
Sonnets

Sir, – Barbara Everett overstates our ignorance when she writes that “there is no evidence linking Shakespeare’s love sonnets . . . to any specific date before that of their first publication in 1609” (Letters, May 24). Because the dates of composition of Shakespeare’s plays are known with tolerable certainty, it is possible to date the Sonnets by their sharing with the plays certain habits of rhyming and rare-word choice, as MacDonald P. Jackson has shown in a series of groundbreaking studies. The most important conclusion from this work, published in *Review of English Studies* 52 (2001), is that Sonnets 104 to 126 are Jacobean and the others are mostly from the 1590s.

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