Sonnet 45: The other two, slight air and

POEM TEXT

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
The first my thought, the other my desire,
These present-absent with swift motion slide.
For when these quicker elements are gone
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life, being made of four, with two alone
Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;
Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
Who even but now come back again, assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:
This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,
I send them back again and straight grow sad.

SUMMARY

The two other elements that make up my body and soul—lightweight air and cleansing fire—are always with you, no matter where I live. The first element, air, represents my thoughts. The second, fire, represents my desires. These two elements move quickly between being present (with me) and absent (with you). My life is made up of four elements, so when these lighter two are away carrying messages of love to you, the heavy elements are left alone; my life seems to sink in despair, to the brink of death, as if weighed down with sadness. I stay in this condition until balance is restored by the fast elements returning with your messages. They come back even to this day, confident that your health is good and relaying this news to me. When I learn that you are well, I am delighted, but the feeling fades away quickly; I send my thoughts and desires back to you once again and immediately become sad.

THEMES

LOVE AND LONGING

The speaker of Shakespeare's "Sonnet 45" addresses an absent lover, describing the sadness and disorientation that this person's absence has caused. Because the speaker's thoughts and desires are constantly with his faraway beloved, the speaker feels lonely and unsettled. Even the thrill of hearing from this person is short-lived, because it triggers the speaker's painful longing to be with the lover all over again. So long as the speaker is separate from this beloved, the poem suggests, the speaker will never experience inner peace or stability.

The speaker treats his chaotic mood swings as an imbalance in the four "elements" that (according to pre-modern science) shape the speaker physically, mentally, and emotionally: air, fire, earth, and water. The speaker specifically links thought and desire with air and fire, the two "quicker elements." They are sent off to be with the speaker's distant beloved—leaving the speaker, in turn, feeling incomplete. Moreover, the two elements that the speaker is left with, water and earth, are slower and heavier than their counterparts. Because the speaker's thoughts and desires are with the lover, the speaker's "life" consists only of elements that weigh him down emotionally. He therefore feels as if he's "sink[ing] to death" and falls into "melancholy" (intense sadness or depression).

On hearing that the beloved is doing well, the speaker feels joy and inner balance, as thought and desire "return" along with good word from the lover. But the uplifting feeling of this return doesn't last. Hearing from the beloved seems only to rekindle the speaker's longing, and he immediately sends his thoughts and desires "back again and straight grow[s] sad."

Absence, longing, and satisfaction exist here in a kind of endless feedback loop. The indefinite cycle that the speaker describes suggests that, so long as the speaker's beloved is physically out of the picture, any elemental balance will be short-lived. In other words, he will never feel fully self-possessed and healthy while apart from his beloved. For this speaker, separation from a loved one causes suffering that only reunion can heal.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-14

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-4

The other two, slight air and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide;
The first my thought, the other my desire,
These present-absent with swift motion slide.

As "Sonnet 45" opens, the speaker states that his thoughts and desires are always with his faraway lover. Their "motion" is so "swift," he suggests, that they can instantly cross the distance that divides the couple. He compares these thoughts and

desires to air and fire, respectively, establishing an extended metaphor that will continue throughout the poem.

This metaphor is rooted in the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire—that, according to pre-modern science, make up the natural world. (Remember, Shakespeare wrote this poem around the end of the 16th century.) Earth and water were traditionally described as heavy and slow, air and fire as light and swift. Each of the four elements was thought to have particular qualities, influencing people's health, personality, and behavior:

- Water was associated with steadiness and reflection;
- Earth was associated with seriousness, analysis, and caution;
- Air was associated with knowledge, imagination, hope, and inspiration—a fitting choice for the speaker's "thought";
- And fire, representing the speaker's "desire," was associated with vitality, energy, and passion.

Strange as it may seem today, some system involving these elements was the foundation of much of the world's science and medicine from ancient times until the Victorian era. By referencing a widely known "scientific" principle, Shakespeare's metaphor helps readers understand the speaker's emotional problem from an intellectual perspective.

The speaker also draws out the individual qualities of the elements, so that they almost become characters in their own right: fire is purifying ("purging"), while air is lightweight and sprightly ("slight"). This effect makes the speaker's chaotic mood swings seem more vivid and dramatic.

It's clear that the speaker has already discussed the heavy elements, as he calls air and fire "The other two." In fact, this phrase alludes to the poem that comes right before "Sonnet 45" in Shakespeare's larger sonnet sequence. "Sonnet 44" provides more details and context for the element metaphor:

- This poem describes the speaker's devastation that he isn't made entirely of "thought," which travels so quickly toward his beloved that "injurious distance" wouldn't keep them apart.
- Instead, he's largely made up of "slow" elements (earth and water), which the speaker describes in a negative light—as barriers to overcome ("nimble thought can jump both sea and land") and expressions of pain ("heavy tears").

The reference to the previous sonnet indicates that this poem builds on its themes: the speaker's preference for the lighter elements, the pain of his lover's absence, and the sadness that the heavy elements cause. Therefore, when the audience learns that "the other two" elements are always away from the speaker, this allusion immediately suggests an atmosphere of sorrow and longing.

This passage features both juxtaposition and paradox. First, the speaker's thoughts and desires (represented by air and fire) "are both with thee, wherever I abide." That is, the speaker is in one place and his lover is somewhere far away, yet, in a seeming paradox, elements of the speaker are actually with his lover. Similarly, the speaker describes his thoughts and desires as "present-absent," again juxtaposing their two locations: *present* (with the speaker) and *absent* (with the lover). "Present-absent" can also be read as an oxymoron, because it seemingly contradicts itself: the elements are present and absent at the same time. Perhaps they move so quickly that it's hard for the speaker to tell where exactly his thoughts and desires really are. Or perhaps the lack of these elements always looms over the speaker; their *absence* is ever-*present* in his mind.

The phrase "present-absent" probably alludes to Sir Philip Sidney's "Sonnet 106" (from his *Astrophil and Stella* sequence), in which Astrophil, the speaker of Sidney's sonnet, laments the "absent presence" of his beloved, Stella. This allusion reinforces the atmosphere of romance and high drama in Shakespeare's poem.

By the second line of "Sonnet 45," it's clear that the speaker is directly addressing his lover ("thee"), who cannot respond. This kind of address to an absent person is called apostrophe. By allowing the speaker to address the source of his passions, it heightens the poem's tension and emotional impact. Plus, the second-person point of view creates the illusion that the speaker is communicating directly with readers—an effect that encourages reader sympathy.

These opening lines establish the poem's iambic pentameter, meaning that there are five unstressed and five stressed syllables per line in a da-DUM da-DUM pattern. The meter throughout the first several lines is nearly "perfect"; it doesn't deviate from the standard iambic pentameter pattern at all, except that there's an extra emphasis on "slight." All of these lines are also end-stopped, with the regular pauses at the end of each line reinforcing the regularity of the meter. The first three lines even feature a caesura after the fourth syllable, creating yet another regular pause and further establishing the rhythm:

> The other two, || slight air and purging fire,
> Are both with thee, || wherever I abide;
> The first my thought, || the other my desire,

The absence of caesurae (pauses) in line 7 helps the meter gain momentum, reflecting the "swift motion" that this line describes. Other sound devices in this line also evoke this speedy motion. In particular, assonant short vowel sounds (/eh/ and /ih/) quicken the pace of the verse, while sibilant /z/ and /s/ sounds create a swift, zipping sound:

These present-absent with swift motion slide.

LINES 5-8

For when these quicker elements are gone
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life, being made of four, with two alone
Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;

The speaker continues to describe his emotional upheaval as fluctuations in the four elements that comprise him (earth, water, air, and fire). The speaker earlier compared the lighter elements, air and fire, to his thoughts and desires, kicking off this extended metaphor. Here, readers see the impact of their absence; because he constantly thinks about and longs for his lover (i.e., sends the lighter elements away), the speaker is weighed down with sadness and despair.

The speaker suffers from an elemental imbalance, according to pre-modern science, which also linked the four elements with four "humors" or bodily fluids. Here, the speaker refers to "melancholy" or black bile, the fluid associated with earth, which encourages seriousness and analysis under normal conditions but, in excess, causes lethargy, sorrow, and despair.

According to the theory of "humorism," an imbalance of humors leads to illness—and, in fact, the speaker frames his longing as a condition that brings him to the brink of "death"! This metaphor conveys the severity of the speaker's inner turmoil, while alliterative /d/ sounds emphasize the intensity of his suffering: "my life [...] sinks down to death."

This second quatrain also describes the lighter elements (air and fire), and thus the speaker's thoughts and desires, in more detail. The speaker explains their task while they are away: they reach out to the beloved in a "tender embassy of love"—in other words, like a group of ambassadors, or an ambassadorial mission. In Shakespeare's time, ambassadors commonly attempted to arrange marriages between royal families. Therefore, the image of a "tender embassy" evokes a warm communion—complete with romance—that's meant to build a lasting, harmonious relationship. As they travel between the lovers, the speaker's thoughts and desires (perhaps recorded in poems like this one!) act as busy messengers, symbolizing the speaker's constant attempt at connection.

Further, his thoughts and desires (in the form of air and fire) are "quicker" than the other two elements, indicating that they travel at a fast pace. When describing someone's temperament, "quick" can also mean perceptive and intelligent. A more archaic meaning of "quick," common in Shakespeare's day, is "alive" or "full of vitality." All these meanings help characterize the speaker's thoughts and desires (air and fire) as swift, intelligent, and lively—especially in contrast with the slow, plodding elements of water and earth.

The structure of this passage further reinforces the contrast, making the speaker's elemental imbalance appear all the more dramatic. Enjambment at the end of line 5 makes the clause flow over the line break, mirroring the swift, unimpeded flow of the speaker's thoughts. It also helps the meter gain momentum, reflecting the motion of the fast elements:

> For when these quicker elements are gone
> In tender embassy of love to thee,

However, when the slow, heavy water and earth dominate the speaker's internal composition, caesurae disrupt the rhythm by creating frequent, irregular pauses:

> My life, || being made of four, || with two alone
> Sinks down to death, || oppressed with melancholy;

These lines also roughen the poem's smooth iambic pentameter. There's an extra stressed syllable at the start of line 8, creating a spondee: "Sinks down." (Also note that meter encourages the reader to contract "being" and "melancholy,"—that is, to hear them as single-syllabled "beeng" and three-syllabled "mel-an-clee," respectively). These metrical quirks bog the verse down a bit and reflect the speaker's turmoil as the heavy elements take over.

Finally, all lines until this point have been end-stopped, so the lack of punctuation after "gone" and "alone," as well as the rhyme between them, draws extra attention to these words and emphasizes the speaker's deprivation.

LINES 9-12

Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
Who even but now come back again, assured
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:

Hope seems to emerge in the sonnet's third quatrain, where the speaker finally achieves contentment upon hearing back from his beloved.

The speaker refers to the speaker's thoughts and desires as "those swift messengers," emphasizing their speed and urgency. This metaphor also recalls the "tender embassy of love" that they form in the previous quatrain. Here, the "messengers" carry news of the beloved's well-being—so the speaker is also referring to literal communications (letters) exchanged between the couple.

Sibilance adds a hissing or zipping sound to "swift messengers"—perhaps mimicking the speaker's thoughts as they zoom along like industrious "messengers." Consonant /t/ sounds appear as the messengers are passing along good news ("recounting it to me"). These /t/ sounds add emphasis—and a light, tripping sound—to an upbeat moment in the poem.

The speaker continues using an extended metaphor that compares his health (or lack thereof) to the balance of his four elements (earth, water, air, and fire). According to pre-modern

science, an imbalance in these elements causes all sorts of problems. The absence of the light elements, air and fire (here standing for thoughts and desires), leaves the speaker sick and depressed. But when the lover *returns* the speaker's thoughts—sends word of his "fair health"—the speaker's own health recovers. Specifically, the speaker's "composition is recured." Here, "composition" refers to the arrangement of the speaker's elements/humors, which have now been re-balanced; it can also refer to mental soundness. Overall, then, this metaphor shows that the speaker's physical and mental well-being depend on communication with his beloved.

The speaker's description of his thoughts' "return" suggests that this process has occurred many times before. In an example of parallel phrasing, each leg of their travels begins with a time word (e.g., "until") and concludes with the direction of their travel (e.g., "from thee"). The first instance of this structure occurs in the previous quatrain:

> For when these quicker elements are gone
> In tender embassy of love to thee

And it continues throughout this quatrain:

> Until life's composition be recured
> By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
> Who even but now come back again, assured
> Of thy fair health, recounting it to me.

These repetitions reflect the cyclical nature of the speaker's emotional fluctuations. The time language in each phrase reinforces the urgency of the speaker's thoughts and desires, while the directional language calls attention to their back-and-forth flow. This passage also contains several terms with "re-" prefixes: "recured," "return'd," "recounting." Each term indicates a repetitious action; the first two also contain multiple /r/ sounds. Subtly, these repetitions evoke the routine path that the "swift messengers" travel.

Again, however, there's a new sense of hope in these lines. Enjambment, along with rhyme, draws extra attention to "recured" and "assured," which seem to linger at the end of their respective lines. These are optimistic words, relating to health and confidence.

LINES 13-14

> *This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,*
> *I send them back again and straight grow sad.*

When the speaker receives word that his lover is doing well, he celebrates. But his happiness is short-lived, as the promising message only fills him with yearning. Now sending *more* thought and desire to his beloved, the speaker immediately feels sad—again. Basically, the end of the poem shows that the speaker's emotional lows and highs form an endless cycle.

The description of the speaker's happiness is (fittingly) much shorter than the description of his sadness. He simply says, "I joy." Two caesurae set apart "I joy," creating a visual division—and rhythmic pauses—around this phrase. Thanks to these effects, the speaker's glimmer of happiness comes across as extremely brief and isolated. As long as his lover is away, the speaker mostly exists in a state of sadness, which sets in quickly ("I [...] straight grow sad").

For the first time, the speaker credits (or blames) *himself* for the disappearance of his thoughts and desires. Rather than simply describing them as "gone," he says, "I send them back." This phrasing gives the speaker agency, suggesting that he has some control over his fate. Perhaps he's increasing his own suffering by constantly seeking contact.

These lines continue the extended metaphor that compares the speaker's thoughts and desires to "messengers." He describes being "told" good news and immediately "send[ing]" these messengers "back again" to the beloved. Readers may wonder whether his uncontrollable impulse to respond is perpetuating his inner imbalance, leaving him few thoughts or desires truly his own.

Like any English sonnet, this one ends with a rhymed couplet. Here, the rhyme between "glad" and "sad"—opposite emotions—ends the poem on a note of antithesis, leaving a strong impression of the speaker's extreme emotional fluctuations.

Assonance and consonance are particularly dense in these final lines. For instance, assonant /eh/ and /ah/ as well as consonant /g/ and /n/ sounds all appear in the short phrase, "but then no longer glad, / I send them back again." Moreover, alliteration calls attention to "straight grow sad," accentuating this final expression of the speaker's pain. These dense, interlocking sounds add complexity to the couplet, evoking the speaker's complex emotional life.

The speaker describes his joy and despair using parallel syntax: "This told, I joy [...] no longer glad, / I [...] straight grow sad." The parallelism invites the audience to contrast these phrases; one is brief, like the speaker's joy, while the other is prolonged, like his sadness. Their cause-effect structure marks the speaker's emotional fluctuations as a predictable process.

These lines contain one other example of parallelism, which carries over from the previous passage: "but now come back again [...] / but then [...] / send them back again." (The word "but" actually serves two different functions here; the first time, it means "just," while the second time, it means "yet.") The repetitive structure drives home the cyclical nature of the speaker's emotions, suggesting that his woes will continue long after the poem ends.

SYMBOLS

THE FOUR ELEMENTS (AND HUMORS)

The four elements that appear throughout the poem—earth, water, air, and fire—symbolize aspects of the speaker's well-being (both physical and mental). According to pre-modern science, the whole natural world consists of these four elements, which correspond with four bodily fluids: black bile or melancholy, phlegm, yellow bile, and blood. An imbalance in the elements or humors was thought to produce ill health.

The elements' weights correspond to the speaker's emotional states: heaviness is associated with sadness and strain, while lightness is associated with mirth and vibrancy. Throughout the poem, the two lighter elements—air and fire—represent the speaker's thoughts and desires. They constantly travel to be with the speaker's beloved, so the heavier elements take over the speaker's body. He is left (according to pre-modern medicine) with an excess of black bile or melancholy, a condition that includes deep psychic despair.

The speaker's humors and elements are in constant fluctuation, making it impossible for him to maintain balance for more than a brief moment. With his lover gone, the speaker is so imbalanced and unwell that he feels close to "death"! Therefore, the elements, as symbols of the speaker's health, suggest that missing his lover causes him deep suffering, while also implying that the couple must be reunited in order for him to recover.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** “The other two, slight air and purging fire, / Are both with thee”
- **Lines 3-4:** “The first my thought, the other my desire, / These present-absent with swift motion slide”
- **Line 5:** “these quicker elements are gone”
- **Line 7:** “My life, being made of four, with two alone”
- **Line 8:** “melancholy”
- **Line 9:** “life's composition be recured”
- **Line 10:** “those swift messengers return'd”
- **Line 12:** “health”
- **Line 14:** “send them back”

POETIC DEVICES

ALLUSION

This poem alludes to two other sonnets: "Sonnet 106" in Sir Philip Sidney's *Astrophil and Stella* series, and Shakespeare's own "Sonnet 44," which appears directly before this poem in his collected *Sonnets*.

The opening line of "Sonnet 45" mentions "The other two, slight air and purging fire," without explaining what the original "two" are. (Though audiences familiar with the four classical elements can infer that the speaker means earth and water.) "Other" implies that earth and water have already been discussed, and, in fact, "Sonnet 44" describes the speaker's sorrow at being comprised "so much of" these heavier elements. In particular, the speaker wishes he were made of thought rather than flesh. His thoughts travel to be with his faraway lover at a moment's notice, while his flesh—made up of earth and water—is slow and remains behind. Still, according to "Sonnet 44," the one redeeming quality of these elements is their ability to express the pain of being apart, via "tears" that serve as "badges of [...] woe."

"Sonnet 44" presents the heavy elements as an obstacle to the speaker's communion with his love. Thus, the callback to "Sonnet 44" reinforces a stark contrast between the burdensome earth and water and the swift, vibrant air and fire. "Sonnet 44" is about the pain of "Injurious distance," so the allusion also encourages the audience to bear themes of absence and longing in mind as they continue into "Sonnet 45." Critics consider these two poems companion pieces, meant to be read together (though "Sonnet 44" can stand on its own).

In "Sonnet 45," the speaker's thoughts and desires—represented by the lighter elements, air and fire—travel back and forth between himself and his lover. He describes them as "present-absent," echoing the opening line of Sir Philip Sidney's "Sonnet 106" in *Astrophil and Stella*:

> O absent presence, Stella is not here;

Sidney's sequence of sonnets and songs is told from the perspective of Astrophil, who is enamored with Stella. Astrophil eventually learns that Stella is happily married, a fact that only heightens his desire. Stella begins to return Astrophil's affections, with the condition that their relationship remain chaste. But when Astrophil betrays Stella's terms—attempting to coerce her into sex and kissing her while she's asleep—their relationship falls apart.

"Sonnet 106" appears at the tail end of this sequence, when Astrophil's hopes for romance are crushed for the last time. Stella had fallen ill, and Astrophil, reminiscing about her pink cheeks during their tender moments, had mistaken her paleness for a sign that her body was ready for *new* love. Now, in "Sonnet 106," Astrophil scorns his previous, delusional hope, realizing that Stella won't return to him. Instead, she remains an “absent presence” in his life.

The allusion to Sidney's poem likens the speaker of “Sonnet 45” to a man who's just lost all hope of being with his beloved. In doing so, it heightens the dramatic atmosphere of "Sonnet 45" and helps show how extreme its speaker's emotions have become. The allusion probably isn't meant to invoke specific

plot points of *Astrophil and Stella*, aside from the lovers' separation—though overlapping themes (e.g., love as illness) are interesting to note! Rather, the allusion evokes a general atmosphere of high passion and doomed romance to dramatize the intensity of the speaker's feelings. The echo of Stella's "absent presence" underlines the pain and longing that constantly loom over the speaker of "Sonnet 45."

Where Allusion appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "The other two"
- **Line 4:** "present-absent"

APOSTROPHE

"Sonnet 45" addresses an absent person, making it an example of apostrophe. This device frames the poem as a direct communication with the speaker's beloved. It makes the speaker's emotional declarations seem all the more intense, concrete, and authentic.

Since apostrophe uses a second-person point of view (addresses "you" or, in this case, "thee"), it creates the impression that the speaker is also addressing *us*, the audience. By seeming to engage us in the poem's events, it heightens the poem's emotional impact. By suggesting a bond of familiarity or intimacy, it further encourages our sympathy for the speaker.

In "Sonnet 45," the speaker describes his thoughts and desires as "messengers" he sends to his beloved. The direct address implied by apostrophe reinforces the speaker's desperation to communicate with his lover. He'd rather talk face to face, but has to settle for addressing him in poems like this one—or simply in his own head.

However, apostrophe provides only the speaker's perspective on the relationship, focusing all attention on his own pain and suffering. The lover's thoughts and desires go unexplored. Though the speaker's one-sided professions of love might draw the audience's sympathies, they might also raise questions about how fully his feelings are reciprocated.

Where Apostrophe appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "thee"
- **Line 6:** "thee"
- **Line 10:** "thee"
- **Line 12:** "thy"

ASSONANCE

Examples of assonance appear intermittently throughout "Sonnet 45." Repeated, resounding vowels add to the poem's musicality, making it more harmonious and pleasurable to read. (The sonnet form has its roots in song, and Shakespeare's sonnets are famous for their lush lyricism.) For instance, long /i/ sounds appear in the first two lines, drawing the reader into the poem:

> [...] wherever I abide;
> The first my thought, the other my desire,

Assonance also calls attention to important words and the ideas they represent. For example, when the speaker sends his thoughts and desires away, assonant /eh/ sounds help emphasize his pain as sadness takes over:

> Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;

Most of the assonance in this poem involves short vowel sounds: /eh/ ("send"), /ih/ ("swift"), and /ah/ ("sad"). Short vowels generally quicken the poem's pace (similar to a staccato rhythm), reflecting the rapid motion of the speaker's thoughts and desires (as in "these quicker elements"). Occasionally, however, the repeating vowel sounds, combined with consonance, become so dense that they create "tongue twisters," as in line 4:

> These present-absent with swift motion slide.

The resulting complexity might require the audience to slow down or reread certain sections, as if they can't keep up with the swiftness of the light elements. In this way, assonance makes the sprightliness of the light elements and the burden of their heavy counterparts more vivid and memorable.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "I," "abide"
- **Line 3:** "my," "my," "desire"
- **Line 4:** "present," "absent," "with," "swift"
- **Line 5:** "when," "elements"
- **Line 6:** "tender," "embassy," "of," "love"
- **Line 7:** "My," "life"
- **Line 8:** "death," "oppressed," "melancholy"
- **Line 11:** "again," "assured"
- **Line 13:** "glad"
- **Line 14:** "back," "sad"

CAESURA

Clusters of caesurae pop up throughout the poem, controlling its rhythm by creating and reinforcing pauses. At first, caesurae help establish the poem's iambic pentameter pattern by creating regular pauses in each of the first three lines:

> The other two, || slight air and purging fire,
> Are both with thee, || wherever I abide;
> The first my thought, || the other my desire,

Because the caesurae fall in the same place in each line

(between the second and third iamb), they reinforce the regularity of the meter, easing the audience into the speaker's cadence. But after line 3, caesurae pop up more unpredictably, varying the meter so that it doesn't become too repetitive.

Caesurae become particularly dense in lines 7-8, as the speaker describes sending his thoughts and desires ("quicker elements") away to his beloved and feeling heavy and sad as a result:

> My life, || being made of four, || with two alone
> Sinks down to death, || oppressed with melancholy;

These mid-line pauses slow down the reading process, reflecting the speaker's sluggish somberness. In general, the hesitations and metrical disruptions that caesurae create in the poem can be read as signs of the speaker's faltering composure.

As caesurae create pauses within a line, they often emphasize words that might not otherwise draw notice. For instance, a caesura falls after "again" in line 11, emphasizing the repetitive nature of the speaker's emotional fluctuations. In line 8, a caesura punctuates the word "death," encouraging the audience to linger on this dramatization of the speaker's suffering.

Finally, caesurae allow for highly complex sentence rhythms, as they permit punctuation to land in the middle of lines, not just at the end. Look at the punctuation in lines 11-13, for example:

> Who even but now come back again, || assured
> Of thy fair health, || recounting it to me:
> This told, || I joy; || but then no longer glad,

Such meandering, shifting sentences subtly reflect the restless movement of the speaker's thoughts.

Where Caesura appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-1:** "two / slight"
- **Line 1:** ","
- **Lines 2-2:** "thee / wherever"
- **Line 2:** ","
- **Lines 3-3:** "thought / the"
- **Line 3:** ","
- **Lines 7-7:** "life / being"
- **Line 7:** "," ","
- **Lines 7-7:** "four / with"
- **Lines 8-8:** "death / oppressed"
- **Line 8:** ","
- **Lines 11-11:** "again / assured"
- **Line 11:** ","
- **Lines 12-12:** "health / recounting"
- **Line 12:** ","
- **Lines 13-13:** "told / I"
- **Line 13:** "," ";"
- **Lines 13-13:** "joy / but"

CONSONANCE

Throughout the poem, consonance serves some of the same functions as assonance. It keeps the reader engaged by adding musicality to the speaker's language and often emphasizes important phrases and ideas in the process.

For instance, when the heavy elements weigh the speaker's mood down (line 8), he complains that his life sinks "down to death." Here, consonant /d/ sounds accentuate the speaker's most extreme expression of his suffering. As the repeating sounds fall at the beginning of each word (and on stressed syllables), this is an example of the type of consonance called alliteration. The sound effect makes the phrase—and the speaker's emotional pain—more vivid and memorable.

Like assonance, consonance can also cause a line's sound to mimic what the line's describing. For instance, sibilant /z/, /s/, and /sh/ sounds in "These present-absent with swift motion slide" (line 4) and "those swift messengers" (line 10) give the verse a whispering or hissing quality. This quality reinforces the speaker's description of his thoughts and desires as light, swiftly moving elements (air and fire, which can whisper, sizzle, and hiss). By intensifying the poem's imagery, consonance underscores the restless intensity of the speaker's longing.

Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "The," "other," "air," "purging," "fire"
- **Line 2:** "Are," "both," "with," "thee," "wherever"
- **Line 3:** "The," "first," "thought," "the," "other," "desire"
- **Line 4:** "These," "present," "absent," "with," "swift," "slide"
- **Line 5:** "elements," "gone"
- **Line 6:** "In," "tender"
- **Line 7:** "life," "of," "four," "alone"
- **Line 8:** "Sinks," "down," "death," "melancholy"
- **Line 9:** "Until," "life's," "composition," "recured"
- **Line 10:** "those," "swift," "messengers," "return'd," "from"
- **Line 11:** "come," "back," "assured"
- **Line 12:** "fair," "recounting," "it," "to"
- **Line 13:** "told," "but," "then," "no," "longer," "glad"
- **Line 14:** "send," "back," "again," "and," "straight," "grow," "sad"

ENJAMBMENT

Most of "Sonnet 45" consists of end-stopped lines, which reinforce the poem's rhythm through regular pauses and give the speaker's statements a sense of finality. However, the poem also contains four instances of enjambment, which have the opposite effect: varying the rhythm and creating anticipation and ambiguity (rather than assurance or finality).

Enjambment requires the reader to read on past the line break in order to reach the end of a clause or sentence. It thus creates anticipation and causes the verse to gain speed and momentum, which here reflect the swift elements the speaker describes. Look at lines 5-6, for instance:

> For when these quicker elements are gone
> In tender embassy of love to thee,

Notice how enjambment suggests a continuous flow of thought. In this way, it also reinforces the constant, uncontrollable nature of the speaker's thoughts and desires, which spill over from one line into the next.

Because end-stopped lines are the norm in this poem, the unpunctuated words at the end of enjambed lines draw increased attention, seeming to linger in the air for a moment. In the above example, the enjambment after "gone" emphasizes the speaker's sense of emptiness in the absence of his "quicker elements."

Finally, the four examples of enjambment in this poem follow rhyme words: "gone"/"alone" and "recured"/"assured." The combination of rhyme and enjambment draws extra attention to these words. In the first rhyme pair, this device helps highlight the speaker's loneliness when the fast elements are away. Later, when the speaker receives good news, the strong rhyme between "recured" and "assured" highlights the speaker's restored health (and the accompanying atmosphere of hope). In this way, the poem's enjambments make the speaker's emotions more prominent.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 5-6:** "gone / In"
- **Lines 7-8:** "alone / Sinks"
- **Lines 9-10:** "recured / By"
- **Lines 11-12:** "assured / Of"

JUXTAPOSITION

Throughout the poem, the speaker juxtaposes the fast and slow elements (air and fire vs. earth and water), which represent different parts of his being. This device reinforces the speaker's internal divisions and emotional fluctuations.

Air and fire, representing the speaker's thoughts and desires, are described as "these quicker elements," which travel "with swift motion." The slower elements, by contrast, are so heavy that the speaker "sinks down to death" when they're left to take over. The juxtaposition (carried over from "Sonnet 44") thus highlights the vibrancy and liveliness of the light elements as well as the gloom and burden of their heavy counterparts. It clearly shows the speaker's preference for the air and fire, reinforcing how necessary they are to his well-being.

The speaker also contrasts the harmony and contentment he (briefly) feels when all four elements are reunited with the pain and imbalance he feels when they're apart. That is, "when these quicker elements are gone," the speaker is "oppressed with melancholy" (i.e., suffers from something like severe depression). However, once "those swift messengers [have] return'd," the speaker is "recured" (healed). The speaker even briefly experiences "joy" when his thoughts and desires are back, but immediately "grow[s] sad" upon sending them away once again. Thus, juxtaposition shows how huge an impact these fluctuations have on the speaker—and suggests, in turn, that constantly longing for a loved one causes a devastating sense of imbalance.

Finally, the speaker juxtaposes the two locations that the lighter elements travel between—that is, wherever the speaker is ("wherever I abide"), and wherever his beloved is ("with thee"). The distance between the speaker and his beloved comes across as burdensome; meanwhile, the speaker's thoughts and desires appear hardworking, desperate to unite the two lovers across whatever distance necessary. The phrase "present-absent"—which suggests that the speaker's thoughts and desires are here one minute, gone the next—heightens the audience's awareness that the light elements have no fixed "home," but are always bouncing between the speaker and his beloved. Therefore, balance and inner peace seem unattainable for this speaker.

Where Juxtaposition appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "with thee, wherever I abide"
- **Line 4:** "present-absent," "with swift motion slide"
- **Line 5:** "these quicker elements are gone"
- **Line 7:** "being made of four, with two alone"
- **Line 8:** "Sinks down to death," "oppressed with melancholy"
- **Line 9:** "composition be recured"
- **Line 10:** " swift messengers return'd"
- **Line 13:** "I joy"
- **Line 14:** "grow sad"

METAPHOR

Throughout the poem, the speaker describes his emotional pain as an imbalance in the four classical elements, producing an extended metaphor. The speaker directly compares his thoughts and desires to air and fire, the lighter elements. The heavy elements, earth and water, represent his body (explicitly in "Sonnet 44" and implicitly in this poem).

As the speaker describes the light elements traveling quickly and the slow, heavy elements dragging the speaker "down to death," the underlying metaphor seems to personify the elements. The elements effectively become characters in their own right, helping the audience imagine the various parts of the speaker they represent. This device makes the speaker's internal conflict and emotional fluctuations more vivid and

engaging.

According to pre-modern science, the four elements corresponded with four bodily fluids, or "humors," which themselves represented four personality types, or "temperaments" (depending on which humor was dominant). Like the elements, the fluids were believed to influence one's health and behavior, and an imbalance would lead to illness.

The speaker of this poem refers to an excess of black bile (or "melancholy"), which corresponds with earth:

- Melancholy is associated with a serious, analytical disposition, but in excess, it was believed to cause deep sadness, lethargy, and despair (a condition similar to depression). Thus, this metaphor casts the speaker's longing as a health condition (one that brings him close to "death"), dramatizing his pain to express the difficulty of his lover's absence.
- The metaphor also emphasizes how the speaker's well-being is tied to his relationship, as only hearing from his lover restores his health.

"Sonnet 45" also contains a series of metaphors that compare the lighter elements to "swift messengers":

- These descriptions emphasize their speed and the long, repetitive distances they travel. The speaker's thoughts and desires are shown doing important work on the speaker's behalf, laboring to keep his relationship alive and (briefly) restoring his health, all by transmitting messages. He describes them reaching out in "tender embassy of love," recalling foreign ambassadors who would propose marriage between royal families in order to secure alliances.
- Of course, this description also suggests a more literal correspondence between the lovers, as the two send their thoughts to each other in letters—or in poems like this one!
- Above all, the metaphor illustrates the speaker's deep investment in the relationship: he's so desperate for it to progress (or simply survive) across distance that he constantly sends his thoughts and desires away, even as doing so causes his emotional "death."

Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-2
- Lines 3-4
- Lines 5-6
- Lines 7-8
- Line 9
- Lines 10-12
- Line 14

PARALLELISM

Examples of parallelism appear throughout the poem. When the speaker first compares his thoughts and desires to the light elements, "slight air and purging fire," he characterizes the two elements in parallel, linking them through shared grammatical structure (adjective + noun). He then describes air and fire as: "The first my thought, the other my desire." The parallel clauses ("The ___ my ___") lay out the poem's extended metaphor in an easy-to-follow format, both distinguishing between the elements and suggesting their joint importance.

The speaker then uses parallelism to describe the specific movements of his thoughts and desires, allowing the reader to "track" them through the poem. One example spans lines 5-12:

> For when these quicker elements are gone
> In tender embassy of love to thee,
> [...]
> Until life's composition be recured
> By those swift messengers return'd from thee,
> Who even but now come back again, assured
> Of thy fair health, recounting it to me:

In this case, terms denoting time ("until," "but now," etc.) begin each phrase, while directional language (e.g., "from thee [...] to me") is repeated at the end of each. Here, parallelism accentuates the constant to-and-fro movement of the light elements, illustrating the speaker's dramatic emotional fluctuations.

Language denoting time reappears as the speaker sends and receives these thoughts/desires as "swift messengers" of love in lines 13-14: "[...] but then no longer glad, / I send them back again and straight grow sad." Although these lines aren't set in grammatical parallel, notice the repetitious phrasing: "but now" (line 11) and "but then" (line 13) and "back again" (line 11) and "back again" (line 14).

In this way, the speaker traces the "steps" of his thoughts and desires throughout the poem; just when one leg of their journey ends, a "but then" statement arrives, starting another. Parallelism makes his explanation of this process sound clear, insistent, and urgent. The repetitious sentence structures also suggest ongoing action (as in the repetition of "again"), stressing the cyclical nature of the speaker's emotions.

Finally, in the poem's closing antithesis, which contrasts the speaker's two main emotional states, the speaker uses parallel structure to accentuate the contrast:

> This told, I joy; but then no longer glad,
> I send them back again and straight grow sad.

Notice how short the statement "I joy" is compared to the parallel, but drawn-out, "I [...] grow sad"! This contrast wittily

suggests how brief the speaker's happiness is and how prolonged his suffering is (or feels).

Where Parallelism appears in the poem:

- Line 1
- Line 3
- Lines 5-6
- Lines 9-10
- Lines 11-12
- Line 13
- Lines 13-14
- Line 14

VOCABULARY

Slight (Line 1) - Lightweight and delicate.

Purging (Line 1) - Cleansing; purifying.

Abide (Line 2) - Live; reside.

Quicker (Line 5) - Moving at a faster pace. "Quick" can also be used to describe someone's temperament—as perceptive and keen, and/or excitable. Other, more archaic definitions include "alive" and "fiery." All these definitions suggest that the absent elements are vibrant and lively.

Elements (Line 5) - In general, an element is a part of something, like a building block. According to pre-modern science, all matter is made up of four elements—earth, water, air, and fire. Earth and water were thought to be slower and heavier, while air and fire ("these quicker elements") were considered swift and light.

Embassy (Line 6) - Here, "embassy" refers to a body of ambassadors or an ambassadorial mission. It can also mean the place where officials from a foreign government pass along messages and maintain international relations. In Shakespeare's time, many embassies sought to arrange marriages between royal families that would secure alliances. This term suggests that the speaker's thoughts and desires bring warm messages to the faraway lover.

Melancholy (Line 8) - Another term for black bile, one of four fluids thought to control the human body. An excess of black bile—the condition that the speaker describes here—was said to produce a "melancholic" temperament, including sadness, despair, and lethargy (something akin to depression).

Composition (Line 9) - The particular arrangement or makeup of something (in this case, the balance of the elements within the speaker). "Composition" sometimes also refers to someone's mental well-being.

Recured (Line 9) - Brought back to heath.

Fair (Line 12) - Fine or good. When used to describe people, "fair" can also mean attractive, so here it may imply that the speaker's faraway love is beautiful.

Recounting (Line 12) - Giving a description of something; telling someone about something (in this case, the beloved's health).

Joy (Line 13) - Here, a verb meaning "rejoice."

Straight (Line 14) - A shortened form of "straightaway"; immediately.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"Sonnet 45" is a Shakespearean sonnet, also called an English or Elizabethan sonnet. This variation on the Petrarchan sonnet contains 14 lines of iambic pentameter (meaning that each line contains 10 syllables following an unstressed-stressed pattern). Moreover, Shakespearean sonnets traditionally follow a strict rhyme scheme that divides the poem into three quatrains (four-line stanzas) and a final couplet:

- Quatrain
- Quatrain
- Quatrain
- Couplet

Sonnets traditionally grapple with a problem or internal conflict. In Shakespeare's sonnets, the quatrains typically lay out the problem, while the final couplet, making a shift known as the *volta* or turn, provides a response. In this poem, the structure helps illustrate the speaker's emotional turmoil by tracing the cyclical movement of his thoughts and desires.

This first quatrain sets up the speaker's dilemma: his thoughts and desires are always traveling to be with his faraway lover. The second quatrain shows the speaker's pain while they're away. The third brings a glimmer of hope when they return with good news. However, the final couplet reveals that the speaker's longing is sparked anew, starting the whole process over again. Rather than providing a resolution, then, this poem's closing couplet implies that the speaker's suffering will continue as long as the lover is away.

METER

A classic English sonnet, this poem is written in iambic pentameter, which means that there are 10 syllables per line, alternating between unstressed and stressed beats. For example, take a look at the meter in the opening line:

The oth- | er two, | slight air | and pur- | ging fire,

The repeated rises and falls of the iambs create a da-DUM da-DUM rhythm that's often compared to a heartbeat—one reason this form is a popular choice for love poems. The

speaker's cadence thus subtly reflects his passion.

The faint metrical "heartbeat" also reinforces the poem's health imagery (i.e., descriptions of the four elements and humors). Any metrical disturbances, then, could suggest an irregular heartbeat and weakened vitality. And, in fact, when the heavy elements take over the speaker's body in lines 7-8, the verse's rhythm slows down:

> My life, being made of four, with two alone
> Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy;

There's a spondee at the start of line 8, thanks to the two heavy stresses of "Sinks down." The word "being" squeezes two unstressed syllables into a metrical position where there would normally be one (it's pronounced with a single syllable here, like "beeng"). "Melancholy" must be pronounced as MEL-an-CLEE (not MEL-an-COL-lee) in order to fit within the meter and rhyme scheme. But anyway you say it, it's a mouthful! These lines are metrically dense and difficult compared to the "quicker" lines 5-6. The disruptive variations help illustrate the speaker's pain.

This poem contains another interesting metrical quirk in line 11:

> Who even but now come back again, assured

For metrical purposes, "even" was generally treated as one syllable in Shakespeare's day, and sometimes written as the contraction "e'en" (pronounced EEN) for that reason. But this packing of two syllables into one still draws attention to itself. Here, it helps emphasize the phrase "even but now," which increases the atmosphere of urgency and anticipation as the light elements return to a speaker who desperately needs them.

RHYME SCHEME

This poem mostly follows the traditional rhyme scheme of Shakespearean sonnets:

ABABCDCDEFEFGG

However, the speaker repeats the "D" rhyme sound (lines 6 and 8; "thee"/"melancholy") in lines 10 and 12 ("thee"/"me"). So the pattern really looks more like this:

ABABCDCDEDEDFF

The rhyme schemes of sonnets divide them into smaller units, and here, the continuation of "D" rhymes creates the impression of ongoing/extended action. Fittingly, these lines describe the movements of the speaker's thoughts and desires, constantly passing between the speaker and his beloved ("to thee [...] from thee [...] to me"). The reappearance of rhyme sounds drives home the repetitive, cyclical nature of the speaker's emotional turmoil.

Rhymes can also create or emphasize connections between important words. The rhyme between "recured" and "assured" creates an impression of hope and restored balance. The rhyme between "glad" and "sad," on the other hand, highlights the contrast between two emotions that the speaker experiences.

SPEAKER

The speaker of "Sonnet 45" is, in a word, lovesick. He can't seem to do anything but pine for his faraway lover, constantly sending thoughts and desires his way. As a result, the speaker experiences extreme emotional turmoil and feels like he's on the brink of "death."

Based on the surrounding sonnets in Shakespeare's sequence, the poem's speaker is generally understood to be male and addressing a male beloved. Aside from his ongoing psychic imbalance, very little information about the speaker can be gleaned from this particular poem. Instead, "Sonnet 45" plunges the audience into the speaker's emotional state, which seems to consume his daily life and sense of self.

Shakespeare's sonnets are sometimes read as autobiographical and thought to contain clues about his relationships. However, there isn't much concrete evidence to support this theory. So while the sonnets certainly reflect the writer's concerns and interests—perhaps even some of his emotions and struggles—they don't necessarily present a factual account of his life.

SETTING

Shakespeare wrote "Sonnet 45" in England at the end of the 16th century, but the poem doesn't mention a specific location or time period. Rather than focus on his physical environment, the speaker is so wrapped up in his relationship that he even describes his setting with reference to it. The poem takes place between "wherever I abide"—that is, the speaker's home—and "with thee"—wherever his beloved happens to be.

In a way, then, the true "setting" of the poem is the relationship that spans both locales. The speaker describes this relationship as intense, loving, and devastating all at once. Thinking about it, maintaining it, etc. totally consumes the speaker, leaving him with little sense of place or self beyond its ups and downs.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Celebrated as one of the world's great authors, William Shakespeare was a highly successful playwright and poet in his own time. His popularity grew throughout the 1590s, the period in which he probably wrote "Sonnet 45." His collected

Sonnets were first published in 1609, but their intended order and narrative (if any) remain subjects of debate.

The English sonnet began when Thomas Wyatt ("I Find No Peace") translated Petrarch's sonnets, which follow a different formal pattern. The Earl of Surrey quickly constructed a new rhyme scheme for the adapted form, giving us the English sonnet we know and love today. Philip Sidney ("Sonnet 89"), a contemporary of Shakespeare, helped popularize the form, kicking off the trend of the "Elizabethan sonnet cycle" with the publication of *Astrophil and Stella* in 1591. Traditionally, a sonnet cycle is a series of sonnets that tells the story of a tragic romance—typically from the perspective of an adoring, misguided male speaker who praises an attractive woman. The relationship most often ends with the speaker losing his love and descending into despair.

However, Shakespeare pushed the English sonnet to its formal limits, taking advantage of the opportunities it presents for wordplay, surprise, and emotional expression. He is known for revolutionizing the form, which has become synonymous with his name (the English sonnet is now commonly called the Shakespearean sonnet).

Moreover, Shakespeare's collected *Sonnets* upends many of the conventions of the sonnet cycle. The initial "Fair Youth" sequence (Sonnets 1-126) doesn't praise the beauty of a young woman; it addresses a striking nobleman who repeatedly betrays the speaker. In the "Dark Lady" sequence (Sonnets 127-154), the speaker turns his attention to a woman whose supposedly unattractive qualities—she has dark features (not conventionally beautiful according to the standards of Shakespeare's time) and a scheming personality—only attract the speaker to her more. Of course, both relationships end in tragedy and the speaker's despair. But the complicated, often torturous love these poems describe was radical for Shakespeare's time.

Shakespeare's collected *Sonnets* don't seem to have had as much initial success as his poem *Venus and Adonis* or his most popular plays. Still, they have influenced poetry, literary culture, and popular culture from the time of their publication until today. References to the *Sonnets* pop up everywhere from movies to song lyrics to everyday conversation, shaping our shared understanding of love.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

While "Sonnet 45" doesn't reference any particular historical events, it does refer at length to pre-modern scientific beliefs. Though the details varied over time, a belief in the four elements—earth, water, air, and fire—was the foundation of (Western) science and medicine from antiquity until the 19th century.

These four elements were thought to comprise the entire natural world. Each corresponded with a "humor" or bodily fluid: phlegm, yellow bile, black bile (or melancholy), and blood. These elements and humors were each believed to hold distinct qualities, controlling health, personality, and behavior (among other things).

Illnesses of mind, body, and spirit were all considered humoral imbalances. In fact, by the Elizabethan era, when this poem was written, psychological struggles were seen as medical conditions. In a sort of precursor to our modern understanding of mood disorders, the effect of emotions on the body was increasingly recognized and stressed during this period. For Shakespeare and his contemporaries, the ideal of health encompassed a fit mind, body, and soul, so relating emotional suffering to an elemental imbalance was a perfectly normal—even highly *rational*—way for people to understand their feelings.

Some scholars believe that Shakespeare wrote many of his sonnets during a quarantine to prevent the spread of bubonic plague. There was an outbreak in London from 1592-93 and another in 1603, with the latter closing down theaters and preventing public gatherings for most of the next decade. The young, prominent playwright may have turned to sonnet-writing at this time (though he kept working on plays, too!).

Scholars have mined Shakespeare's *Sonnets* for insights into his personality and experience. Although the poems are often assumed to be autobiographical, it's difficult to find any concrete connections between the events of the sonnets and those of Shakespeare's life. Therefore, while the speaker's concerns and interests undoubtedly gesture toward some of Shakespeare's own, "Sonnet 45" (and the *Sonnets* in general) shouldn't be interpreted as a literal record of his life.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- First Edition of Shakespeare's Sonnets — Read "Sonnet 45" (and the rest of the sequence) as it was originally circulated in 1609. (https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/first-edition-of-shakespeares-sonnets-1609)
- The Poem Aloud — Listen to a recitation of "Sonnet 45." Note the modern-day English pronunciation, which is slightly different than the poem would have sounded in Shakespeare's day. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vy8sXbSM8ck)
- The Poem's "Companion" — Read "Sonnet 44," which appears directly before this poem in Shakespeare's sequence of sonnets and is often considered its companion piece. (http://www.shakespeares-sonnets.com/sonnet/44)
- The Elizabethan Sonnet Sequence — Learn more about the

sonnet cycle format, including Sir Philip Sidney's sequence, which established the trend and which Shakespeare references in this poem. (https://www.britannica.com/art/English-literature/The-sonnet-sequence)

- Shakespeare and the Four Humors — A brief explanation of the four humors, with links to related documents and information about their appearance in Shakespeare's plays. (https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/shakespeare/fourhumors.html)
- "The Balance of Passions" — Learn more about humorism through an exhibition on the history of Emotions and Disease. (https://www.nlm.nih.gov/exhibition/emotions/balance.html)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE POEMS

- Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds
- Sonnet 129: Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
- Sonnet 12: When I do count the clock that tells the time
- Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun
- Sonnet 138: When my love swears that she is made of truth
- Sonnet 147: My love is as a fever, longing still
- Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
- Sonnet 19: Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws
- Sonnet 20: A woman's face with nature's own hand painted
- Sonnet 27: "Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed"
- Sonnet 29: When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
- Sonnet 30: When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
- Sonnet 33: Full many a glorious morning have I seen
- Sonnet 55: Not marble nor the gilded monuments
- Sonnet 60: Like as the waves make towards the pebbl'd shore
- Sonnet 65 ("Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea")
- Sonnet 71: No longer mourn for me when I am dead
- Sonnet 73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold
- Sonnet 94: "They that have power to hurt"

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