

*Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
 Some in their wealth, some in their bodies' force,
 Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill,
 Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;
 And every humor hath his adjunct pleasure,
 Wherein it finds a joy above the rest.
 But these particulars are not my measure;
 All these I better in one general best:
 Thy love is better than high birth to me,
 Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
 Of more delight than hawks or horses be:
 And having thee, of all men's pride I boast;
 Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
 All this away, and me most wretched make.*

At first we seem to be thrown into another world. The subject is personal pride, specifically what various men prize the most. It's an interesting list, given in virtually anti-climactic order: social class, special ability, wealth, bodily strength, clothes ("though newfangled ill," an irresistible jab at fashion), and prestigious animals – hawks, hounds, and horses. Clearly this list presents the values of "the world," which has been in the sonnets as a whole a force to be both satirized and feared.

The second quatrain is transitional, abstract, and climactic. Every temperament ("humor," l. 5) has its own pleasure which gives the greatest joy. But the speaker flatly rejects this measure of value, and asserts his superiority to "the world" in one "general best." (l. 8) This, he announces at the opening of the sestet, is the love of his friend, whom he now addresses directly. Then he declares that he is both richer and happier than the privileged folk cited in the first quatrain. In having his friend, he can boast of what is more valuable than other men's pride.

At the back of his mind the speaker must have kept the maxim "pride cometh before a fall," because in the couplet he confesses to being "wretched" because his friend might take away his pride and joy – and make him the most wretched one of all.