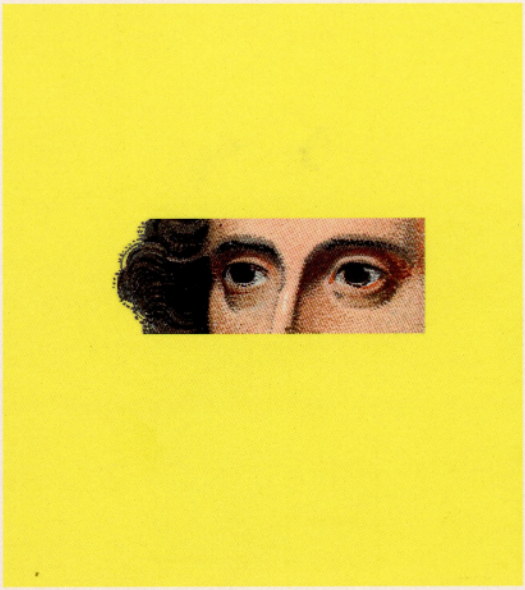
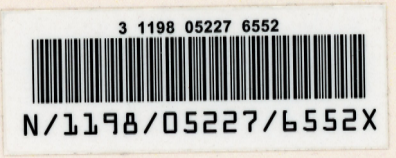
Notes on the Sonnets

A Poetry Book Society Recommendation



Penned in *the Margins*

Luke Kennard



'I'm in the kitchen with a man who says he can recite any of Shakespeare's sonnets if someone gives him a number from 1 to 154. And I'm like, Wow, that's great. 66? And he says, No. Not 66. Anything but that.'

Luke Kennard recasts Shakespeare's 154 sonnets as a series of anarchic prose poems set in the same joyless house party. A physicist explains dark matter in the kitchen. A crying man is consoled by a Sigmund Freud action figure. An out-of-hours doctor sells phials of dark red liquid from a briefcase. Someone takes out a guitar.

Wry, insolent and self-eviscerating, NOTES ON THE SONNETS riddles the Bard with the anxieties of the modern age, bringing Kennard's affectionate critique to subjects as various as love, marriage, God, metaphysics and a sad horse.

Penned in *the Margins*



UK £9.99 RRP

Is flattery so bad if it's offered for no reason? I'll drink whatever you give me. If you mean to poison me I believe you ultimately have your reasons. It has nothing to do with trust. You're the absolute best. You're so wonderful. I love you. Everything about you. Really, what do we want from one another? Have you ever been there? Yes. No. How amazing. I bet it was. I bet you were. I heard it was something of an armpit. Yes, but *what* an armpit. In 3rd century Bavaria the armpit was considered – against a backdrop of numerous natural disasters and the breakdown of the internal trade network – the most beautiful part of the human body. Really? Because I thought that was the knee; I thought Bavaria was established in the 18th century. That's nonsense. It became a stem duchy in 602. It's always existed. It was settled by Iron Age Celts before Christ. You know so much about Bavaria. Here, drink this. At that time they practiced *via negativa*: fifty teachers in a room with one student; all holiday and twenty days of work; everyone was a king or queen and went around in finery and crowns, except this one guy: their loyal subject. Everybody's loyal subject. And that's you. I don't think that's what *via negativa means*. But keep going and we'll get there. It is unseemly to dig with your hands while wearing a crown. Even a paper one. Drink up.

Probably the worst company are the people who lament *the lost art of conversation.* Let's say you take upon yourself a platitude: You are drawn to unattainable people. The sort of phrase so overgrown with moss and lichen it can barely pass for insight anymore. We cannot love ourselves any more than a camera can love itself. We only want something distant enough to be idealised. Thank you. No, don't light it, I want to pontificate with it. We navigate by the North Star because its position happens to be more or less in line with the Earth's axis. In fact it is exactly one degree off and traces a very small arc in the night sky. Nonetheless, it holds fast over bad waters for the tea merchant and the human trafficker. *Let the war criminal say I never claimed to be perfect.* Let's say, *ffs, nobody ever asked for perfection.* What's required of us is the absolute bare minimum, I know. You know the Elizabethan marriage ceremony was quite severe? 'I require and charge you, as you will answer at the dreadful day of judgment when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed...' I mean mix that with your confetti, right? We edited it because we're so pathetic. But memory is the present's diet, exclusively, since our hopes' ingredients are memories anyway. That's neuroscience. No, wait, come back.

I am invited to give a short talk about my children to the Council of Child Studies, convening in the living room. When my youngest was two he used to shout 'Goodbye, leaves!' to the yellow leaves as they fell. Yesterday he collected more leaves than he could carry on the way home from school, selecting the ones he described as *valuable*, but there were too many. When he was three I was carrying him home from nursery one October afternoon and the sun and the moon were in the blue sky at the same time and this produced in him a quasi-religious fervour, twisting in my arms to look East then West then East again, an incoherent babble as if speaking in tongues, which resolved into – I promise I'm not inventing this – it resolved into: *'The colours describe the colours! The colours describe the colours!'* It causes me actual physical pain, how much I love him. As a child I liked to see the otters in the zoo and I found them so endearing my reaction was to grind my teeth together so hard I'd chip them slightly and feel a film of fine grit in my mouth.