

*Then let not winter's wragged hand deface  
 In thee thy summer ere thou be distil'd:  
 Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place,  
 With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed.  
 That use is not forbidden usury,  
 Which happies those that pay the willing loan;  
 That's for thyself to breed another thee,  
 Or ten times happier be it ten for one.  
 Ten times thy self were happier than thou art,  
 If ten of thine ten times refigured thee;  
 Then what could death do if thou shouldst depart,  
 Leaving thee living in posterity?  
     Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair  
     To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.*

**T**he *then* which opens this sonnet provides a surprise connection with Sonnet 5. It makes the whole of the preceding poem into a premise and therefore Sonnet 6 becomes its momentous logical conclusion. Just when the reader—and the youth—thought the argument had been abandoned, it surfaces again. The speaker tells the youth to make “some sweet vial” (l. 3) before winter “defaces” (l. 1) his summer. Enrich, he says, “some place” (a womb) with “beauty’s treasure” (his semen) before the summer—and therefore his potency—dies a natural death.

Causing wealth to increase in that fashion is not unlawful usury because it makes those happy who pay the loan freely, that is to say, the women who have the beautiful children. Thus, says the speaker, happiness will come to you as the breeder of another self. In fact, if you beget ten children you will be ten times happier. After his usual fashion, the speaker expands the hyperbole, envisioning one hundred grandchildren for the young man. The climax, as we might expect, is the defeat of death by living on through such ample posterity.

The tone has become a combination of the serious and the comic, not unlike that of pompous Polonius. A touch of the comic is followed by more than a touch of the macabre. The last command

that the speaker gives to the youth is to abandon selfishness. He is much too beautiful and virtuous ("fair" embodies both) to be conquered by death and thereby forced to bequeath everything to worms.

Note: the repetition of *self* in *self-killed* (l. 4) and *self-willed* (l. 13) is a subtle echo of the self as foe in Sonnet 1 (l. 8), thus carrying forward the thread of self-betrayal.