



VERN BARNET

## Fenestration

In my frail frame immortal love doth dwell;  
And in these lines with borrowed breath you live.  
No skill can keep my body from death's spell;  
what skill I have doth life forever give  
to you and me conjoined in sounds that they  
shall speak who never knew us, though they gaze  
long through the window of this page, and say  
with wonder how we loved, in our brute age.

And yet no words I write can e'er be true;  
They all fumble, flunk, fall, deform, and fail  
Light's infinite mystery that is you  
and me, like calling minnow what is whale.

*No lay can list to others what is ours  
though yet these rimes might reach as far as stars.*

**Fenestration** is the architectural term for the design and disposition of windows and other exterior openings of a building. A **lay** is a short lyric for a song; the word is often a pun. **Light** is often a symbol for the sacred, the divine. **The language, style, and theme** of this sonnet imitates Shakespeare's Sonnets 18 (So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,/ So long lives this, and this gives life to thee) and 55 (So till the judgment that yourself arise,/ You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes) and employs the Renaissance convention that poetry, unlike flesh, is permanent. But this motif is not an egotistical claim so much as a tradition originating with the classics, perhaps with Theognis of Megara [c550 BCE] in a work wonderfully translated by Richmond Lattimore as a Shakespearean sonnet, "Captive." Hippokrates of Kos [c460-c370 BCE] summarized it this way: Ὁ βίος βραχύς, ἡ δὲ τέχνη μακρὴ recast as *Ars longa, vita brevis* by Seneca the Younger [c4 BCE–65 CE], and resonating with Horace [65-8 BC] in his Odes, III, 30, beginning *Exegi monumentum aere perennius . . .* Martial [40-104 CE] also employed this theme. Early English examples include Edmund Spenser [1552?-1599] in his "Amoretti," 65 (My verse your virtues rare shall eternalize . . .) and Michael Drayton [1563-1631] (So shalt thou fly above the vulgar throng,/ Still to survive in my immortal song).  
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