

Sonnet 144 by William Shakespeare

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits, do suggest me still;
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colored ill.
To win me soon to hell, ma female evil
Tempteth my vetter angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turned fiend
Suspect I may, but not directly tell;
But being both form me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

Summary:

Sonnet 144 is the only sonnet that explicitly refers to both the Dark Lady and the young man, the poet's "Two loves." Atypically, the poet removes himself from the love triangle and tries to consider the situation with detachment. The humor of the previous sonnet is missing, and the poet's mood is cynical and mocking, in part because uncertainty about the relationship torments him.

Although the sonnet is unique in presenting the poet's attempt to be objective about the two other figures in the relationship, stylistically it is very similar to others in terms of setting up an antithesis between two warring elements, the youth ("comfort") and the woman ("despair"): "The better angel is a man right fair, / The worser spirit a woman, colored ill." Symbolically, the young man and the woman represent two kinds of love battling for supremacy within the poet's own character: selfless adoration and shameful lust, respectively. However, the poet is a mere spectator now. His greatest fear, one that he cannot face, is that the young man secretly acquiesces to the woman's advances: "And whether that my angel be turned fiend / Suspect I may, yet not directly tell." Unfortunately for the poet, what the outcome of this struggle will be is uncertain: "Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt, / Till my bad angel fire my good one out." Just what the phrase "fire my good one out" means is debatable. One critic suggests that the phrase means "until the woman infects the youth with venereal disease"; others offer the more innocuous meaning "until the youth grows tired of the woman." Ironically, the uncertainty about the fate of the relationship between the young man and the woman is the only certainty the poet has.

More Explanation:

In William Shakespeare's Sonnet 144, the author's intent seems to be describing two sides of his nature: that which is good and that which is dark, a common topic.

One is reminded of Marlowe's Faustus (in his play *Doctor Faustus*) as he struggles between what he knows to be good (represented by an angel hovering over his head) and the temptations of evil (represented by Mephistopheles, the agent of the devil).

In Shakespeare's poem, the same struggle is the topic of the fourteen lines of his sonnet, and the two sides involved in the fight are introduced in the first line:

Two loves I have of comfort and despair...

This line notes that the speaker is undergoing an internal struggle. The good is represented by "comfort," while the bad is presented as "despair," a lack of hope. The second line conveys the movement back and forth between these two extremes that "urge" him on. Line three notes that that which is good is pleasant to look at ("fair")—maybe the spiritual aspect of a person, while the other side, the "worser spirit" is a woman, "colour'd ill" (perhaps dark-haired and sultry) maybe the physical. This may well allude to the man being in control—and his appearance an indication of his virtuous spirit—while the *antagonist* is presented as a woman, often seen as a temptress, a seductress—one that leads a man to his physical downfall—unable

to resist the lure of the flesh. This comparison might well be an allusion to Eve in the Garden of Eden in the Bible's book of Genesis. Light is often associated with good, while the dark is associated with evil.

As the struggle continues, the speaker notes that the female within (the darker spirit) tries to "corrupt my saint to be a devil." This would bring to mind perhaps the illusion of a witch believed during Elizabethan times to be female in nature and dedicated to winning one (often seen in Shakespeare's plays as a man) to his eternal destruction. This is how Shakespeare introduces the struggle within the man, in the first two quatrains (eight lines in total) of the sonnet.

In the third quatrain, there is a shift in the author's attention. The speaker notes in lines nine and ten that he cannot be sure whether the goodness in his soul will be corrupted:

And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
Suspect I may, but not directly tell...

But he notes that both the two opposite powers represent opposite sides of himself. They are "both to each friend," meaning that they coexist, and perhaps more than that, get along well. However, in that each represents something far different, the goodness inside him finds the darkness a version of hell, as the darkness would find the goodness *her* form of hell.

The rhyming couplet at the end summarizes the speaker's thoughts: until one side wins, the other side will exist in a state of doubt...at least until the "bad angel fire my good one out." While the speaker notes that he is doubtful as to the result of the battle, he seems then to contradict himself in the last line, expecting that the matter will be settled when the "bad angel" overcomes the other. He never presents the idea that the struggle could end when his "*good*" angel defeats the dark one. Perhaps in this way, the speaker recognizes the nature of man, noting that too often, regardless of one's intentions, the darker side often does out. We might assume that the speaker expects to fall victim to the dark...perhaps even wants to.

Batter My Heart/ Holy Sonnet 14 by John Donne

Batter my heart, three-person'd God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but O, to no end.
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie, or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

INTRODUCTION:

Holy Sonnet 14 is one of John Donne's series of Holy Sonnets. No one is sure when he wrote them, but some guess it's around 1618. Holy Sonnet 14 is one of his most famous and often-studied poems. In fact, if you only read one of Donne's poems, this is probably the place to go, since it's got a clever extended metaphor (a "metaphysical conceit" if you want the fancy term), and it covers the major recurrent theme in Donne's poetry – a possibly conflicting passion for both carnal and divine love.

Donne wrote this poem at an important time in his life, as he was just ordained in the Church of England. Donne has an interesting relationship with religion. He was born a Roman Catholic, and being Roman Catholic in late 16th century England guaranteed persecution. As a young man, Donne didn't seem particularly interested in religion, but he soon realized that the path to a successful life could be found in the Church of England. As he became more involved in the Church, he became considerably more focused on his own spirituality and relationship with God. If you're inclined to read the poem biographically, Holy Sonnet 14 represents the peak of Donne's conflict between secular and religious lives, and his efforts to reconcile his newfound sacred love with the more familiar, earthly variety.

SUMMARY:

The speaker begins by asking God (along with Jesus and the Holy Ghost; together, they are the Trinity that makes up the Christian "three-personed God") to attack his heart as if it were the gates of a fortress town. The speaker wants God to enter his heart aggressively and violently, instead of gently. Then, in line 5, the speaker explicitly likens himself to a captured town. He tries to let God enter, but has trouble because the speaker's rational side seems to be in control.

At the "turn" of the poem (see the "Form and Meter" section for more on the importance of the sonnet form and, specifically, the "turn"), the speaker admits that he loves God, and wants to be loved, but is tied down to God's unspecified "enemy" instead, whom we can think of as Satan, or possibly "reason." The speaker asks God to break the speaker's ties with the enemy, and to bring the speaker to Him, not letting him go free. He then explains why he wants all of this, reasoning with double meanings: he can't really be free unless God enslaves and excites him, and he can't refrain from sex unless God carries him away and delights him.

Symbol Analysis:

The Besieged Town:

The besieged town is the dominant symbol in the poem, and it's a confusing one. The speaker likens himself to a town that has been taken over, but he wants God to attack the town in order to capture it. Actually, if we're being technical, when the speaker says he's "like an usurp'd town," he actually makes a simile, but by using the simile throughout the rest of the poem without making an explicit comparison elsewhere, we can safely call the whole thing an extended metaphor.

So, aside from the request that he be attacked (if he's the town, is it really such a good thing if the town is assaulted?), there's also the confusion about who "usurped" this town in the first place. We might think it's the "enemy" from line 10, but that's not helpful because we don't know who the enemy is, unless it's just that

general enemy of God, Satan. The real problem, as we see it, is the line: "Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend, / But is captived, and proves weak or untrue" (lines 7-8).

First of all, why is reason described as a viceroy, when the speaker just compared himself to a captured city? Wouldn't that make reason the force in control of the town (since a viceroy is a local ruler)? And, if reason is in charge of the town, does that mean God is the one who usurped the town, since reason is God's viceroy? Or, is reason the original viceroy of the town, before the town got captured? Either way, it's interesting how the speaker sets up his desire for more attention from God as a battle in which God fights against him. The whole thing is a bit confusing, but it could be intentional, working well with the theme that the speaker doesn't really know whom he's addressing (see "Lines 1-2" in the "Detailed Summary").

- Line 1: Here the speaker refers to a battering ram, as if God should break down the walls of a city. That's why "batter my heart" is a metaphor.
- Lines 4-7: The speaker describes himself as a captured town, using a simile. Though he tries to let God in, reason, the figure of power in the town, won't help.
- Lines 12-13: The speaker brings up the siege metaphor one last time, saying that he wants to be imprisoned (as one would be in a captured town) in order to be freed. And, yes, that's a major paradox.

The Unhappy Engagement / Affair with God:

In another metaphor that runs through this poem, the speaker describes an unhappy and inconvenient engagement with the "enemy," presumably the Devil. Where before, the speaker sets up God as an attacker, here, he wants God to be a home-wrecker. Strangely, he seems to want God to break up a marriage, even though we imagine God as a pretty staunch supporter of the institution. This metaphor, then, works more as an apology and plea for forgiveness, whereas the siege is more of a plea for liberation from forces the speaker can't control.

- Line 5: The phrase "to another due" resonates with "betroth'd unto your enemy" as part of the same engagement metaphor. To be "due" can mean to be owed, or it can refer to a pledge to be married.
- Lines 9-11: The main point here is that the speaker describes an engagement with this enemy that he hopes God (the one he actually loves) can help him escape. Since he doesn't actually plan to marry the Devil, this is a metaphor.

Romance with God:

So, in classic Metaphysical Poet tradition, Donne doesn't make anything super-explicit, but it's hard to read this poem without noticing some sexual overtones. "O'erthrow me, and bend Your force" and "[I] labour to admit you" are examples of moments that carry sexual weight.

Plus, the final line of the poem is hard to ignore: "Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me." The speaker seems to try to give a more specific flavor to his demands here at the end of the poem. How about this: in struggling to make what he really wants concrete, the speaker finally admits his thoughts through the entire poem – the closest he can come to describing what he wants from God is through the metaphor of being ravished by God.

- Lines 3-4: "o'erthrow me, and bend / Your force" might be a part of the sexual metaphor.
- Line 6: "Labour to admit you" may be similarly part of the sexual metaphor.
- Line 13: To "enthrall" someone means to put them in captivity or slavery. But, the word can have some sexual overtones, if it refers to being under someone's erotic power.
- Line 14: "Ravish" carries the connotation of "taking advantage of someone," even if it also means the less sexual "fill with delight." This is where the sexual metaphor is most prominent.

Contradictions:

This poem is chock-full of contradictions. Why? Because what the speaker wants is fundamentally a contradiction – a physical manifestation of a being (God) who doesn't really exist in physical terms. Plus, there's the fact that, in the speaker's version of Christianity, eternal happiness can only come through earthly suffering.

But there's also another reason, which we think is just as important: the contradictions give the whole poem a feeling of instability and insecurity, which suggests that the speaker really doesn't know what he wants, and certainly doesn't know how to say it. Ever played Taboo or Catchphrase, or some game where you have to describe an object without using that word or related words? What's the easiest way to do it? Use the

opposite (not salt but...pepper!). We think that's sort of what's going on here. Since the speaker can't figure out what he wants to say, he throws together a lot of opposites to try to approximate it.

- Lines 2 and 4: "knock; breathe, shine, and seek to mend," and then "break, blow, burn, and make me new" set up a series of contradictions. The speaker gets one thing, but says he'd rather have the opposite. But, would he? Is being broken, blown, and burned actually what he wants?
- Lines 3-4: We see a double feature of contradictions here. First, "overthrow" is the opposite of helping someone "rise" and "stand," but the speaker gives us a bonus contradiction here by using enjambment. He asks God to bend his force, but, since "bend" shows up at the end of line 3 and not the beginning of line 4, it looks like he's saying, "So that I may rise and stand, overthrow me and bend me." Intense stuff.
- Lines 7-8: Nothing tricky here, just Reason did the opposite of what the speaker thinks it should. By refusing to allow the speaker to submit to God, Reason acts irrational – which is a paradox.
- Lines 11-12: Untie me so as to imprison me? Sounds like a contradiction.
- Lines 12-14: Welcome to Contradiction City. The speaker asks to be imprisoned, delighted, and raped so that he can be free and chaste.

The Title:

Holy Sonnet 14 is part of a larger series of Holy Sonnets that Donne published in the early 1600s. This happens to be the 14th, which isn't all that important. The significant part here is that Donne adopts the sonnet form, which was previously concerned mainly with the speaker's love for a woman. In turning the traditional object of love away from a woman and toward God, Donne demonstrates his fixation with blending earthly and sacred forms of love.

THEMES:

The subject of Donne's Holy Sonnet 14 is religion, even if it's masked by love, sex, and general mayhem. At the most basic level, this is a poem in which a man asks for forgiveness and salvation from God, but he expresses his frustration that God hasn't revealed himself forcefully enough. The speaker, though, is unclear on what the forgiveness and salvation will entail, and how to make sure that God's message gets through to him.

Complicating the speaker's desire for salvation is the fact that he loves God in more than just the regular spiritual way. He seems interested in marital and sexual forms of love, as well. The bottom line is that he's unsatisfied with the kind of love where one's relationship with God is one-sided worship. He wants to feel loved back, and he's not sure how God can manifest that love.

Sex in this Holy Sonnet 14 is a metaphor our speaker uses for the way in which God might demonstrate his love for the speaker. The speaker really wants a close, reciprocal relationship with God, and one of the only ways he can imagine a relationship like this working is through an encounter of a sexual nature.

Violence is a way in which the speaker of Holy Sonnet 14 imagines God manifesting his love. God's more gentle efforts to remind the speaker of his presence haven't done the trick, so the speaker demands more extreme gestures like breaking, blowing, and burning.

Warfare makes up the major extended metaphor of Holy Sonnet 14, as the speaker presents himself as a captured fortress city. He calls upon God to storm the walls and retake the city. What's curious about this metaphor is that, if the speaker is the city and God is the attacker, God is going to have to do some major damage to the speaker in order to save him. Questions of what it means to be an attacker or a victim dovetail with the notions of rape and ravishment in the poem.

The Soldier by Rupert Brooke

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

NOTES:

This sonnet finds a soldier speculating as he goes away to war about his possible death, which he feels should not be mourned, but understood as part of a selfless tribute to his much-loved England.

STRUCTURE: A sonnet. The sonnet form is particularly appropriate here. Sonnets are traditionally love poems. In many renaissance poems, written by the likes of Plutarch, Thomas Wyatt or the Earl of Surrey, such poems are dedicated to an idealized lover— a lover represented as having the best qualities possible. 'The Soldier' is indeed a love poem, written for a much-loved and idealized England.

'*The Soldier*': the poem's voice is that of the unnamed and so anonymous soldier. This soldier therefore seems to speak not only for himself, but for other soldiers too. This is, literally, a poem about selflessness: the idealized selflessness of the soldier who sacrifices his life for his country.

'*If I should die*': the opening clause may be conditional, but Brooke here reflects the contents of many letters home from soldiers to families, filled with foreboding about possible death.

'*think only this of me*': the tone of selflessness, of refusing mourning, is contained in this command to "*think only this*".

'*There is some corner of a foreign field that is forever England*': an image full of pathos and patriotism. The idea of an unnamed "*corner of a foreign field*" where the soldier will be buried speaks of the unsung and anonymous nature of death in war. Yet the notion that this small space will "forever" be part of England elevates the sacrifice the soldier makes— as if he has in a small way conquered this land. The soft alliteration here lends these opening lines a subdued tone.

'*In that rich earth a richer dust concealed*': the fertile earth of the foreign field (fertile in part because of the dead beneath) has hidden within it the soldier's body (*dust*). 'Dust' is a common literary metaphor for the body: coming as it does from the funeral oration in the Book of Common Prayer, which speaks of the body returning to the earth, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust".

'*A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware*,': England here is personified as a mother; first with child, then rearing her young. The link with the mother, of course, emphasises the deep intimacy and importance of England her 'sons'. "*gave, once, her flowers to love... to roam*": England's abundance and pastoral beauty is emphasised here as a kind gift. *Giving* is an important and recurrent metaphor for Brooke when writing about soldiers sacrifice— a way of giving meaning to death by placing it in the context of a kind of social exchange. "*A body of England's*": the soldier's body actually *belongs* in a fundamental way to England; it is hers. This sense of intimate connection— of actually joining with England— is key to this poem. "*breathing English air...washed...blest...home*": England is again mentioned— six times in this poem in total. By sheer repetition of the name, this poem gains patriotic intensity. Here the pleasant experience of everyday life is described as an *English* experience. The final mention of "*home*" in the octet brings us back to the tragic scene described in the first line. "*And think*": the sextet is more speculative, about life after death, about the soul rather than the body; this call to the reader to "*think*", or imagine, is appropriate. "*this*

heart...eternal mind”: the heart here stands in for the soul; we are asked to imagine this soul after death, when “all evil” or sin has been cast off, and has become part of God himself. The soul is now “*a pulse*” in the mind of the greater being.

“*this heart... no less / Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given*”: This line refers back to the octet, where England made the soldier and his thoughts; now we are asked to imagine that equally (“*no less*”) the soul of the soldier gives all its accumulated thoughts of a lifetime in England to God.

“*Her sights and sounds... laughter, learnt of friends;*”: the soldier lists all the wonderful experiences that the soldier has gained from England. These pleasant thoughts and memories will be given back to God as the soldier becomes one with Him.

“*and gentleness, in hearts at peace / Under an English heaven*”: the poem ends with a startling proposition— the soldier finds rest and peace at last in heaven, but heaven has been transformed by the thoughts and memories that the soldier has given to God. This heaven is now “*an English heaven*”: the connection with England will remain forever unbroken. The sonnet’s turn from an idyllic or idealized vision of England to the idea of a transcendent and literally heavenly England is complete.

[ANTHOLOGY NOTE: This is a sophisticated patriotic response to the First World War that can be contrasted with the more xenophobic and crude patriotism of poets like Jessie Pope and Rudyard Kipling— or at least Kipling’s early responses to the war. Brooke’s characteristic blend of intellectual and emotional power is in evidence, though some may find the poem troubling: the notion of an English heaven suggests, after all, that there is something special about England, in no less eyes than those of God. Can there be, in such a time of war, such a thing as a *German* heaven? Brooke is certainly aware of the dangers of projecting our own ideas and prejudices onto heaven. His amusing 1913 poem 'Heaven', about *fish* heaven, makes that clear: "of all their wish," he declares, "There shall be no more land, say fish." Yet he seems to rely on the force of his patriotic imagination to make an 'English heaven' plausible. Can we- should we- take this English heaven seriously?]

Sonnet 1 of Amoretti by Edmund Spenser

Happy ye leaves when as those lilly hands,
Which hold my life in their dead doing might,
Shall handle you and hold in loves soft bands,
Lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.
And happy lines, on which with starry light,
Those lamping eyes will deigne sometimes to look
And reade the sorrowes of my dying spright,
Written with teares in harts close bleeding book.
And happy rymes bath'd in the sacred brooke
Of Helicon whence she derived is,
When ye behold that Angels blessed looke,
My soules long lacked foode, my heavens blis.
Leaves,lines,and rymes, seeke her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.

Over View:

Sonnet one is the first of the Amoretti sonnets written by Spenser in 1595. Spenser dedicated his poems in the Amoretti series to his new wife, Elizabeth. The audience of this first sonnet is the poem itself, in this way it is a poem alluding to all of his poems he wrote about his wife. Each quatrain focuses on a different part of the poem: quatrain one is about the pages, quatrain two addresses the lines, and quatrain three is the rhymes. Sonnet one ends with a couplet that wraps up the points made in each of the quatrains. Like many of Spenser's sonnets, we see evidence of literary self-consciousness in Sonnet one. Sonnet one displays literary self-consciousness in terms of his lover being a part of each sector of his poetry. Spenser knows that his poems are written for the purpose of his lover to read and enjoy them, he also knows that she will do just that.

The first quatrain addresses the pages of the poem. "Leaves" in the first line is Spenser's name for pages of a poem. He explains that the pages of his poetry are only happy when the woman he loves is holding them. In line two, "Which hold my life in their dead doing might", states that this woman holds his life in her hands therefore she has the power to "kill" him. A metaphor that Spenser describes is his lover holding the poem in her hands captive, just as he is captive by her love. He claims that the pages are happy to be embraced by his lover. In this same way Spenser is happy when his lover embraces him.

The second quatrain describes the lines of the poem. In this quatrain, Spenser says that the lines will be happy when his lover's "starry light" and "lamping eyes" read them. "Starry light" is another way of saying that someone has a innocent and hopeful view of love. The "lamping eyes will deigne sometimes to look" explains that any excitement in her eyes while reading his poem will tell him whether the play is worth being looked at or not. The last two lines explains what his lover will be reading from his poetry, for instance, his sorrows deep inside. On line eight, Spenser writes, "Written with teares in harts close bleeding book." This line portrays how sincere his poetry is and how every emotion or feeling he has for her is evident in the lines of the poems he writes. The whole second quatrain paints a very vivid picture of how heartfelt his poetry is, therefore how heartfelt his love is for her.

The last quatrain focuses on the rhymes within a poem. The "sacred brooke of Helicon" refers to the scared rivers of the Helicon mountains. In Greek mythology, Helicon Mountain was a place favored by gods and goddesses. Some of those goddess were known as muses for literature and other art forms. When Spenser says that his lover is derived from Helicon, he is comparing her to one of the Greek god muses. He says that the rhymes are happy when his lover is the muse. He goes on to say that when his lover looks at the rhymes in his poem this is considered his bliss.

The two lines at the end are the couplet of the poem. In this couplet Spenser wraps up everything he has written in the quatrains above. Spenser states that as long as his lover is happy from his poem, he too is happy. Nothing else matters to him but making his wife happy from his poetry. Sonnet one of The Amoretti is in a way written to describe all the sonnets to follow and explain the significance of each part within the sonnets.

Analysis:

Edmund Spenser's famous collection of sonnets, *Amoretti*, is a series of love sonnets dedicated to Elizabeth Boyle, the lady of his dreams whom he pursues and eventually marries in 1594. The term "amoretti" is literally defined as "little loves" or "little cupids." Spenser closely follows many conventions of the Elizabethan sonnets, but in some ways his sonnets deviate from the norm for this era. For instance, many Elizabethan sonnets call on the idea of the Muses, the mythological Greek goddesses that provided inspiration for literature, science, and the arts. Spenser frequently references the Muses in his sonnets.

STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE:

Edmund Spenser's sonnets follow the Spenserian sonnet form, which is a slight variation of the English (Shakespearean) sonnet. The rhyme scheme for these poems is abab bcbc cdcd ee. Spenser's sonnets are similar to the Shakespearean sonnets in the sense that Like Shakespeare's sonnets, Spenser's poems are abundant in metaphors of nature. For instance, in Sonnet 1 he compares his lover to a flower, by using words such as "lilly hands" and "leaves." Throughout the poems, he maintains metaphors of nature by writing about phenomena such as the oceans and the stars. The interlocking rhyme scheme of the Spenserian sonnet provides a more distinct connectivity between the quatrains compared to the English sonnet. Whereas each quatrain in Shakespeare's sonnets is typically characterized by a unique metaphor or idea that builds towards the couplet, the final two lines in the sonnets in *Amoretti* typically tie together the contents of the first twelve lines in a reflective manner and remind the reader of the overall theme of the poem. In addition, it is important to note that, for the vast majority of *Amoretti*, Spenser is not speaking directly to the female counterpart; he usually refers to her in third person. It is not until the end of the sequence that Spenser addresses Elizabeth in first person.

MAJOR THEMES:

Spenser's sonnets deal largely with the idea of love. Up until Sonnet 67, the sonnets primarily focus on the frustration of unreturned romantic desires. On the other hand, the sonnets that follow Sonnet 67 celebrates the happiness of love shared between two people (Spenser and Elizabeth), as well as celebrating divine love. The frustration of unrequited love is a common theme in the Elizabethan sonnets; however, the celebration of successful love is largely a deviation from the typical themes. In addition, Spenser focuses on courtship and the power dynamic in successful relationships. In particular, he portrays that women want to have the authority in a romantic relationship, echoing Geoffrey Chaucer's central theme in "The Wife of Bath" from *The Canterbury Tales*. Furthermore, he discusses true beauty and the ways in which writing poetry can immortalize things that otherwise cannot be immortalized, such as people. Finally, Spenser's poetry often references God and religion, celebrating the theme of divine love in the second half of the sequence.

Further Analysis:

In this sonnet, Spenser, as the first-person speaker, is focusing on the love that he has for Elizabeth Boyle (the female to whom he frequently refers in the poem). One of the central themes is the value of poetry. The rhyme scheme is a typical Spenserian sonnet: ABAB BCBC CDCD EE.

In the first stanza, he uses the metaphor of a flower – "lilly hands" – to describe her hands as soft and tender. The "lilly hands" echo the word "leaves," which generally also refers to plants or trees but in this case refers to the pages of a book. In the first stanza, he is talking about things that are sweet in lines 1 and 3 and contrasting it with brutal, war-oriented images in lines 2 and 4. In line 2, the word "doing" means "killing," and the word "might" indicates power and strength. Similarly, "captives trembling" in line 4 implies fear and power, and the word "victor" refers to power in the context of winning. Thus, the rhyming lines in this first stanza are similar in both word choice and theme.

In line 5, "happy lines" again refers to poetry. In lines 5-8, Spenser wants her to read his poetry and understand how he is suffering because of his unreturned feelings towards her. During this stanza, he uses words with very sad connotations such as "teares" and "bleeding" to shape his writing. Spenser continues the poetry metaphor again in line 9 with "happy rhymes."

In lines 9-10, he brings the Muses into the poem; the Muses are the goddesses of inspiration for literature, science, and the arts, and many Elizabethan sonneteers referred to them in their poetry. In line 10, "Helicon" indicates that he is comparing her to the goddess who would inspire him to write literature. He continues to put her on a pedestal, comparing her to an angel in line 11 when he says "behold that Angel's

blessed look.” In like 12, when he says, “my soules long lacked foode, my heaven’s blis,” he is saying he needs her to survive just as any other human being needs food to live.

In the ending couplet, he brings back the theme of writing poetry by tying the stanzas together with the words, “leaves,” “lines,” and rhymes.” He is saying that he is writing this poetry for her, restating his love for her in the process.

Happy ye leaves when as those lilly hands,
Which hold my life in their dead doing might,
Shall handle you and hold in loves soft bands,
Lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.

On the “idiot level,” we see here the author looking forward with joy to the day when his love shall hold the *Amoretti* in her own hands, hoping that the contents will be met with love.

With these opening lines of the *Amoretti*, Spenser presents us with an amalgamation of many aspects of the entire cycle: the natural element; the suggestion of the antithetical nature of the female persona; the physical and mental conformity of the female persona to the dictates of the Petrarchan convention; and also the application of decorative devices which add depth of meaning.

To begin, the pages of the work are referred to as “leaves”, thereby suggesting also that the work is a work of nature, and, in the best Platonic sense, therefore holding true not to the appearance of reality, but to the *essence* of reality. Also, the natural element is intensified by the metaphor “lilly hands”, which renders the female persona an embodiment of nature, who is accordingly beautified and magnified.

And yet, with perfect conceit, there is something terrible about those dainty hands, for they hold the life of the lover in “dead doing might”. In this paradox then we see expressed the dichotomy of the Petrarchan female, who is both angelic and yet, by her haughtiness: shunning the affections of her lover, almost despicable. The disdain we typically find in the Petrarchan female is, though not overtly expressed, clearly implied by the power she possesses; and it is only by welcoming love, we see in line three, that her gentleness can take precedence.

To further reiterate this divine devil, imagery of battle, typical to the Petrarchan convention, is evoked. The leaves, which are, in this implicit and complex metaphor, also the lover, become captives, and the female persona the “victor”. The sentiment of reverential wonder here expressed contains, at its heart, an understanding of the terrible power of that cruel goddess, who could—though we know she will not—at any moment close her fist and crush those leaves to dust. Her power then—and we are of course speaking in the figurative sense—is nothing less than the power of life and death.

The paradox of “lilly hands” and “dead doing might” should also be noted, for here again we see an indication of the intrinsic paradox of the Petrarchan female.

Amongst the decorative devices, we see the use of polyptoton in “hands” and “handle”. Certainly there is here a utilitarian urging in the use of this particular device, for it allows for repetition—important to the musical quality of poetry—without being actually repetitious, for we already find “hold” on line two and line three, and it is indeed a fine line that separates the rhythm of repetition from the boredom of repetition.

Delight in Disorder by Robert Herrick

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness;
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction;
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher;
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbands to flow confusedly;
A winning waves, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat;
A careless shoe-string, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part.

‘Delight in Disorder’ is an exquisite poem of English literature by the Cavalier poet Robert Herrick (1591-1674). The poem attracts the heart of every reader by its lyrical quality and harmonious end rhyme. In the poem, the poet expresses his feelings of extreme happiness derived from the disordered dress of a woman. Now we are going to discuss.....

Let us now discuss the ‘Cavalier Poet’. Actually the word ‘Cavalier’ derived from ‘Carolus’, the Latin version of Charles. The reign of Charles I (1625-1649) was the time of ‘English Civil War’, fought between the supporters of king known as ‘Cavaliers’ and the supporters of the parliament known as ‘Round head’. However, a group of lyric poets associated with the ‘Cavaliers’ are called the Cavalier poets, for example, Robert Herrick, Richard Lovelace, Sir Johan Suckling and Thomas Carew. These poets are also called the ‘Sons of Ben’ as they were admirers and followers of Ben Jonson. They usually wrote short lyric poems, generally in lighter vein, gay, trivial, witty and often licentious. The main object of their poems was the ‘woman and beauty’.

Robert Herrick is, indeed, a Cavalier poet. Because his poetry especially ‘Delight In Disorder’ bears all the characteristics of a Cavalier poet’s writings. If we look into the poem, we must get the evidence in favor of it. The poem ‘Delight in Disorder’ is notably short in length and very much witty as well as licentious in theme. It deals with the description of a disorderly dressed lady. Most probably, the name of the lady is ‘Julia’. We, very beginning of the poem, see that, the poet traces out a disorder in the lawn that is thrown carelessly about the shoulders. Says the poet; “A Lawn about the shoulders thrown Into a fine distraction.” The lawn should be attached with shoulders but the lady’s one is free from her neck. This is the source of joy for the poet. Next, the poet finds another disorder in her stomacher. As the poet describes:

“An erring lace which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher.”

Thirdly, the poet gets one more disorder in her cuff which is used carelessly in lady’s hand. As the poet narrates:

“A cuff neglectful and thereby;
Ribbons to flow confusedly.”

Fourthly, the poet notices a disorder in lady’s petticoat. In poet’s speech:

“A winning wave, deserving note,
In the tempestuous petticoat;”

The petticoat should be well attached with body, but the petticoat of the lady is waiving in the air. The poet thinks it is a delightful meter.

Finally, the poet discovers a disorder in her shoestring. As remarks the poet;

“A careless shoestring in whose tie
I see a wild civility;”

Generally, disorder makes a man displeased but in case of poet, it makes him pleased as he says;

“Do More Bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part.”

In conclusion, it must be said that, Robert Herrick, a Cavalier poet, very successfully breaks the traditional concept that delight can only be found in harmony through the poem “delight in disorder” Moreover it possesses a high musical quality and the melodious end rhyme. So considering all these things, it can be regarded as the best example of his poetic intelligence.

Some Notes:

The lyric "Delight in Disorder" is from his collection of lyrics "Hesperides" published in 1648. The gist of the poem is that the poet narrator finds a woman who has dressed carelessly more attractive and seductive than a woman who has dressed very correctly. The following adjectives foreground the lack of attention by the woman to the various articles of her dress: "disorder," "distraction," "erring," "neglectful," "confusedly," "tempestuous" and "careless." She has worn every article of her dress carelessly, however it is this complete lack of attention to her dress which makes her look sexy ["wantonness"] and "bewitches" him all the more.

What is more important is to realize how the three influences-Cavalier poetry, Metaphysical poetry and Ben Jonson's lyricism-are amalgamated in this exquisite lyric "Delight in Disorder." Cavalier poetry is secular and its language and imagery are simple and direct unlike Metaphysical poetry which is characterized by complicated imagery which renders the poem ambiguous. The ambiguity in this poem is, whether Herrick is describing a woman who has dressed carelessly or a painting of a woman who has dressed carelessly - "than when **art**/Is too precise in every part." A lyric is an expression of the poet's own feelings as a response to an external stimulus and Ben Jonson's lyrical influence can best be seen in the last three lines of the poem:

*"I see a wild civility;--
Do more bewitch me, than when art
Is too precise in every part."*

The poet comments on the clothing of a woman and highlights the particular garments, noting their imperfections. Yet, he still admires the pieces and the woman herself. At the end of the poem, the poet reveals that he prefers these imperfections over a “precise art”.

The poet’s message could be deciphered as: beauty can be found amidst the flaws of both humanity and art. Imperfections are more alluring and powerful than the illusion of perfection.

The poem has irregular rhyme scheme, highlights the disorder and suggests imperfection within art. The poet also uses diction to enhance the feeling of disorder. He also implies that clothing, as art, is more appealing when it is not perfect. This highlights the importance of unique self – expression.

“An erring lace, which here and there enthralls the crimson stomacher” The poet used personification to describe the lace, which is described to wrap around the lady's stomach.

The clothing imagery conveys the quality of disorder and enhances the idea that flawed art can also be beautiful. The poetic techniques reflect the message that there is beauty in imperfection. The whole poem basically implies that we should embrace imperfections like they’re beauty itself.

To Science by Edgar Allen Poe

Science! true daughter of Old Time thou art!
Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.
Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?
How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise?
Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
To seek for treasure in the jeweled skies,
Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?
Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?
And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
To seek a shelter in some happier star?
Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

This poem is about what appears to be a disparity between poetry and science, and the poet trying to figure out what it is about this that is making him uncomfortable. The general structure of the poem is a sonnet which first declares that science is the subject of the poem and then attempts an accusation of science for making the world less suitable for making poetry. However, it is unclear if the rhetoric is meant to be a direct accusation, or if the accusation is actually a call for an answer, and this will be explored in more detail later.

This sonnet follows the standard rhyming scheme, ABAB CDCD EFEF GG, but it is actually the case that B and C rhyme. It is likely that this is coincidental, considering there are only so many word endings in English. The metrical structure is iambic pentameter, but the strength of the meter is sometimes not as strong as what we have seen with Shakespeare, or, at least, trying to scan the poem to read it with iambic pentameter is more difficult for the author than with Shakespeare's poetry.

The first stanza explains that this poem is about science. Poe makes this very clear by beginning the poem with an interjection: "Science!" This sets the mood of the poem outright to be something like a protest or entreaty, since it is like starting a phrase with "God!" or "Oh!", which one generally does to ask for something. The rest of the first line gives science a title, calling science the true daughter of old time. The phrase "Old Time" refers to things which are from the distant past, and being the "true daughter" of "Old Time" means that science is faithfully grounded in people's past intellectual pursuits. He is declaring that science is something which is not new, and so cannot simply be dismissed.

Line two is an observation of what science does to our conceptions of the world. The "peering eyes" is the scientific method of careful observation of nature, leaving no stone unturned. This metaphor is continued in the final two lines of the stanza, and it turns out the peering eyes are those of a vulture. This vulture has wings which are "dull realities." This could mean a few things. For one, it could mean that the poet is recognizing that science is supported by a reality whose charm and interest is removed (that is, there are no oddities like Greek gods), which poets tend to write about. Similarly, it could be the imagery that this bird of prey, science, swoops down to pluck out the heart of poetry, beating dull reality into the poet by flapping its wings. In any case, this is phrased as a question: the poet is wondering why science is targeting the heart of the poet. Questions can be used for rhetorical effect (in this case, the first stanza could be read as "Science! Why are you doing this to me?"), or instead to ask for information (which can be read as "Science! You are the continuation of the intellectual enterprise. Why are you aiming at the heart of poetry now?"). At this point in the poem, it is unclear which Poe means.

The second stanza consists of more questions. Continuing with the idea that the questions are for rhetorical purposes, the first line asks how the poet should love science or deem it to be wise with the implied answer "I cannot." However, it is also possible that these questions are not rhetorical, and these questions represent the poet trying to figure out how to place science in his poetical world.

The stanza continues by comparing the poet with another kind of bird. The poem has been using the word "he" to refer to a poet, and "thou" for the notion of science. Line six sets up the question which asks

who it is that does not leave the poet when he wanders, with the implicit answer that it is science which does not leave. Line seven is confusing, though, due to the enjambment. The line “To seek for treasure in the jeweled skies” refers to either the poet or science, as it may be that the wandering is for seeking (and thus the poet is seeking), or it may be that not leaving the poet is for seeking (and thus science is seeking). If the poet is seeking, then the bird which represents the poet is seeking for treasure in the “jeweled skies.” Jeweled seems like a way to refer to stars, which are a kind of truth to be found about the universe, or it may be intensifying the fact that there are many treasures out there. And, this poet bird is flying around, wandering, not intimidated or discouraged by difficulty or danger (“soared with an undaunted wing”). With this reading, the poet is asking why science is not leaving him alone as he is trying to find his own kinds of truths in the world.

On the other hand, if it is science which is seeking, the poet bird is flying “with an undaunted wing,” but the science bird is following, trying to seek the same sources of treasures as the poet is trying to seek. This reading has the poet wondering why science is trying to answer the same kinds of questions he is, snatching up treasures before he can, and, continuing the vulture analogy, like a bird of prey.

The third stanza goes over various things which the poet thinks are the result of science. Line nine, “Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?” refers to the Roman goddess of hunting and virginity, who rides the moon across the sky at night. With science, people saw that the moon, instead of being a carriage for a goddess, was actually a lifeless rock, so science metaphorically dragged her off the moon. The next two lines talk about the Hamadryad, which is a nymph from Greek and Roman mythology that lives in a tree and dies when the tree dies. Science, however, believes the tree lives without such creatures, and so the idea of the Hamadryad has been driven away. Again, enjambment makes it unclear who is seeking shelter on line eleven. It is either the Hamadryad driven from the wood, or it is science which drove the Hamadryad from the wood. If it were science, then science would now be “[seeking] a shelter in some happier star,” which doesn’t make sense because science is a human pursuit. It also doesn’t make sense because one generally does not seek refuge after driving some other entity away from its home. So, the enjambment probably refers to the Hamadryad, which means the poet is imagining this creature still exists somewhere although it is no longer believed. Similarly, the poem talks about Naiads (water nymphs of classical mythology) being torn from their water and elves being torn from their grass. The language used in these last six lines is that a strong verb removes each of these mythical creatures from their native habitats. Diana is “dragged,” the Hamadryad is “driven [...] from”, and the Naiad and the elves are “torn.” The poet is giving science a brutal nature, without any gentle grace, which is in accordance with being a vulture (a creature which is hardly gentle).

The third stanza spills into the final couplet, which is a continuation of the fantastical creatures being removed from their environments. The poet elides the removal verbs after describing the Naiad. The pattern is continued, and we can readily infer the Elves are being torn from their green grass. The final mythical creature is the “summer dream” being torn from “me.” Up until this point, each of the creatures were from well-known mythology, so by continuing the pattern but switching the kind of material intensifies this change in the final couplet. The “me” refers now to Poe himself, where “he” from before referred to any poet.

Starting from the third stanza, the questions of whether science has vanquished mythology can either be read as rhetoric or confusion. If it is rhetoric, then the answer to each of the “Hast thou” questions is a definite “yes,” and Poe is concluding the poem by noting a few of the things which science has shown not to be real. This means that, to Poe, dreams, too, have been disturbed by science, since he feels like he is constrained by science’s notion of reality, which is less vivid to him than the creatures from another “old time.” However, it could be the case that he is asking these questions again out of confusion. He is unsure whether or not science conflicts with these old mythological notions. In a sense, while there is no Diana on the moon empirically, she is still where she always has been: able to be called upon for poetry. So, Poe may still have his dream “beneath the tamarind tree,” and not have it wrest from him by science.

I like how this poem can be read in two ways. One reading is where Poe complains science has removed the old, poetic ideas of the way the world worked. The other is where Poe is unsure whether science truly had removed such ideas. What is clear, though, is that he was concerned this way of thinking would make the poetic way outdated.

Summary:

Science, by enforcing reality and its dull truth, takes away from the abilities of poets. A poet cannot love or respect Science because it would rather study the stars than listen to his fancies. Because of Science, the old myths about nymphs and nature have lost their power, and poets can no longer dream easily.

Analysis:

"Sonnet - To Science" is a poet's lament over the dangers of scientific development and its negative implications for poetry and creativity. Poe lived and wrote in the early nineteenth century as the European Industrial Revolution was crossing the Atlantic and transforming the technological landscape of the eastern United States, and his poem reflects an artistic backlash to the potential problems of the emerging America. Poe's concerns have been relevant at every stage of scientific progress, from the Renaissance to the current day, as each series of technological changes awakens the eternal fear that man will destroy his own humanity during his excited search for better machinery.

In particular, "Sonnet - To Science" hints at the tension between the forward-looking advances of the Industrial Revolution and the nature-oriented tendencies of the Romantic era. Romanticism had appeared as a counterargument to the Enlightenment philosophy of embracing and celebrating progress. Members of this movement sought to return to a purer, more innocent state of nature because they felt that society had corrupted man's innate goodness. Poe was a member of the American Romantic movement, and the poet of Poe's sonnet accordingly explores the inevitable clash between the Romantic outlook on life and the comparative thoughtlessness of industrialism.

The poet of Poe's sonnet worries about and rejects scientific dogmatism because he regards it as too unimaginative and stagnating. For him, science is a predator or, like a vulture, a carrion-eater, and it has damagingly crippled his imagination with "dull realities." In his apostrophe to science, he alludes to characters from Greek and Roman mythology, such as the Hamadryad and Naiad nymphs and Diana, the Roman goddess of the hunt, describing their forced banishment as evidence that humanity is too willing to discard its creative soul.

To reinforce the value of the past over the value of the thoughtless future, Poe uses a traditional English sonnet form to arrange his thoughts. A sonnet consists of fourteen lines, which in the Shakespearean form can be divided into three heroic quatrains and one heroic couplet, where the overall rhyme scheme is ABAB CDCD EFEF GG. The lines are heroic because they use iambic pentameter, or a series of five iambs, where each iamb is an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable. The sonnet form has existed for centuries, and when combined with the archaic diction, the narrator tries to show the beauty of old forms as a structural contrast to the ugliness of scientific realities.

Despite the apparent message of the sonnet, some details of "To Science" could serve to undermine the poet's words. He ironically personifies science in the first line, which may suggest that he unconsciously recognizes some humanity even in what he perceives as the stultifying influence of science. On the other hand, his personification may highlight his fundamental incompatibility with science, since he cannot help but poeticize the mundane. In addition, the use of a rigid sonnet form may also indicate that poetry is itself not as free-formed as the poet characterizes it to be, or alternatively it may suggest that some constraints do not necessarily indicate the strangulation of the imagination.