

Shakespeare Goes to a Poetry Workshop
or "Be, Not Be?"

Feeling self-conscious, Will takes from his case
his final draft– a scrawled, much-altered screed –
apologises for its lack of grace,
puts on his glasses and begins to read:

My mistress' are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red, than her lips' red:
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet by heave, I think my love as rare,
As any she belied by false compare.

A silence falls and lengthens; undeterred
Will starts to scan the room for any signs
of approbation — then a voice is heard:
"I wonder, do you need the last two lines?"