

SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS AND THE ARTS OF MEMORY

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Abstract: *Written "in war with Time," Shakespeare's Sonnets construe memory as a means of perpetuating the finite self. Echoing the classical tradition of the ars memoriae, they offer their versions of the two classical mnemonic modes, the natural and the artificial. Reimagined as progeny and poetry, and interacting in various ways, these modes are explicitly thematised in the Friend subsequence (1-126), and virtually absent from the Dark Lady group (127-152).*

*Contextualising its reading of the Sonnets in Frances A. Yates's seminal *The Art of Memory* (Routledge, 1966), and making reference to modern memory studies, the paper argues that, beyond the binary opposition, Shakespeare strategically intertwines the mnemonics of bodies and texts. Through the machinery of an ambiguous, self-subversive Platonism, he suggests their equal reliance on copies, virtual in their tangibility and tangible in their virtuality, to such an extent that the Sonnets reinvention of the arts of memory seems to imply a Shakespearean defense of poesy.*