

*Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye  
 That thou consum'st thy self in single life?  
 Ah, if thou issueless shalt hap to die,  
 The world will wail thee like a makeless wife,  
 The world will be thy widow and still weep,  
 That thou no form of thee hast left behind,  
 When every private widow well may keep,  
 By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind:  
 Look what an unthrift in the world doth spend  
 Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it,  
 But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,  
 And kept unused the user so destroys it:  
     No love toward others in that bosom sits  
     That on himself such murderous shame commits.*

**L**ike Sonnet 8, this poem moves away from the hearty visions of procreation (in Sonnet 6) and the admiration of the public (in Sonnet 7) to serious family concerns and the youth's relation to the larger world of others. The expanding vision is accompanied by tightening arguments. The final warnings move from "Thou single wilt prove none" (i.e., a happy father in Sonnet 8) to the youth's possibly committing "Murderous shame" on himself. (l. 14)—in other words, self-betrayal. The tone of voice shifts from quiet encouragement to serious threatening. And, as elsewhere, the threat involves that powerful force called "the world" (the phrase is used five times).

Like Sonnet 8, this poem begins with a concerned, almost pitying question. Here it is a question of life and death, whereas in the previous sonnet it was inexplicable sadness. From the youth's possible fear of "wetting a widow's eye" (l. 1), the image shifts to the youth's possible death as a childless man and the world's mourning for him as if it were a mateless wife. (l. 4) The world will continue to weep, because he will have left no replica of himself behind. By contrast, every true widow with children would have the happiness of looking at her husband's image in her children's eyes.

After the octave, the admonition becomes more emphatic, beginning with the imperative "Look." Understand, says the speaker, that a

spendthrift does not hurt the world; he simply circulates his wealth. Beauty, however, if wasted, dies in the world, and if it is unused (in procreation) it is destroyed forever. Finally, the youth would commit the murderous sin of not showing love for others. The speaker, as usual, is hyperbolic--almost ridiculous in his argument—but his rhetoric has emotive force—or so he hopes. The idea of showing love for others, however, is crucial in the speaker's own development because one of those others is himself.