

*O how thy worth with manners may I sing,
 When thou art all the better part of me?
 What can mine own praise to mine own self bring,
 And what is't but mine own when I praise thee?
 Even for this, let us divided live,
 And our dear love lose name of single one,
 That by this separation I may give
 That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone.
 O absence, what a torment wouldst thou prove,
 Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave
 To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
 Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive,
 And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
 By praising him here who doth hence remain.*

Like Sonnet 38, this poem begins with two questions. Here the speaker asks why he suffers a block in trying to do justice to his friend's virtue. How can he sing the praises of someone who is the "better part" (l. 2) of himself? Since he and his friend are one, he would be praising himself. Therefore, he proposes that they should live not as one but two. By separating, the speaker can laud his friend alone, as he deserves.

But, the reader well may ask, is this step necessary? The speaker is clearly seeking self-effacement, but what pressures are put upon him? Is he still concerned about the world's opinion? Whatever the case, the speaker's elaborate argument is self-defeating: to give his friend just praise, the speaker must give up "our dear love" (l. 6).

The undercurrent of discontent in the speaker's own logic surfaces in the sestet, which is addressed not to the friend but to absence itself, as if the speaker were already alone. This absence would be a torment to him, he argues, if it did not give "sweet leave" (l. 10) to while away thoughts of love. Just as *pain* emerges suddenly at the end of Sonnet 38, the word *sour* appears here as a sharply negative adjective applied to the speaker's leisure. *Sour* is reinforced by *deceive* (l. 12), which implies that the sweetness imputed to leisure "time and thoughts" (l. 12) is not

likely to be sweet at all. The “dear love” he has cherished in his oneness is lost.

It is absence (*thou* in l. 13) that teaches the speaker how to split loving oneness in two by praising his friend, who is actually absent, as if he were present. Does absence really make the heart grow fonder? Yes, if fonder means foolish.