

William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

Sonnet 119

What potions¹ have I drunk of Siren² tears,
Distill'd from limbecks³ foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes and hopes to fears,
Still losing when I saw myself to win!

- 5 What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never⁴!
How have mine eyes out of their spheres been fitted⁵,
In the distraction⁶ of this madding fever,
O benefit of ill, now I find true,
10 That better is by evil still made better,
And ruin'd love, when it is built anew,
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater,
So I return rebuked⁷ to my content,
And gain by ill thrice more than I have spent.
(113 words)

¹**potions** drugs – ²**Siren** falsely alluring – ³**limbecks** containers used by alchemists – ⁴**so blessed never** never so fortunate – ⁵**out of their spheres been fitted** driven out of their sockets by fits – ⁶**distraction** delirium – ⁷**rebuked** chastened