

*When most I wink then do my eyes best see,
 For all the day they view things unrespected;
 But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
 And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
 Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
 How would thy shadow's form form happy show
 To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
 When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
 How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made,
 By looking on thee in the living day,
 When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
 Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
 All days are nights to see till I see thee,
 And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.*

After the desperate, angry revelations of the speaker's betrayal by both friend and mistress, the next sonnets mourn the collapse of the relationships in a stylized virtuosic fashion. During the preceding ordeal, the speaker has amply demonstrated his capacity for using rhetoric to justify closing his eyes, turning the other cheek, and glossing over the betrayals. Now he is separated, perhaps physically, from his affairs and has little to do but exercise his skill in working out conceits. It is almost as if he is stepping up the pace to ease his pain.

Sonnet 43 has a paradox in almost every line. Oxymorons (concentrated paradoxes) raise their heads almost mechanically. For example, "darkly bright" (l. 4) and "unseeing eyes" that see (l. 8) are followed by "sightless eyes" to which the friend's shade appears (l. 12) and "nights bright days" (l. 14). Oxymoron is combined with chiasmus (in line four) when "darkly bright" is followed immediately by "bright in dark," reversing the order of the adjectives. Other figures and devices abound, and seeking them out, though pleasant, rather overwhelms the sadness. Still it is in character for the speaker to verbalize in this bravura fashion, and there is some pathos in his having to fall back on his skill in verse, which now may – or may

not— give promise of immortality.

Despite rhetorical distractions, the grief of the speaker comes through and now he sees truly. Ironically, it is in sleep and darkness that his vision clears; his dreams show the real “thee” in the final, revelatory line. What is absent is the joy of two souls joined as one, quite a jarring contrast to the close of Sonnet 42.