

*Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,  
 The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,  
 But then begins a journey in my head  
 To work my mind when body's work expired.  
 For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)  
 Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,  
 And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,  
 Looking on darkness which the blind do see.  
 Save that my soul's imaginary sight  
 Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,  
 Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)  
 Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.  
     Lo, thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,  
     For thee, and for my self, no quiet find.*

After closeness comes separation, the separation of loved ones being a traditional part of the sonnet sequence. Where the speaker has actually traveled, we never know. Indeed, the journey may be imaginary. It is not important. But where the speaker's thoughts go is crucial. They make "a zealous pilgrimage" (l. 6) to the addressee, presumably, but not inevitably, his friend. The idea of a pilgrimage has religious overtones, but the true journey is a night vision, a work of the speaker's mind after his body's work is done. (l. 4) Though no specific details of time or place are given, Shakespeare artfully creates a scene for the reader.

The speaker says that he keeps his "drooping eyelids open wide" as he looks into the "darkness which the blind do see." (ll. 7-8) The reader's imagination is stimulated by the poetry and follows the vision of the speaker's soul. This presents the image of the beloved to his "sightless view," the basic oxymoron on which the reader's belief rests. The appearance is the reality because it arises from the soul (l. 9). This "shadow"—his lover's visage—is like a jewel hanging in terrifying darkness. The night is made radiant by the jewel (jewels were often thought to emit light), and night's ancient face (also traditional) looks fresh and new.

The result here (interestingly, there is no argument) is that the speaker, who is unquiet, sleepless in mind and body, is nevertheless able to see in the night. Despite their separation, the two friends reunite. The interaction of their imaginations has made for a stronger bond. Darkness has been negated, and there is light.