William Shakespeare Sonnet 18

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| **«** Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date.  Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimmed, And every fair from fair sometime declines, By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;  But thy eternal summer shall not fade, Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest; Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade, When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  So long lives this and this gives life to thee.**»** |

ANALYSIS: The sonnet belongs to Shakespeare’s collection of 154 sonnets. In addition the intelligent reader knows that the poem belongs to the section of the “marriage sonnets”.

In the title the speaking voice is talking to an unidentified person. The title is the same to the first line of the sonnet and they ended with a question mark so the speaker is wondering if he shall compare ‘thee’ to a summer’s day.  The question is a rhetorical question because the speaking voice already knows the answer. All the sonnet in a way or in another is an exploration of why the first line is a rhetorical question.

Considering the layout the reader  can understand that the sonnet follows the English, or Elizabethan model, since the sonnet consists of three quatrains with alternate rhyme and a rhyming couplet. The rhyme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, typically rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnets.

In the first quatrain the comparison between the summer’s day and the addressee is unsuitable. Even if the summer’s day is connected to positive qualities, it is not enough to express the great values of the interlocutor. Immediately in the second line the speaking voice explains why the comparison reduces such qualities. The use of the majority comparative "more" and the use of the anaphoric syntax reinforce the idea of the supernal qualities of the “Fair Youth”. But nature can sometimes show its negative sides (line 3). In the fourth line the poet expresses that his love is stronger than summer, because summer is too short. In the first quatrain is relevant the presence of the semantic field of nature, that it is also visible in the second quatrain where the poet uses a metaphor "heaven eye" referring to the sun. The message of this quatrain is that the time passes and the beauty fades. In the third quatrain the speaking voice expresses that the qualities of the Fair Youth are better than the qualities of the sun thanks the use of anaphora. The rhyming couplet is the solution of the speaker’s question. The poet’s lines conveys that his love will survive in the eternal memory of words, as long as eyes can see “this”.