My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date;
But when in thee time’s furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.
For all that beauty that doth cover thee
Is but the seemly raiment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me.
How can I then be elder than thou art?
O therefore, love, be of thy self so wary,
As I not for my self, but for thee will,
Bearing thy heart, which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill.

Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain,
Thou gav’st me thine not to give back again.
The chief theme of Sonnet 22 is that of “one soul in bodies twain,” a commonplace in Elizabethan literature. Enthusiastically, the speaker claims in the second quatrains that his friend’s beauty is “the seemly raiment” (l. 6) of his heart because the speaker’s heart is in the friend’s breast and vice versa. The speaker continues this fanciful argument by asserting that they are therefore the same and one cannot be older than the other. Moreover, they must be mutually caring: Like a “tender nurse” (l. 12) each must shield the other from illness.

With a slightly saucy warning in the couplet, the speaker declares that his friend must not count on getting his heart back when the speaker dies because, according to the tradition, when the friend gave his heart to the speaker he did so for eternity.