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Emma Hallock
Utah State University

Sarah Kohler
Utah State University

Thomas Lee
Utah State University

Hannah Liddiard
Utah State University

Becca Swan
Utah State University

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Emma Hallock, Sarah Kohler, Thomas Lee, Hannah Liddiard, and Becca Swan

Utah State University
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



Guercino. *St Francis with an Angel*, 1620

The Fair Young Man

- Sonnet 42 reveals that the fair young man has betrayed the poet with his mistress.
- The poet does not care about the mistress' infidelity because he really wants to be with the young man.
- The poet struggles with his jealousy of the mistress because she gets to be with the man he loves.
- This is the first mention of the love triangle in the sonnet sequence. The poet thinks that the young man loves the woman only "because thou know'st I love her" (6).

*If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain
And losing her, my friend hath found that loss*
- Sonnet 42

Sonnet 144

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still.
The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman colored ill.
To win me soon to hell my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turned fiend
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
But being both from me, both to each friend
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

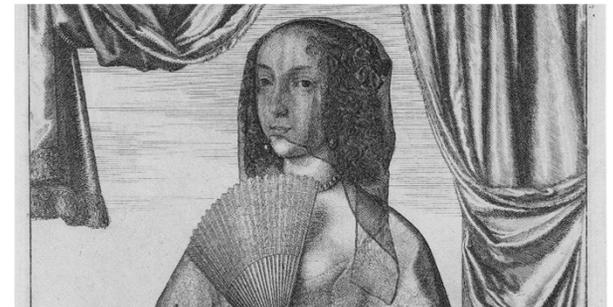
The Love Triangle

Unlike most sonnet sequences, in Shakespeare's there are two beloveds – a man and a woman. Throughout the sonnet sequence, both beloveds betray the poet. Sonnet 144 refers to both loves. The poet sets one against the other as if they were angels on his shoulder, fair young man versus dark lady. This is a metaphor for the inner psychological turmoil that the poet feels concerning his heart, and who he truly wants to be with.

*For, thou betraying me, I do betray
My nobler part to my gross body's treason.*
- Sonnet 151

The Dark Lady

- Sonnet 151 tells how the dark lady has betrayed the poet and the poet betrays himself by continuing to love her.
- The poet begins by telling the lady she should not look for his flaws because she might be equally flawed.
- This sonnet is one of the most overtly sexual. The poet admits that his relationship with the dark lady is lustful, not loving.
- The poet does not understand why he loves her, but chooses to continue to do so and betray himself.



Hollar, Wenceslaus. *Aestas = Summer*, 1641