

*So shall I live, supposing thou art true,  
 Like a deceived husband, so love's face,  
 May still seem love to me, though alter'd new:  
 Thy looks with me, thy heart in other place.  
 For there can live no hatred in thine eye;  
 Therefore in that I cannot know thy change.  
 In many's looks, the false heart's history  
 Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange;  
 But heaven in thy creation did decree  
 That in thy face sweet love should ever dwell;  
 Whate'er thy thoughts or thy heart's workings be,  
 Thy looks should nothing thence but sweetness tell.  
       How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,  
       If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show.*

The doubts continue, and the language testifies to their increased intensity. Now the gap between appearance and reality widens. If the speaker is to continue to live, he must suppose that his friend is faithful. The simile of the deceived husband in the second line sets the dismal tone. Nothing could be worse than becoming a cuckold, but the speaker would have to settle for that. No one knows for certain that the friend has betrayed anyone. However, the seed has been planted in the speaker's mind as it was in Othello's. There is no Iago here — except within. The probability of the beautiful face reflecting the true state of the friend's heart has been shaken.

In the second quatrain the speaker stoutly insists that "there can live no hatred in thine eye" (l. 5), but hatred has been detected before in no uncertain terms. (Sonnet 89) Emotional forces are in full swing, and the shifts are reflected in phrases like "the false heart's history" and "moods and frowns and wrinkles strange." (ll. 7-8) The speaker has not as yet seen the evidence, but he will be looking for it.

The logical progression of thought that the speaker supposes himself to have is canceled — briefly and dramatically — in the sestet, where the heavenly beauty of his friend comes back into his mind. It is beauty, he says, "that in thy face sweet love [shall] ever dwell." (l. 10) All of the third quatrain is devoted to the sweetness of this divine appearance,

and the assertion is so emphatic that it seems to wipe away all the doubts.

But the benign aspect of Eros vanishes in the couplet. Now the youth's beauty threatens to become like Eve's apple. The Christian strictures blot out the guiltless pagan responses. We are left to contemplate what fate might loom if the speaker discovers that apparent virtue is not confirmed by reality.