "If I could offer you my veins, I'd gladly use a knife. / At times it seems if you go, I too will perish" (2016, p. 5). Even the title of Kay's poem illustrates this affection as "Thirty-Five" refers to the number of the ward in which Kay's mother was hospitalised in Glasgow Royal Infirmary (Shakespeare Lives, 2016, n.p.). The idea of love in Shakespeare's version is retained by Kay, but the approach to this issue differs as Kay does not make use of romantic/sexual love in her poem but uses Shakespeare's sonnet to express her love towards her mother. In this particular example, since Jackie Kay composes the poem to reveal her relationship with her mother, the adaptation is created based on Kay's personal experience. It is, like the other poems discussed so far, realistic, and it extends the theme of love that is only directed towards a beloved in Shakespeare's sonnets.

Reminding the need to observe the difference between the sonnet tradition in Shakespeare's time and the multiplicity of ideas and theories of literary creation in the postmodern period, Peter Erickson (1991), in *Rewriting Shakespeare*, boldly emphasises the problem of labelling Shakespeare's works as timeless and universal:

> Shakespeare can no longer be treated as an absolute, unframed standard as though his art were fully adequate to the range of thought and feeling possible for us in the present . . . His work provides not a body of timeless, inexhaustible, or unmodifiable knowledge, but rather a historical baseline that helps us to measure our difference. (p. 164)

Correspondingly, in certain adaptations of Shakespeare, the difference between his time and the one in which we live is quite evident. An example in this collection, Peter Joseph Kavanagh's poem titled "Dream" illustrates a rewriting that points to the difference between the understanding of love back in Shakespeare's day and the recent one. Kavanagh's poem is a variation of Shakespeare's sonnet 18, which highlights the power of poetry to render love eternal. In this sonnet, the speaker makes a promise to the beloved as follows:

> . . . thy eternal summer shall not fade,
> Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
> . . .
> So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
> So long lives this, and this gives life to thee. (2016, p. 14)

Time's destructive aspect as a persistent concern in Shakespeare's sonnets dominates this poem as well; however, poetry is seen as an even more powerful force which would immortalise the beloved. Kavanagh's poem, on the other hand, does not portray a romanticised perspective about art or beauty. Instead, it discusses love as an artificial concept in the modern world dominated by images of urbanism such as shopping malls and traffic (2016, p. 15). The speaker of this poem emphasises the function of technology in the relationship of modern couples as opposed to the influence of poetry on love, as suggested by the speaker in Shakespeare's poem. The lines that follow illustrate this alternative approach: "Today we are still bound / Not by a chain or a rope, by a radio-signal / Of exaggeration, never untuned, a wireless / Connection, with its own reach and sound" (2016, p. 15). This transformation leads one to question the applicability of glamorised ideas of love and beauty in Shakespeare's poetry to the contemporary context. Romantic love in Shakespeare's sonnet, which supposedly transgresses the end of life through the agency of poetry, is altered in Kavanagh's adaptation with a more practical and relevant outlook.

Shakespeare talks about love as an unchanging and everlasting concept in sonnet 116, which is among his most popular sonnets. In this collection, Carol Ann Duffy and Elaine Feinstein provide their individual responses to this sonnet. Similar to the other rewritten poems discussed so far, these two poems also subvert the idea of belief in love as an eternal concept. According to M. J. Kidnie (2008), sonnet 116 portrays "an affirmation of love and marriage" (p. 111). Likewise, this poem idealises love as an unwavering concept as observed in the lines, "Love is not love / Which alters when alteration finds" (2016, p. 60). The speaker sees love as "an ever-fixed mark, / That looks on tempests and is never shaken" (2016, p. 60), and for him, love is certainly "not Time's fool" (2016, p. 60). As opposed to the idealisation of love in this poem, Carol Ann Duffy's speaker in "CXVI," using pastiche, admits his/her disbelief in love: "Love is not love" (2016, p. 62) without stating a specific condition. Love is a disappointment for the two lovers in Duffy's poem. They are distant from each other even though they sleep on the same pillow. Instead of the glorification of love in Shakespeare's sonnet, Duffy provides a realistic portrayal of love through a disillusioned couple in marriage.

Elaine Feinstein's poem "Betrayal," in like manner, deals with the difficulty of getting over a past relationship as well as making a new beginning, which could also be considered in opposition to Shakespeare's romanticised representation of the concept of love as never-ending. As a response to Shakespeare's speaker who sees love as ever-lasting, Feinstein's speaker, after the end of what seems to be a long relationship, complains about love which s/he falsely conceptualised as eternal. The title of Feinstein's rewriting is quite suggestive as ideas of love and devotion are problematised in this poem. Betrayal is also a part of relationships as much as love and loyalty, and Feinstein approaches love from a darker perspective and calls marriage "licenced disorder" (2016, p. 63). Creating a frustrated speaker, she presents adultery as a traumatic experience which causes the individual to approach new relationships sceptically: "Get over it, get a life, my friends implore me, / sure that revival lies in moving on. / Yet some bond holds me like a tie of blood" (2016, p. 63). This adaptation is one of those rewritings in the collection based on the real-life experiences of the poet herself. Feinstein explains why she is particularly drawn to sonnet 116 and why she subverts the positive representation of love in the source text: "'Sonnet 116' have remained with me all my life. Some time ago, however, a painful marital tangle led me to question the virtues of such a commitment" (2016, p. 80). Echoing the realistic approach to the idea of time, poetic creativity, and love discussed in the earlier examples in this study, Feinstein's poem illustrates a realistic approach to love by presenting its bitter side through the experience of discontented lovers. By showing that love is not as idealistically experienced in real life as is often mentioned in sonnets, Feinstein's poem recalls the need to refer to more recent experiences while recreating Shakespeare's works.

Conclusion

As observed in the poems specifically discussed here, *On Shakespeare's Sonnets* contributes to a large collection of Shakespeare rewritings published in the twenty-first century. Most of the adaptations of Shakespeare, including movie adaptations and other fictional adaptations, are reworkings of his dramatic texts. The Arden Shakespeare's publication provides an alternative production by using Shakespeare's sonnets as the source texts instead of his plays. Interestingly, rewriting Shakespeare, which was once considered disrespectful towards the "greatest" poet of the English language, is now commissioned by institutions dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Shakespeare's works. It is observed that adapting Shakespeare is now met with less criticism, and the practice is often used and encouraged to express admiration towards his career as a writer. However, there is a common tendency to accept Shakespeare's assumed superiority while rewriting his texts as seen in the Foreword and Afterword of *On Shakespeare's Sonnets*, along with the works of poets like Roger McGough and Nick Laird. These poets express their apologetic attitude by accepting their lack of poetic creativity compared to that of Shakespeare. Nevertheless, the other poets' attitude, which is still full of respect to Shakespeare's literary heritage, states a clear need to mention matters that are more relevant to the current moment than the Renaissance. Therefore, they use the dominant themes of Shakespeare's sonnets and employ them in a much more realistic manner. These poets' treatment of Shakespeare's sonnets is reminiscent of Graham Holderness's (1992) comment on the function of deconstruction in which "[t]he [source] text is free – to be arbitrarily manipulated and strategically mobilized by any cause and in any direction" (p. 38). Accordingly, most of the rewritings included in this volume deconstruct the Shakespearean text by subverting popular ideas in the sources such as love, procreation, beauty, and transience of life. Shakespeare's sonnets are thereby turned into tools by contemporary poets to express the dominant modes of feeling and experience of the modern times.

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