

*Is it thy will thy image should keep open  
 My heavy eyelids to the weary night?  
 Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,  
 While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?  
 Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee  
 So far from home into my deeds to pry,  
 To find out shames and idle hours in me,  
 The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?  
 O no, thy love, though much, is not so great.  
 It is my love that keeps mine eye awake,  
 Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,  
 To play the watchman ever for thy sake.  
 For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,  
 From me far off, with others all too near.*

After two sonnets that gain emotional and intellectual force by projecting the image of the beloved first back into time and then far ahead into the future with the threat of time's cruelty, Shakespeare shifts the scene to the present. The movement is wave-like and is enriched by re-reading Sonnets 27 and 43 with their extraordinary night visions of his absent friend.

Now the speaker is in his bedroom beset by insomnia. The vision of his friend's perfection is now tormenting him. Is this your will? the speaker asks. Anxiety seizes him. Perhaps his friend sends his shadows to break his sleep. Do you, in your intense jealousy, he asks, send your spirit to search out my shameful acts and idleness? The speaker's usual happy admiration of his friend's beauty has been replaced by fear for loss of his friend's affection.

In the sestet, however, the speaker takes over the responsibility for his insomnia. It is his "own true love" that destroys his rest. He has dared to declare his love to be greater than his friend's is for him. (l. 9) Now he reverses his field, asserting a kind of dominance by playing the "watchman" of his friend – for his friend's sake. The speaker's jealousy now begins to loom, as he imagines following the actions of his friend far away. In his role as watchman, he would warn people of danger, a fact

evident in the last, climactic phrase: there are “others all too near.” Potential lovers leap to mind.

However, the phrase cuts more than one way: behind the fact of mutual jealousy just revealed lies “the world”—the opinion of the many whose presence and probable disapproval would put pressure on their lives.