

*Against my love shall be as I am now,
 With time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn,
 When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
 With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn
 Hath traveled on to age's steepy night,
 And all those beauties whereof now he's king
 Are vanishing, or vanished out of sight,
 Stealing away the treasure of his spring;
 For such a time do I now fortify
 Against confounding age's cruel knife,
 That he shall never cut from memory
 My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
 His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
 And they shall live, and he in them still green.*

Once more, Shakespeare plunges us into the future. However, in a subtly dramatic shift, the sonnet is not addressed to the friend; in fact, the lines are a true soliloquy. No longer is the speaker worried about his friend's marriage and procreation. He is envisioning a darker time when his friend will be as "crushed and o'erworn" as the speaker is now. (l. 2) Time is indeed the villain, and the imagery is strongly suggestive of death--the deaths of *both* men. The friend's waning hours will have "drained his blood" (l. 3); his beauties will not only be vanishing but "vanished out of sight" (l. 7); age's "cruel knife" will be "confounding" (l. 10), a word denoting total destruction. At the close of the poem, that cruel knife will not cut the lover's beauty from memory but it surely will cut off his life.

Just barely, in the couplet, the possibility of survival sneaks through "these black lines" of poetry in which the friend's beauty will appear as "green." The threat here, in contrast to the affirmations of Sonnets 60 and 62, almost gets the upper hand over the hopes for immortality.

Furthermore, the tone and imagery echoes Sonnet 2 in its fears of forty winters that will "dig deep trenches" in "beauty's field" (l. 2), but overall Sonnet 63 portrays more violence. The beauty of the friend's days that caps Sonnet 62 so positively is replaced by his beauties' vanishing, "stealing away the treasure of his spring." (l. 8) The brightness of Sonnet 18's summer's day is dimmed now. Death has become more imminent.