

Sonnet 19

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws, a
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood; b
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws, a
And burn the long-liv'd Phoenix in her blood; b

Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleets, c
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time, d
To the wide world and all her fading sweets; c
But I forbid thee one more heinous crime: d

O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow, e
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen! f
Him in thy course untainted do allow e
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men. f

Yet do thy worst, old Time! Despite thy wrong g
My love shall in my verse ever live young. g

I. Summary of Sonnet 19

This sonnet is about the destructive power of time which consumes everything in its path including the poet's beautiful young man. Nevertheless, the poet tends to challenge time by asserting that the young man will live eternally in his verse.

II. Sonnet 19 analysis

Quatrain one

- The sonnet starts by the speaker addressing someone which turns out to be "Time". So, the sonnet is written in a form of an apostrophe to Time. Time here is personified by the poet which appears in his capitalization of the first letter "T". In addition, the verb devouring which means eating greedily is an action often undertaken by humans.

- The word Time is also capitalized to stress its immense power and destructive nature.
- In this quatrain the speaker makes use of strong animals' imagery to address the fact that even the strongest animals become impotent against the destructive nature of time. For example, in the first line, the speaker uses the lion which is an animal of a great power in order to demonstrate the fact that Time is able of reducing even the fiercest of creatures to powerlessness. This appears in the image in which Time makes the sharp claws of a lion blunt which signifies the fact that time can annihilate the lion's ability to hunt and survive.
- Line two expands the theme of the destructive power of time which is not limited to destroying the power of strong animals only but everything in nature. For instance, the speaker instructs time to compel the earth to reclaim everything that she has produced "her own sweet brood".
- In line three, the speaker selects another powerful and wild animal, the tiger that represents raw power and energy of the life force, and urges Time to pull out the teeth from his jaws, hence, making him impotent.
- In line four, the speaker moves from the natural world to the mythological realm, in that he now selects a mythological bird, phoenix. In Mythology, the phoenix is a bird that is said to live for up to five hundred years and this occurs in the poet's use of the phrase "long- liv'd". So, in this line, the speaker urges time to burn this phoenix alive while the blood still occurs in her veins.
- These four lines show that the lion, tiger and phoenix are unable of equating the destructive power of time, implying that nothing escapes Time and everything is eventually defied by it.

Quatrain Two:

- The speaker in this quatrain proceeds to invite Time to carry out his destructive work. In line one, the speaker asks time to produce "glad and sorry seasons" as it passes. "Sorry" seasons refer to Autumn and Winter because they are associated with loss, decay, decline and death. "glad" seasons on the other hand, refer to Spring and Summer because they associated with life, birth, renewal and beauty.
- In Line two of this quatrain, the speaker addresses time as "swift footed" indicating its quick fleeting nature and instructs it to do whatever it chooses.

- Line three of this quatrain shows how the speaker extends his instructions and this time he seems to give permission to Time to act on everything that belongs to the wide world and let nothing escape including the earth's "fading sweets" which refers to flowers in the process of losing their beauty.
- The last line of this quatrain signals a twist; in that, the speaker forbids Time from committing one "heinous" crime. Up to this point, the speaker has been allowing time to act on everything as though Time needed the speaker's permission to carry out its natural tasks of destruction. It can be argued that the speaker has been appearing to accept the destructive work of Time throughout the world, when in reality he has been hiding his true intention which is to set the ground for a potential bargain with Time.

Quatrain Three:

- This quatrain lists the acts that the speaker implores Time not to do. For example, the speaker, in line one of this quatrain, prevents Time from carving aging marks (wrinkles) on the forehead "brow" of the young man. This request is repeated further in the following line as the speaker asks time not to draw lines of aging, with his antic pen" on the young man's forehead as this will despoil his beauty.
- In lines 3 and 4 of this quatrain, the speaker goes on to plead that his beloved be spared the ravages that Time might inflict upon him. As time progresses, it must allow the young man to remain "untainted" meaning untouched or unmarked by any signs of aging. The speaker makes such plea in order for the young man to remain as the true model of beauty, or a kind of template of human beauty that subsequent generations must see and follow.

Couplet

- The couplet makes a rapid turnaround because the speaker seems to accept the impossibility of the bargain he has attempted to strike at the beginning. This is because Time is not a force that he can make a bargain with since its progress cannot be refrained or modified. This means that no one can escape the touch of Time nor can they avoid his antic pen.
- This couplet shows that the speaker appears to accept this harsh reality. Despite the speaker's acknowledging this reality, he still attempts to defy time: "yet do your worst, old

Time!” by immortalizing the young man in his verse. So, the young man will remain young and youthful in his poetry.

III. Theme of sonnet 19

The central theme of sonnet 19 is conflict between the destructiveness of Time and Art. This sonnet focuses on the idea that nothing can escape the ravages of time and despite this fact, the speaker tends to defy Time by immortalizing his beloved in his poetry.

IV. Poetic Devices:

Figures of Speech	Meaning
Imagery: “blunt though the lion’s paw	In this line the poet uses vivid description of the lion’s power being disrupted by Time to draw on its destructive power.
Apostrophe:	The speaker addresses Time directly
Metaphor “carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow”	Time is compared to an artist in this line
Personification: Time	Time is personified like a human character throughout the sonnet
Alliteration: Long-lived	Repetition of the initial consonant sound in two words
Assonance: Keen Teeth	Repetition of vowel sound in two words