In 1921, the only year separating the first and final editions of “A Few Figs from Thistles,” The Measure, a poetry magazine, published a review by Frank Hill, who charged the book with the quality of being a collection of lyrics “in which the author is spying upon herself” (25). With so many different tones and attitudes, however, it is difficult to believe that this book was a product of one person spying on themselves; Millay’s collection possess the kind of human truth that transcends the boundaries of one person alone. While Millay’s collection, however, speaks such universal truth that it cannot reasonably be seen as one person spying on herself and instead must be recognized as one person spying on humanity. Though, as is exposed through the careful analysis of the formal elements and placement of “Midnight Oil” and “First Fig,” as well as the consideration of the work as whole, one person’s findings on the universe will always inevitably be different from another’s. Millay’s work teaches its audience that experiences and the way we deal with them are not unlike the perception of time, or even the interpretation of a poem in that all things are relative.

When “First Fig” and “Midnight Oil” are juxtaposed, it is clear that they are, in essence, doppelgangers. There is overwhelming evidence for their pairing on the grounds of formal elements alone. Both poems, for instance, exist within four end-stopped lines that address time and the night, allude to light (“First Fig” in its use of candle and “Midnight Oil” in its title”), contain a dash after the word friend (third line), and follow a simple “ABAB” abbreviated rhyme scheme. Their similarities, however potent, do not speak quite as loudly as their differences. While on the surface the two pieces match up nearly perfectly in form, the emotional connotations of “First Fig” are the antithesis to those of “Midnight Oil,” which is why their juxtaposition is so relevant in understanding relativity as a theme in *A Few Figs from Thistles.* The attitude of the poet-speaker in “First Fig” is one best described as whimsical acceptance; the lines of this opening piece reflect more than anything a belief in the celebration of the time one has and a blatant support of the carpe diem mentality. In contrast, “Midnight Oil,” in approaching the same conceptual ideas sets a rather defiant tone when its poet-speaker challenges the universe to bring forth the night and attempt to cut “each day to half its length.” It is, to this poet-speakers mind, a matter simply of taking control of time, while its counterpart, the poet-speaker of “First Fig,” exudes an exuberant amount of interest in not taking control of, but appreciating, the “lovely light” in the time that he or she possesses. The very notion that two fundamentally different takes on the same ideas can co-exist within one collection sheds light on Millay’s thematic truth. While two people, or even one person at different times, can live through a single event, the experience itself is relative to the person experiencing it and that person’s relationship with the role that he or she is playing in his or her world.   
 At the beginning of the collection it would seem that the role that the poet-speaker plays in his or her world is radically different from the role that the poet-speaker in “Midnight Oil” plays in his or hers. By this token, the order of the pieces in relation to the other poems in Millay’s collection, also contribute to their significance thematically. One can look at the collection as a life of its own. In starting said life with “First Fig” in all of its glorious optimism, readers begin the journey of life within the context of the collection as one ought to begin all things, free of outside burden. In fact, the only burden placed upon the reader at the beginning of the collection is that of a double ended candle and the poem reassures us that even that ought not to be a burden. “Midnight Oil,” however, carries the burdens of all its poetic predecessors. The concept of time and its transience takes on an entirely new meaning when it is explored after such emotionally charged pieces as “The Prisoner”, “Grown-Up” and “Portrait by a Neighbor.” The perception of time and life itself has, by the time a sequential reader reaches “Midnight Oil,” changed relative to the experience they have gained in the reading of other poems. The placement of the more defiant and willful “Midnight Oil” suggests that a person’s perception of life is easily jaded by the life that he or she leads. When the theme of relativity is applied to one’s own life it holds up quite soundly within the context of this understanding. For instance, relative to the proverbial stage in one’s life, the perception, significance and consideration of an event may vary, and two different people with separate and varying burdens or emotional baggage will view the world through different scopes relative to their own milestone predecessors. The pairing of “Midnight Oil” and “First Fig”, nay, Millay’s collection as a whole, is simply a reflection of that universal truth.   
 . While “Midnight Oil” and “First Fig” clearly epitomize the theme, the theme itself could not be proven without the presence of the other 21 poems in the collection to support it. In fact, other poems share similar doppelganger elements that further the thematic statement made so clear by our initial pairing. For instance, if one were to look at “Recuredo” and “MacDougal Street,” one might be intrigued to find, once again, two different commentaries on the same concept and experience of love and intimacy. Or, in another instance, “The Prisoner” and “Merry Maid,” both of whom speak to the frustrations of womanhood, but each from a different scope. While any poet may explore different angles from which to attack a subject, the significance of Millay’s *A Few Figs from Thistles,* is that she puts these different angles together in one context for the reader to attempt to deconstruct and interpret and in doing so leads her readers to new conclusions about life and it’s duality, and more so relativity. The analysis of all 23 poems leaves the reader with more than a few new ideas on life and the struggles of human beings as a whole, but, depending on who the reader is, the understanding of life and its struggles will be different, further proof that Millay’s careful grouping is a tribute to relativity.

While to some the idea of relative interpretation might seem obvious, the ideas and issues set forth in Edna St. Vincent Millay’s 1922 publication are rarely explored by two simultaneous viewpoints; love rarely seen from the eyes of both lovers, maturity rarely understood from the stance of two people, and at the root of it all, time and they way we spend it rarely understood dually for its beauty and its urgency. In juxtaposing not only “Midnight Oil” and “First Fig,” Millay teaches a lesson of relativity that opens for the reader new doors in terms of understanding their fellow human beings, and more importantly, understanding themselves the way they might understand a poem, with the preconditioned notion that there is never one right answer.