

*My love is strengthened though more weak in seeming;
 I love not less, though less the show appear.
 That love is merchandised, whose rich esteeming
 The owner's tongue doth publish everywhere.
 Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
 When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
 As Philomel in summer's front doth sing,
 And stops her pipe in growth of riper days.
 Not that the summer is less pleasant now
 Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
 But that wild music burthens every bough,
 And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
 Therefore, like her, I sometime hold my tongue
 Because I would not dull you with my song.*

The paradox that opens Sonnet 102 connects with the preceding poem largely by the thread of appearance versus reality. The words *seem* and *show* both occur in the last line of Sonnet 101 and *seeming* and *show* appear in the first and second lines, respectively, of Sonnet 102. But the differences between the two poems are more striking: the former is devoted to apostrophes to the muse; the latter does not even mention the muse but consists of an argument addressed to the friend and explaining the speaker's silence. Arguing that his love is stronger though it appears weaker, the speaker claims that reticence is better than "merchandized" love, which is hawked everywhere.

The bulk of the sonnet is devoted to nostalgia for the early days of the pair's love when the speaker greeted the springtime with his songs. These, like those of Philomel (the nightingale), were stronger then than in summer when Philomel stopped her pipe. It is not, the speaker says, that summer is less pleasant than when Philomel's "mournful hymns did hush the night" but that "wild music burdens every bough." (ll. 10-11) The reason is that love ceases to be as sweet as it was.

In the larger context of the poetry, Philomel, whose famous myth juxtaposes the extremes of pain and ecstasy, represents the reality of love, which is tinged with sorrow. The argument concludes with the speaker's declaration that he will

hold his tongue like the nightingale because he does not want to bore his friend with his song. But his song is his poem, and he is already singing it. And so there is the appearance—that the speaker is keeping mute and rationalizing it, and there is the reality—that the speaker is serenading in his finest strains to win back what may be slipping away.