

*Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
 And that which governs me to go about
 Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
 Seems seeing, but effectually is out:
 For it no form delivers to the heart
 Of bird, of flow'r, or shape which it doth latch;
 Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
 Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch:
 For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
 The most sweet favor or deformedst creature:
 The mountain, or the sea, the day, or night,
 The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature.
 Incapable of more, replete with you,
 My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.*

An especially complex conceit concerning the accuracy of the speaker's vision – whether of mind or eye – is developed in this sonnet and the next. Now that the speaker has left his lover and “the world,” his vision is split. Part of it functions as usual, but part is blind: it seems to see but in effect it does not. (ll. 3-4) The blind part does not deliver to his heart (the seat of emotional truth) the natural forms of objects like birds or flowers – whatever the eye happens to seize on (“latch,” l. 6). The mind takes no heed of fleeting live objects; any that it does happen to catch it cannot hold.

The speaker is concerned because no matter what he beholds, “the rud'st or gentlest sight” (l. 9), it is distorted and made to look like his friend. Whether he sees a mountain or the sea, the day or the night, a crow or a dove, it is always the same. This phenomenon, even allowing for hyperbole, is fantastic. Addressed as it is to his friend, this goes far beyond the extravagant compliments paid to him before. In fact, they seem more the product of emotional disorder caused by his absence from his friend. Later on we get a better idea of why this is happening.

For now, we have to be contented with the speaker's own diagnosis in the couplet. He is so full of his friend that he cannot absorb more images. Therefore he does not see truly. The poem ends with a paradox: the true mind makes the eye untrue.