

*How heavy do I journey on the way,
 When what I seek (my weary travel's end)
 Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
 Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend.
 The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
 Plods dully on to bear that weight in me,
 As if by some instinct the wretch did know
 His rider lov'd not speed being made from thee:
 The bloody spur cannot provoke him on,
 That sometimes anger thrusts into his hide,
 Which heavily he answers with a groan,
 More sharp to me than spurring to his side;
 For that same groan doth put this in my mind:
 My grief lies onward and my joy behind.*

The thread of the journey returns in Sonnets 50 and 51. But unlike the earlier poems of separation, which stress the presence of the lover even in absence, these two focus on actual travel and the relation between horse and rider. The speaker as traveler is sad indeed (the reason has been made clear in Sonnet 49). He is heavy with thoughts of his future, and he is heavily answered by his beast, who groans at being spurred. (Shakespeare chooses to use *beast* in the fifth line of each sonnet and *horse* does not occur until line nine of Sonnet 51. There it is compared unfavorably with desire. Finally, just before the couplet, it becomes an inferior jade.) The speaker and the beast are paired in Sonnet 50, the former dominating the first quatrain and the latter the second. The first has the traveler at rest soliloquizing on the physical distance, not the mental presence of his friend: "Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend." (l. 4)

The beast, a kind of alter ego, is as tired of the speaker's woe as the speaker is. Despite bearing the weight of woe, he plods on sullenly. As if by instinct, the beast (now called a "wretch," l. 7) knows that the speaker doesn't want to speed because that carries him farther from his friend.

In the third quatrain, the speaker reports that his bloody spur, which he sometimes angrily thrusts into the beast's side, has no effect. Instead, the spurring makes him groan, and this is more painful to the rider than the spurring is to the beast. In the couplet, the groaning reminds the speaker of the fact that his joy is behind him and only grief is ahead.