

*Being your slave, what should I do but tend
 Upon the hours and times of your desire?
 I have no precious time at all to spend,
 Nor services to do till you require.
 Nor dare I chide the world without end hour
 Whilst I (my sovereign) watch the clock for you,
 Nor think the bitterness of absence sour,
 When you have bid your servant once adieu.
 Nor dare I question with my jealous thought
 Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,
 But like a sad slave stay and think of nought
 Save where you are how happy you make those.
 So true a fool is love, that in your will
 (Though you do any thing) he thinks no ill.*

At first this sonnet seems disjunctive, but the very word *desire*, even though it is the youth's, promises the return of the speaker's "sweet love." Two ironies attend this happy reunion: one is the slavery of the speaker and the threat to his own "precious time" (l. 3). The imagery of time initiated in Sonnet 2 takes over in the second quatrain, further linking this group of sonnets to the body of the sequence, and leading into the theme of absence (l. 7).

The picture the speaker paints of himself is not that of a happy shadow. Though partly voluntary, his "slavery" is that of a drudge. Crucial, too, is the phrase "world without end" (l. 5), which implies both doom and the tyranny of society. The speaker watches the clock for his sovereign, who is engaged in "affairs" (l. 10) that may be worldly matters but perhaps even hint at other liaisons. Who are "those" (l. 12) whom the master makes happy instead of his slave?

All this culminates in the couplet, where the speaker dubs himself a fool, which could mean a dear one as well as a dupe, and gives his name as will. (The pun is generally accepted as Shakespeare's self-identification, and is reinforced by the more obvious and insistent use of his name in Sonnet 135). Less commented upon is the endless forgiveness of the true lover that the speaker says he is. This is consonant with the Christian humility shown by turning the other cheek. It is also a subtle connection with the word *blest* in line twelve of the preceding sonnet. The self-styled fool may indeed be wise after all. But all religious implications are not to be taken as definitive.