



Shakespeare's Sonnets: An Original-Spelling Text

Paul Hammond

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This book is at once an edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and a guide to how to read these exquisite and complex poems, and is designed both for readers new to the poems and for those who are familiar with the *Sonnets* but are ready to engage with them afresh. It is the only current edition which provides an original-spelling text of the poems: that is, it prints the poems as they appeared in the first edition, *Shake-speares Sonnets* (1609), preserving the spelling, punctuation, italics, and capitalization of the original, with only minor interventions where that edition manifestly needs correction. The advantages (and occasional hazards) of reading an original-spelling text are explained, and detailed help is provided in order to assist readers who may be unfamiliar with the conventions of early-modern spelling and punctuation. The introduction focuses on how we might read the poetry, discussing the sonnet form, the tradition within which Shakespeare was writing, and the ways in which readers might explore the richly suggestive language which he used. The forms of sexuality evoked in the Sonnets are fully charted, both in the introduction and the notes, but readers are steered away from biographical speculation. The annotation which accompanies the text of the poems provides detailed and carefully-targeted glosses which set out the likely meanings of the words in order to help the reader construct their own understanding of the poem. The text is followed by appendices on Shakespeare's rhetoric and complex words which will enable the modern reader to appreciate the intricate verbal play of the poetry.

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