Sonnet 1: From fairest creatures we desire increase
By: William Shakespeare

From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory;
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding.
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave and thee.

Summary

The first sonnet takes it as a given that "From fairest creatures we desire increase"—that is, that we desire beautiful creatures to multiply, in order to preserve their "beauty's rose" for the world. That way, when the parent dies ("as the riper should by time decease"), the child might continue its beauty ("His tender heir might bear his memory"). In the second quatrain, the speaker chides the young man he loves for being too self-absorbed to think of procreation: he is "contracted" to his own "bright eyes," and feeds his light with the fuel of his own loveliness. The speaker says that this makes the young man his own unwitting enemy, for it makes "a famine where abundance lies," and hoards all the young man's beauty for himself. In the third quatrain, he argues that the young man may now be beautiful—he is "the world's fresh ornament / And only herald to the gaudy spring"—but that, in time, his beauty will fade, and he will bury his "content" within his flower's own bud (that is, he will not pass his beauty on; it will wither with him). In the couplet, the speaker asks the young man to "pity the world" and reproduce, or else be a glutton who, like the grave, eats the beauty he owes to the whole world

Analysis

The first sonnet introduces many of the themes that will define the sequence: beauty, the passage of human life in time, the ideas of virtue and wasteful self-consumption ("thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes"), and the love the speaker bears for the young man, which causes him to

elevate the young man above the whole world, and to consider his procreation a form of “pity” for the rest of the earth. Sonnet 1opens not only the entire sequence of sonnets, but also the first mini-sequence, a group comprising the first seventeen sonnets, often called the “procreation” sonnets because they each urge the young man to bear children as an act of defiance against time.

Sonnet 19: Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws
By: William Shakespeare

Devouring time, blunt thou the lion's paws
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood,
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws
And burn the long-liv'd phoenix in her blood,
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
And do what e'er thou wilt, swift-footed time,
To the wide world and all her fading sweets:
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime,
O carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen,
Him in thy course untainted do allow
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
  Yet do thy worst, old time, despite thy wrong,
  My love shall in my verse ever live young.

Summary: All-consuming Time, dull the lion's claws and force the earth to ravenously eat up her own sweet children. Remove the sharp teeth from the powerful tiger's mouth, and burn the immortal Phoenix in her own blood. Turn happiness into sadness as you quickly slip away, and do whatever you will, quick-moving Time, to the whole world and all its fleeting pleasures. But I refuse to let you commit one truly unspeakable crime: don't etch wrinkles into my love's young and beautiful forehead. Don't use your old pen to draw any lines on his face! Leave him alone so that his beauty can serve as a model for future generations of men. That said, you might as well do your worst, old Time! Because even if you wrong my love, he will remain forever young in my poetry.

Themes

Time and Decay: "Sonnet 19" focuses on the idea that everyone and everything is at the mercy of time, a force that the poem argues leads to inevitable deterioration and decline. Even the fiercest lions and tigers aren't exempt from the **personified** "Time's" mighty power, the speaker says, which eventually makes all things fade. Nothing lasts forever, the poem implies, and the speaker is particularly troubled by the fact that "[d]evouring Time" will lay waste to the youth and beauty of the speaker's lover.

The speaker notes that even the strongest, most respected creatures on earth are vulnerable to the passage of time, which can "blunt" a lion's claws or "pluck" the sharp teeth from a tiger's mouth. Given that these animals are so strong and powerful, their physical deterioration highlights that the cruelty of time makes no exceptions—no matter what, all living things are fated to decline.

Time, in other words, has its way with everything in the end, an idea the speaker further accentuates by mentioning the "long-liv'd Phoenix." The Phoenix is a mythical creature that, upon burning to death, rises from its own ashes and begins life anew. Although this bird usually represents the idea of immortality, this poem highlights something else about the Phoenix—namely, that this mythical creature is susceptible to the passage of time just like everything else is. After all, its many life cycles demonstrate that even things that live forever are still subject to destruction.

If even the immortal Phoenix is influenced by time's unrelenting march, it's clear that humans are even *more* vulnerable to decay and change. This is why the speaker implores time to spare the lover, asking it to not etch wrinkles into his face. This, however, is not a reasonable request, since it's obviously impossible to protect somebody from the effects of age and time. In the end, the speaker knows, time will do its "worst" to the lover, and this spotlights the inarguable fact that nothing can withstand the pull of time. Simply put, everything in life—including youth and beauty—is fleeting.

Art and Immortality: Despite arguing that time is an all-consuming, destructive force, the speaker spends much of the poem trying to fight back—imploring the personified "Time" to spare the youth and beauty of the speaker's beloved. In the end, however, the speaker seemingly rejects

the rules the poem has established altogether, declaring that if Time won't spare the lover, then the speaker will simply preserve this person through "verse." Although it's impossible for people to avoid the ravages of time, then, the speaker argues that it *is* possible to use art—and, more specifically, poetry—to immortalize certain aspects of human life. The speaker accepts that there is no avoiding the passage of time and the destruction it brings. To make this easier to bear, the speaker takes comfort in the idea that the poem itself will preserve the lover. Time may "carve" wrinkles and "draw" lines onto his face, but the speaker is confident that the lover will remain youthful and attractive in poetry, saying, "My love shall in my verse ever live young. The word "live" in this phrase is especially important, since it suggests that poetry isn't just a record of the past, but rather something capable of housing the ongoing spirit of the lover's youth—something the poem implies will continue to live long after time has had its way with the lover. In this sense, part of the lover's youth will survive old age and even death. Poetry, then, is more than a simple historical document—it's something that gives lasting life to otherwise short-lived, ephemeral things like youth and beauty. In the face of so much impermanence, the speaker suggests, creating art is a meaningful way to immortalize a person's most fleeting qualities.