II

POEMS FROM THE DEVONSHIRE MANUSCRIPT

A. Ascribed Poems
B. Unascribed Poems
A. ASCRIBED POEMS

CIX

Take heed betime, lest ye be spied!
Your loving eye ye cannot hide,
At last the truth will sure be tried.
Therefore take heed!

For some there be of crafty kind;
Though you show no part of your mind,
Surely their eyes ye cannot blind.
Therefore take heed!

For in like case theirselves hath been,
And thought right sure none had them seen;
But it was not as they did ween.
Therefore take heed!

Although they be of divers schools
And well can use all crafty tools,
At length they prove themself but fools.
Therefore take heed!

If they might take you in that trap,
They would soon leave it in your lap.
To love unspied is but a hap:
Therefore take heed!

CX

What meaneth this? When I lie alone
I toss, I turn, I sigh, I groan,
My bed me seems as hard as stone:
What meaneth this?

1. lest...spied: cf. ML, 199.  
2. spied: cf. CXXXVI, 24.  
9. like: i.e. 'the same as you'.  
18. 'They would forcefully confront you with it.'  
19. but a hap: a matter of mere luck.

3. as hard as stone: cf. LXVI, 7.  
I sigh, I plain continually,
The clothes that on my bed do lie
Always methink they lie awry:
What meaneth this?

In slumbers oft for fear I quake,
For heat and cold I burn and shake,
For lack of sleep my head doth ache:
What meaneth this?

Amornings then when I do rise,
I turn unto my wonted guise,
All day after muse and devise:
What meaneth this?

And if perchance by me there pass
She unto whom I sue for grace,
The cold blood forsaketh my face:
What meaneth this?

But if I sit near her by,
With loud voice my heart doth cry,
And yet my mouth is dumb and dry:
What meaneth this?

To ask for help no heart I have,
My tongue doth fail what I should crave,
Yet inwardly I rage and rave:
What meaneth this?

Thus have I passed many a year
And many a day, though nought appear
But most of that that most I fear:
What meaneth this?

Is it possible
That so high debate,
So sharp, so sore, and of such rate,
Should end so soon, and was begun so late?
Is it possible?

Is it possible:
So cruel intent,
So hasty heat, and so soon spent,
From love to hate, and thence for to relent?
Is it possible?

Is it possible
That any may find
Within one heart so diverse mind
To change or turn as weather and wind?
Is it possible?

Is it possible
To spy it in an eye
That turns as oft as chance on die,
The truth whereof can any try?
Is it possible?

It is possible
For to turn so oft,
To bring that lowest that was most aloft,
And to fall highest yet to light soft:
It is possible.

All is possible,
Whoso list believe.
Trust therefore first, and after prove
As men wed ladies by licence and leave
All is possible.

2 debate: strife. 14 guise: manner. 15 muse and devise: wonder and guess. 26 doth fail: lacks. 30-31 though . . . fear: 'though nothing appears other than most of what I fear most (i.e. refusals, etc.)'. 19 try: cf. CXXXVI, 24. 28 prove: cf. CXLVIII, 29. 29 by . . . leave: a reference to the wedding ceremony, but also to the woman's lawlessness and her dismissal of her husband (cf. XV, 5). W may hint that his wife, Elizabeth Brooke, was unfaithful to him.
CXII
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay, for shame,
To save thee from the blame
Of all my grief and grame!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath loved thee so long
In wealth and woe among?
And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath given thee my heart
Never for to depart,
Neither for pain nor smart?
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
And have no more pity
Of him that loveth thee?
Alas thy cruelty!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

The restful place, reviver of my smart,
The labour’s salve, increasing my sorrow,
The body’s ease, and troubler of my heart,
Quieter of mind, and my unquiet foe,
Forgetter of pain, remembering my woe,
The place of sleep, wherein I do but wake,
Besprent with tears, my bed, I thee forsake!

The frost, the snow, may not redress my heat,
Nor yet no heat abate my fervent cold.
I know nothing to ease my pains meet:
Each cure causeth increase by twofold,
Reviving cares upon my sorrows old.
Such overthrow affects they do me make
Besprent with tears my bed for to forsake.

Yet helpeth it not: I find no better ease
In bed or out. This most causeth my pain:
Where most I seek how best that I may please,
My lost labour alas is all in vain,
Yet that I gave I cannot call again.
No place fro’ me my grief away can take,
Wherefore with tears, my bed, I thee forsake.

CXIV
So unwarily was never no man caught
With steadfast look upon a goodly face
As I of late: for suddenly me thought
My heart was torn out of his place.

5 Remembering: used causatively.
7 Besprent with tears: perhaps suggested by Chaucer, ‘Complaint unto Pity’.
9 fervent: severe.
12 cares: griefs.
13 overthrow affects: contrarious passions.
19 again: back.
Then though my songs be somewhat strange
And speaks such words as touch thy change,
Blame not my lute.

My lute alas doth not offend,
Though that perforce he must agree
To sound such tunes as I intend
To sing to them that heareth me.
Then though my songs be somewhat plain
And toucheth some that use to feign,
Blame not my lute.

My lute and strings may not deny,
But as I strike they must obey:
Break not them then so wrongfully,
But wreak thyself some wiser way.
And though the songs which I indite
Do quit thy change with rightful spite,
Blame not my lute.

Spite asketh spite, and changing change,
And falsed faith must needs be known;
The fault so great, the case so strange,
Of right it must abroad be blown.
Then since that by thine own desert
My songs do tell how true thou art,
Blame not my lute.

Blame but thyself, that hast misdone
And well deserved to have blame,
Change thou thy way so evil begone,
And then my lute shall sound that same.
But if till then my fingers play
By thy desert their wonted way,
Blame not my lute.

5 Then though: MS. tho; but cf., e.g., 12.
6 speaks: the subject is my songs (5).
13 use to: are in the habit of.
31 evil begone: 'surrounded by (i.e. steeped in) evil'.
Farewell, unknown, for though thou break
My strings in spite with great disdain,
Yet have I found out for thy sake
Strings for to string my lute again.
And if perchance this foolish rhyme
Do make thee blush at any time,
Blame not my lute.

CXVI

All in thy sight my life doth whole depend:
Thou hidest thyself, and I must die therefore.
But since thou mayst so easily save thy friend,
Why dost thou stick to heal that thou madest sore?
Why do I die, since thou mayst me defend?
For if I die, then mayst thou live no more:
Since the one by the other doth live and feed the heart,
I with thy sight, thou also with my smart.

CXVII

My love took scorn my service to retain,
Wherein me thought she used cruelty,
Since with good will I lost my liberty
To follow her which causeth all my pain.
Might never care cause me for to refrain,
But only this, which is extremity,

unknown: i.e. sexually, cf. OED know, II.7; or W plays on the phrase 'unknown,unkissed' (cf. OED unkind.

friend: lover.

stick: perhaps 'hesitate' (Rollins), but cf. OED 13; 'stab' is possible, if heal is ironic.

7–8: 'For each of us lives and feeds his heart by means of the other person—I by looking at you, and you by feeding on my grief.' 7 the (s): D thy, no doubt in error for the (cf. It. il).

thou: D may have then or thin, i.e. thine.

5: 'Grief could never lead me to cease serving her.'

CXVIII

Perdie, I said it not,
Nor never thought to do:
As well as I ye wot
I have no power thereto.
And if I did, the lot
That first did me enchain
Do never slake the knot
But straiten to my pain.
And if I did, each thing
That may do harm or woe
Continually may wring
My heart whereso I go.
Report may always ring
Of shame of me for aye,
If in my heart did spring
The word that ye do say.

If I said so, each star
That is in heaven above
May frown on me to mar
The hope I have in love;

Giving me nought, alas, not to agree
That as I was her man I might remain.
But since that thus ye list to order me
That would have been your servant true and fast,
Displease thee not my doting days be past,
And with my loss to live I must agree.
For as there is a certain time to rage,
So is there time such madness to assuage.
And if I did, such war
As they brought into Troy
Bring all my life afar
Fro' all this lust and joy.

And if I did so say,
The beauty that me bound
Increase from day to day
More cruel to my wound;
With all the moan that may
To plaint may turn my song;
My life may soon decay
Without redress by wrong.

If I be clear for thought,
Why do ye then complain?
Then is this thing but sought
To turn me to more pain.
Then that that ye have wrought
Ye must it now redress,
Of right therefore ye ought
Such rigour to repress.

And as I have deserved,
So grant me now my hire;
Ye know I never swerved,
Ye never found me liar.
For Rachel have I served
(For Leah cared I never),
And her I have reserved
Within my heart for ever.

CXIX
Driven by desire I did this deed,
To danger myself without cause why:
To trust the untrue, not like to speed,
To speak and promise faithfully.
But now the proof doth verify
That whoso trusteth or he know
Doth hurt himself and please his foe.

B. UNASCRIBED POEMS

CXX
My pen, take pain a little space
To follow that which doth me chase
And hath in hold my heart so sore;
But when thou hast this brought to pass,
My pen I prithee write no more.

Remember oft thou hast me eased
And all my pains full well appeased,
But now I know unknown before,
For where I trust I am deceived,
And yet, my pen, thou canst no more.

1 this deed: prob. W's decision to become a woman's 'servant'. Cf., e.g., LXII, 8-9.
6-7: Cf., e.g., 'Try your friend before you trust' (ODEP, p. 845; Tilley, T 595).

Moralized by John Hall in his The Court of Virtue (ed. Russell A. Fraser, London, 1961), who presents his version with music for one voice. As with LXVI and CXV, we need not assume that there is any connection between Hall's music and W's poem; cf. Stevens, 136 ff.

3, 28 in hold: in captivity (cf. I, 10).
9: Proverbial, cf. SCM, 64.
A time thou haddest as other have
To write which way my hope to crave.
That time is past, withdraw therefore;
Since we do lose that other save,
As good leave off and write no more.

In worth to use another way
(Not as we would, but as we may—
For once my loss is past restore,
And my desire is my decay),
My pen yet write a little more.

To love in vain whoever shall,
Of worldly pain it passeth all,
As in like case I find. Wherefore
To hold so fast and yet to fall?
Alas, my pen, now write no more!

Since thou hast taken pain this space
To follow that which doth me chase
And hath in hold my heart so sore,
Now hast thou brought my mind to pass:
My pen, I prithee write no more.

CXXI

I love loved, and so doth she,
And yet in love we suffer still;
The cause is strange as seemeth me,
To love so will and want our will.

14: Cf. Tilley, M337.
16 In worth: perhaps 'patiently' (cf. Nott and CXXVII, 8), but 'with dignity' would also fit.
18 once: once for all (?).
18 restore: i.e. restoration; repair.

1 I . . . loved: I love while being loved; cf. Stevens, 424, 'I love unloved' (WMT).
4 ff. will: sexual desire (or satisfaction); with a pun on well.

CXXII

O deadly yea! O grievous smart!
Worse than refuse, unhappy gain!
I love: whoever played this part,
To love so will and live in pain?

Was ever heart so will agreed,
Since love was love as I do trow,
That in their love so evil did speed,
To love so will and live in woe?

This mourn we both and hath done long,
With woeful plaint and careful voice.
Alas, alas! It is a grievous wrong
To love so will and not rejoice.

And here an end of all our moan!
With sighing oft my breath is scant,
Since of mishap ours is alone—
To love so will and it to want.

But they that causeth is of this,
Of all our cares God send them part,
That they may trow what grief it is
To love so will and live in smart.

Farewell, all my welfare!
My shoe is trod awry.
Now may I cark and care
To sing lullay-by-by.
Alas, what shall I do thereto?
There is no shift to help me now.

10, 25 trow: experience (OED 7).
14 careful: sorrowful. Cf. 22.
19 alone: unique (cf. XCVIII, 73).

2: 'I have been seduced.' Proverbial (Nott), cf. Tilley, S373.
5 cark and care: mourn and grieve.
6 shift: expedient.
Who made it such offence  
To love for love again?  
God wot that my pretence  
Was but to ease his pain  
For I had ruth to see his woe:  
Alas, more fool, why did I so?  
For he from me is gone,  
And makes thereat a game,  
And hath left me alone  
To suffer sorrow and shame.  
Alas, he is unkind doubtless  
To leave me thus all comfortless.

It is a grievous smart
To suffer pains and sorrow,
But most grieved my heart
He laid his faith to borrow;
And falsehood hath his faith and truth,
And he forsworn by many an oath.

All ye lovers, perdie,
Hath cause to blame his deed,
Which shall example be
To let you of your speed;
Let never woman again
Trust to such words as men can feign.

For I unto my cost
Am warning to you all
That they whom you trust most
Soonest deceive you shall,
But complaint cannot redress
Of my great grief the great excess.

Alas, poor man, what hap have I,
That must forbear that I love best?
I trow it be my destiny
Never to live in quiet rest.

No wonder is though I complain—
Not without cause, ye may be sure:
I seek for that I cannot attain,
Which is my mortal displeasure.

Alas, poor heart, as in this case
With pensive plaints thou art oppressed,
Unwise thou were to desire place
Whereas another is possessed.

Do what I can to ease thy smart,
Thou wilt not let to love her still.
Hers and not mine I see thou art:
Let her do by thee as she will.

A careful carcass full of pain
Now hast thou left to mourn for thee.
The heart once gone, the body is slain;
That ever I saw her woe is me!

Mine eye alas was cause of this,
Which her to see had never his fill;
To me that sight full bitter is,
In recompense of my good will.

She that I serve all other above
Hath paid my hire, as ye may see:
I was unhappy, and that I prove,
To love above my poor degree.

Nott suggests that W expresses in this how he was obliged to relinquish all claim to Anne Boleyn's affection. As for loving above one's 'degree' and its consequences, cf. SCM, 24.

8 displeasure: grief.
12 another: cf. e.g., XC, 9 ff.
17 careful: sorrowful.
27 prove: cf. CXLVIII, 29.
28 degree: rank (particularly social).
CXXIV

It was my choice, it was no chance,
That brought my heart in other's hold,
Whereby it hath had sufferance
Longer, perdie, than reason would.
Since I it bound where it was free,
Me thinks iwis of right it should
Accepted be.

Accepted be without refuse,
Unless that fortune have the power
All right of love for to abuse,
For as they say, one happy hour
May more prevail than right or might.
If fortune then list for to lour,
What 'vaileth right?

What 'vaileth right if this be true?
Then trust to chance and go by guess:
Then whoso loveth may well go sue
Uncertain hope for his redress.
Yet some would say assuredly
Thou mays appear for thy release
To fantasy.

To fantasy pertains to choose.
All this I know, for fantasy
First unto love did me induce,
But yet I know as steadfastly
That if love have no faster knot,
So nice a choice slips suddenly:
It lasteth not.

CXXV

It lasteth not that stands by change:
Fancy doth change, fortune is frail,
Both these to please the ways is strange.
Therefore me thinks best to prevail:
There is no way that is so just
As truth to lead, though t'other fail,
And thereto trust.

Full well it may be seen
To such as understand,
How some there be that ween
They have their wealth at hand:
Through love's abused band
But little do they see
The abuse wherein they be.

Of love there is a kind
Which kindleth by abuse,
As in a feeble mind
Whom fancy may induce
By love's deceitful use
To follow the fond lust
And proof of a vain trust.

Cf. XLIII. 2 hold: captivity (cf. I, 10).
3 sufferance: suffering. 6 iwis: for sure.
11-12: No exact parallel comes to hand, but cf. Tilley, H741, and Whiting, H600. 21 fantasy (29 Fancy): amorous inclination; caprice.
As I myself may say
By trial of the same,
No wight can well bewray
The falsehood love can frame.
I say 'twixt grief and game
There is no living man
That knows the craft love can.

For love so well can feign
To favour for the while
That such as seeks the gain
Are served with the guile;
And some can this concile,
To give the simple leave
Themselves for to deceive.

What thing may more declare
Of love the crafty kind
Then see the wise, so ware,
In love to be so blind?
If so it be assigned,
Let them enjoy the gain
That thinks it worth the pain.

CXXVI

Since love is such that as ye wot
Cannot always be wisely used,
I say therefore then blame me not
Though I therein have been abused;
For as with cause I am accused—
Guilty, I grant, such was my lot—
And though it cannot be excused,
Yet let such folly be forgot.

21 can: is skilled in.
26–28: 'And this can lull some, so as to allow the innocent to deceive themselves.'
31 so ware: i.e. 'normally so vigilant'.

For in my years of reckless youth
Me thought the power of love so great
That to her laws I bound my truth
And to my will there was no let.
Me list no more so far to fet
Such fruit lo as of love ensueth:
The gain was small that was to get,
And of the loss the less the ruth.

And few there is but first or last
A time in love once shall they have,
And glad I am my time is past,
Henceforth my freedom to withsave.
Now in my heart there shall I grave
The grounded grace that now I taste:
Thanked be fortune, that me gave
So fair a gift, so sure and fast.

Now such as have me seen or this,
When youth in me set forth his kind
And folly framed my thought amiss,
The fault whereof now well I find,
Lo since that so it is assigned
That unto each a time there is,
Then blame the lot that led my mind
Sometime to live in love's bliss.

But from henceforth I do protest
By proof of that that I have passed
Shall never cease within my breast
The power of love so late outcast:
The knot thereof is knit full fast,
And I thereto so sure professed,
For evermore with me to last
The power wherein I am possessed.

12 will: sexual desire. Immature love is contrasted with a ripe, stable relationship, the 'grounded (i.e. firmly based) grace' of 22.
13 fet: i.e. fetch.
20 withsave: preserve.
32 love's: disyllabic.
CXXVII

Lo how I seek and sue to have
That no man hath, and may be had!
There is no more but sink or save,
And bring this doubt to good or bad.
To live in sorrows always sad,
I like not so to linger forth;
Hap evil or good, I shall be glad
To take that comes as well in worth.

Should I sustain this great distress,
Still wandering forth thus to and fro,
In dreadful hope to hold my peace,
And feed myself with secret woe?
Nay, nay, certain I will not so!
But sure I shall myself apply
To put in proof this doubt to know
And rid this danger readily.

I shall essay by secret suit
To show the mind of mine intent,
And my deserts shall give such fruit
As with my heart my words be meant.
So by the proof of this consent
Soon out of doubt I shall be sure,
For to rejoice or to repent,
In joy or pain for to endure.

CXXVIII

Now must I learn to live at rest
And wean me of my will,
For I repent where I was pressed
My fancy to fulfil.

4 ff. doubt: suspicion; fear.
8 take in worth: bear patiently (Nott).
11 dreadful: full of fear.
21 by... consent: by putting this feeling to the test.
2 will: cf. CXXVI, 12.
4 fancy: cf. CXXIV, 21.

UNASCRIBED POEMS

I may no longer more endure
My wonted life to lead,
But I must learn to put in ure
The change of womanhood.

I may not see my service long
Rewarded in such wise,
Nor I may not sustain such wrong
That ye my love despise.

I may not sigh in sorrows deep,
Nor wail the want of love,
Nor I may neither crouch nor creep
Where it doth not behove.

But I of force must needs forsake
My faith so fondly set,
And from henceforth must undertake
Such folly to forget.

Now must I seek some other ways
Myself for to withsave,
And as I trust by mine essays
Some remedy to have.

I ask none other remedy
To recompense my wrong
But once to have the liberty
That I have lacked so long.

CXXIX

Forget not yet the tried intent
Of such a truth as I have meant,
My great travail so gladly spent
Forget not yet.

7 put in ure: i.e. 'get used to'.
27 once: one day.

Padelford notes: 'Music composed for this song is to be found in Royal Ms. App. 58, p. 50, 53 b.'
1 intent: endeavour.
Forget not yet when first began
The weary life ye know since when,
The suit, the service none tell can,
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet the great essays,
The cruel wrong, the scornful ways,
The painful patience in denays,
Forget not yet.

Forget not yet, forget not this,
How long ago hath been and is
The mind that never meant amiss,
Forget not yet.

Forget not then thine own approved,
The which so long hath thee so loved,
Whose steadfast faith yet never moved,
Forget not this.

CXXX

Me list no more to sing
Of love nor of such thing
How sore that it me wring,
For what I sung or spake,
Men did my songs mistake.

My songs were too diffuse,
They made folk to muse.
Therefore, me to excuse,
They shall be sung more plain,
Neither of joy nor pain.

What 'vaileth then to skip
At fruit over the lip?
For fruit withouten taste
Doth nought but rot and waste.

What 'vaileth under key
To keep treasure alway
That never shall see day?
If it be not used,
It is but abused.

What 'vaileth the flower
To stand still and wither?
If no man it savour,
It serves only for sight,
And fadeth towards night.

Therefore fear not to essay
To gather, ye that may,
The flower that this day
Is fresher than the next:
Mark well, I say, this text.

Let not the fruit be lost
That is desired most:
Delight shall quite the cost.
If it be ta'en in time,
Small labour is to climb.

And as for such treasure
That maketh thee the richer
And no deal the poorer,
When it is given or lent
Me thinks it were well spent.

9 essays: perhaps 'tribulations' rather than 'attempts'.
11 denays: i.e. denials; refusals.
17 thine own approved: 'him whom you yourself approved of (or: have found good through experience')
6 diffuse: obscure, vague.
7 muse: wonder, guess at the meaning.
1 ff.: A line is missing from this stanza, probably the first.
13 withouten taste: i.e. untasted.
22 savour: smell.
29 text: adage.
32 quite: i.e. quit; repay.
37 no deal: not at all.

If this be under mist
And not well plainly wist,
Understand me who list:
For I reck not a bean,
I wot what I do mean.

CXXXI
To rail or jest ye know I use it not
Though that such cause sometime in folks I find;
And though to change ye list to set your mind,
Love it who list, in faith I like it not.
And if ye were to me as ye are not,
I would be loth to see you so unkind;
But since your faith must needs be so by kind,
Though I hate it, I pray you leave it not.
Things of great weight I never thought to crave—
This is but small, of right deny it not:
Your feigning ways as yet forget them not,
But like reward let others have;
That is to say, for service true and fast
Too long delays, and changing at the last.

CXXXII
Pain of all pain, the most grievous pain
Is to love heartily and cannot be loved again.

Love with unkindness is causer of heaviness,
Of inward sorrow and sighs painful.
Whereas I love is no redress

40 under mist: i.e. not clear.  41 wist: known, grasped (by you).
43: 'I don't care at all' (cf. Tilley, B118).

1: 'You know I am not in the habit of rallying or jesting.'
5-8: 'If you were loyal to me (which you are not), I should hate you to be cruel to me. But since, detestably enough, it is not in your nature to be loyal to me, I hope you will be cruel—to others, as a small favour to me (cf. 9 ff.).'

3ff. unkindness: cf. XXV, 3.  5-6 Whereas ... pastime: i.e. 'where I love there is no remedy, no matter how I spend my time'.

10 train: trick.
14 care: grief.
18 fantastical: of what exists in the imagination only (cf. LXXIX).
23 cure: remedy.
24 Record of: witness.
24 Terence: Roman writer of comedies, 195-159 B.C.
26 debate: quarrelling.
28 mort: dead.
28 cold ... stone: cf. Tilley, S876.
29 cannot skill: do not know.
Lucrece the Roman, for love of her lord
And because perforce she had commit adultery
With Tarquinus, as the story doth record,
Herself did slay with a knife most piteously
Among her nigh friends because that she
So falsely was betrayed. Lo, this was the guerdon
Whereas true love hath no dominion!

To make rehearsal of old antiquity
What needeth it? We see by experience
Among lovers it chanceth daily:
Displeasure and variance for none offence.
But if true love might give sentence
That unkindness and disdain should have no place,
But true heart for true love, it were a great grace.

O Venus, lady, of love the goddess,
Help all true lovers to have love again!
Banish from thy presence disdain and unkindness,
Kindness and pity to thy service retain.
For true love once fixed in the cordial vein
Can never be revulsed by no manner of art,
Unto the soul from the body depart.

CXXXIII

Lament my loss, my labour, and my pain,
All ye that hear my woeful plaint and cry;
If ever man might once your heart constrain

91 Lucrece: Lucretia. Cf. Livy and Ovid, but particularly Chaucer's version in LGW (F), acc. to which L's husband, L. Tarquinia Collatina, invited Sextus Tarquiniius (33) to his home to exhibit his virtuous wife. When S. T. raped her, L. felt morally compelled to commit suicide.
91 her: MS. 'or (i.e. our) may be correct, cf. MT and LGW, 1870-1 and 1879-82.
94 in: MS. 'or 'or' may be correct, cf. MT and LGW, 1870-1 and 1879-82.
98 cordial: of the heart.
50 'Can never be torn away by any kind of trick.' 51 Unto: until.

Chambers, p. 110, suggests that CXXXIII confirms his impression derived from E that W meant to publish his poems. But W's revisions in E are not necessarily intended for a printer, and the anonymous poem may be an Envoi to a manuscript collection. Cf. CXLII, 5.

To pity words of right, it should be I,
That since the time that youth in me did reign
My pleasant years to bondage did apply,
Which as it was I purpose to declare,
Whereby my friends hereafter may beware.

And if perchance some readers list to muse
What meaneth me so plainly for to write,
My good intent the fault of it shall 'scuse,
Which mean nothing but truly to indite
The craft and care, the grief and long abuse
Of lovers' law, and eke her puissant might,
Which though that men oftentimes by pains doth know,
Little they wot which ways the guiles doth grow.

Yet well ye know it will renew my smart
Thus to rehearse the pains that I have passed:
My hand doth shake, my pen scant doth his part,
My body quakes, my wits begin to waste,
'Twixt heat and cold in fear I feel my heart
Panting for pain. And thus as all aghast
I do remain, scant wotting what I write,
Pardon me then, rudely though I indite.

And patiently, O reader, I thee pray
Take in good part this work as it is meant,
And grieve thee not with ought that I shall say,
Since with good will this book abroad is sent
To tell men how in youth I did assay
What love did mean, and now I it repent:
That moaning me my friends might well beware,
And keep them free from all such pain and care.

13 care: grief.
27 grieve thee not: take no offence.
29 assay: examine; learn by experience.
CXXXIV

Divers doth use, as I have heard and know,
When that to change their ladies do begin,
To mourn and wail and never for to lin,
Hoping thereby to 'pease their painful woe.
And some there be that when it chanceth so
That women change and hate where love hath been,
They call them false, and think with words to win
The hearts of them which otherwhere doth grow.
But as for me, though that by chance indeed
Change hath outlawed the favour that I had,
I will not wail, lament, nor yet be sad,
Nor call her false that falsely did me feed,
But let it pass, and think it is of kind
That often change doth please a woman's mind.

CXXXV

Spite hath no power to make me sad,
Nor scornfulness to make me plain:
It doth suffice that once I had,
And so to leave it is no pain.

Let them frown on that least doth gain:
Who did rejoice must needs be glad,
And though with words thou weenest to reign,
It doth suffice that once I had.

Since that in checks thus overthwart
And cooly looks thou dost delight,
It doth suffice that mine thou wert,
Though change hath put thy faith to flight.

1. *Divers doth use*: various men are accustomed' (WMT).
3. *which*: refers to hearts.
4. *spear*: Cf. Stevens, 359, 'To let it over pass, and thynk . . .'
5. *Proverbial*: cf. Tilley, W673 (WMT); also W674 and W698.

CXXXVI

Alas, it is a peevish spite
To yield thyself and then to part,
But since thou setst thy faith so light,
It doth suffice that mine thou wert.

And since thy love doth thus decline
And in thy heart such hate doth grow,
It doth suffice that thou wert mine,
And with good will I quite it so.

Sometime my friend, farewell my foe,
Since that thou change I am not thine:
But for relief of all my woe
It doth suffice that thou wert mine.

Praying you all that hears this song
To judge no wight, nor none to blame:
It doth suffice she doth me wrong
And that herself doth know the same.

And though she change, it is no shame:
Their kind it is, and hath been long.
Yet I protest she hath no name:
It doth suffice she doth me wrong.

20. *quit*: i.e. quit; abandon.
31. *A typical note in poetry of the period, cf., e.g., Stevens, 395, H28.*
The body and the soul to hold together,
It is but right, and reason will the same,
And friendly for the one to love the other,
It increaseth your bruit and also your fame.
But mark well my words, for I fear no blame:
Trust well yourselves, but 'ware ye trust no mo,
For such as ye think your friend may fortune be your foe.

Beware hardly ere ye have any need,
And to friends reconciled trust not greatly:
For they that once with hasty speed
Exiled themselves out of your company,
Though they turn again and speak sweetly,
Feigning themselves to be your friends fast,
Beware of them, for they will deceive you at last.

Fair words makes fools fain,
And bearing in hand causeth much woe,
For time trieth truth: therefore refrain.
And from such as be ready to do—
None do I name, but this I know,
That by this fault cause causeth much,
Therefore beware, if you do know any such.

'To wise folks few words' is an old saying,
Therefore at this time I will write no more,
But this short lesson take for a warning:
By such light friends set little store,
If ye do otherwise ye will repent it sore.
And thus of this letter making an end,
To the body and the soul I me commend.

Written lifeless at the manner place
Of him that hath no chaff, nor nowhere doth dwell,
But wandering in the wild world, wanting that he has,
And neither hopes nor fears heaven nor hell,
But liveth at adventure, ye know him full well:
The twenty day of March he wrote it in his house,
And hath him recommended to the cat and the mouse.

CXXXVII

Tangled I was in love's snare,
Oppressed with pain, torment with care,
Of grief right sure, of joy full bare,
Clean in despair by cruelty:
But ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.
The woeful days so full of pain,
The weary night all spent in vain,
The labour lost for so small gain,
To write them all it will not be:
But ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.

Everything that fair doth show,
When proof is made it proveth not so,
But turneth mirth to bitter woe.

8: i.e. in harmony.
9 will: cf. XV, 8.
14 fortune: perchance.
15 hardly: firmly.
23 bearing in hand: deceiving someone by false promises.
24 trieth: sifts out, reveals.
29 To... words: i.e. a word to a wise man is enough.
36 manner place: kind of place.
37 that... chaff: that has no livelihood; but cf. OED 5.b., proverbial 'An old bird is not caught with chaff' (i.e. tricks).
38 the wild world: cf. ML, 40, 'this troublesome world'.
39 wanting... has: 'desiring what he already has', i.e. 'suffering from an excess of desire'. Cf. XXXVI, 25: 'And that I have, to crave so sore.'
40 at adventure: at hazard.
42: The cat is a metaphor for the body, and the mouse for the soul, cf. 8, 35. The idea is that the demands of the body make the soul suffer (cf. 38); hence also the warnings against trusting other people (cf., e.g., 24). There may be a parallel with CVI.

1 love's: disyllabic. So in 22.
2 torment with care: tormented with grief.
8 night: uninflected plural.
POEMS FROM THE DEVONSHIRE MANUSCRIPT

Which in this case full well I see:
But ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.

Too great desire was my guide,
And wanton will went by my side;
Hope ruled still, and made me bide
Of love's craft the extremity:
But ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.

With feigned words, which were but wind,
To long delays I was assigned;
Her wily looks my wits did blind,
Thus as she would, I did agree:
But ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.

Was never bird tangled in lime
That broke away in better time
Than I that rotten boughs did climb
And had no hurt, but 'scapeed free:
Now ha, ha, ha, full well is me,
For I am now at liberty.

CXXXVIII

I abide and abide and better abide
And after the old proverb the happy day,
And ever my lady to me doth say
'Let me alone, and I will provide.'

20 will: sexual appetite.
25 words...wind: cf. Tilley, W833.
31: Cf. Tilley, B380.
33: Cf. XIII, 14.

The proverb that underlies 1–2 and 5–6 is 'To him that abides shall betide well' (Whiting, A8; and cf., e.g., T & C, I, 956); tarry the tide (5) may also be an ironic variation on 'Time and tide tarry (stay, wait for) no man' (ODEP, p. 822; Tilley, T328).

UNASCRIBED POEMS

I abide and abide and tarry the tide,
And with abiding speed well ye may.
Thus do I abide I wot alway,
Neither obtaining, nor yet denied.
Ay me! This long abiding
Seemeth to me as who sayeth
A prolonging of a dying death,
Or a refusing of a desired thing.
Much were it better for to be plain
Than to say abide and yet shall not obtain.

CXXXIX

Deem as ye list, upon good cause
I may and think of this or that,
But what or why myself best knows,
Whereby I think and fear not;
But thereunto I may well think
The doubtful sentence of this clause:
I would it were not as I think,
I would I thought it were not.

For if I thought it were not so,
Though it were so, it grieved me not:
Unto my thought it were as though
I hearkened though I hear not.
At that I see I cannot wink,
Nor from my thought so let it go:
I would it were not as I think,
I would I thought it were not.

15 for...obtain: 'For you to refuse me bluntly, than to ask me to wait, and never let me obtain my desires' (MT).

1–2: 'Judge as you please, I may—and do—with good reason think of one thing or another.'
6 doubtful sentence: suspicious thought.
7–10: 'I would like my suspicion to be unjustified, or that I had no suspicion—for if I could free my mind from that (even if it were correct), I would not suffer.'
Lo how my thought might make me free
Of that per chance it needeth not!
Per chance none doubt the dread I see,
I shrink at that I bear not.
But in my heart this word shall sink
Unto the proof may better be:
I would it were not as I think,
I would I thought it were not.

If it be not, show no cause why
I should so think, then care I not;
For I shall so myself apply
To be that I appear not:
That is as one that shall not shrink
To be your own until I die,
And if it be not as I think,
Likewise to think it is not.

CXLI
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee
To set so light my liberty,
Making me bond when I was free?
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee?

When thou were rid from all distress,
Void of all pain and pensiveness,
To choose again a new mistress,
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee?

When thou were well, thou couldst not hold—
To turn again, thou wast too bold!
Thus to renew my sorrows old,
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee?

Thou knowest full well that but of late
I was turned out of love's gate:
And now to guide me to this mate,
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee?

I hoped full well all had been done,
But now my hope is ta'en and won.
To my torment to yield so soon,
Ah! my heart, ah! what aileth thee?

CXLI
I am as I am, and so will I be,
But how that I am none knoweth truly:
Be it evil, be it well, be I bond, be I free,
I am as I am, and so will I be.

I lead my life indifferently,
I mean nothing but honestly,
And though folks judge full diversely,
I am as I am, and so will I die.

I do not rejoice, nor yet complain,
Both mirth and sadness do refrain,
And use the mean since folks will feign,
Yet I am as I am, be it pleasure or pain.

9–10: 'When you were well (i.e. not entangled in love), you could not control yourself—in turning back to love you were all too audacious.'

14 love's: disyllabic.
18 won: overcome.

3 bond ... free: perhaps lit. (cf. Tillyard) 'in prison or not'; or, as often, 'in love or out'.
6: Cf. CLXXXII, 4.
Divers do judge as they do trow,
Some of pleasure, and some of woe,
Yet for all that nothing they know,
But I am as I am, wheresoever I go.

But since judgers do thus decay,
Let every man his judgement say:
I will it take in sport and play,
For I am as I am, whosoeuer say nay.

Who judgeth well, well God him send,
Who judgeth evil, God them amend:
To judge the best therefore intend,
For I am as I am, and so will I end.

Yet some there be that take delight
To judge folks' thought, for envy and spite,
But whether they judge me wrong or right,
I am as I am, and so do I write.

Praying you all that this do read
To trust it as you do your creed,
And not to think I change my weed,
For I am as I am, however I speed.

But how that is I leave to you:
Judge as ye list, false or true,
Ye know no more than afore ye knew.
Yet I am as I am, whatever ensue.

And from this mind I will not flee,
But to you all that misjudge me
I do protest, as ye may see,
That I am as I am, and so will I be.
In faith, welcome to me myself,
Welcome, my joy! Welcome, my health!
For I am thine, thou mayst be sure,
And shall be while that life doth dure.

Ho me! Alas! What words were these?
In covenant I might find them so!
I reck not what smart or disease,
Torment or trouble, pain or woe
I suffered so that I might know
That she were mine, I might be sure,
And should be while that life doth dure.

26 health: welfare.
31 disease: distress.
32 trouble: affliction.
A. ASCRIBED POEMS

CXLIII

V. Innocentia
Veritas Viat Fides
Circumdederunt me inimici mei

Who list his wealth and ease retain,
Himself let him unknown contain;
Press not too fast in at that gate
Where the return stands by disdain:
   For sure, circa Regna tonat.

The high mountains are blasted oft
When the low valley is mild and soft;
Fortune with health stands at debate,
The fall is grievous from aloft,
   And sure, circa Regna tonat.

These bloody days have broken my heart:
My lust, my youth did them depart,
And blind desire of estate.
Who hastes to climb seeks to revert:
   Of truth, circa Regna tonat.

Probably written during or after W’s imprisonment in 1536, when he appears
to have seen Anne Boleyn’s execution from his cell in the Tower. He no doubt
also alludes to the execution of Anne’s alleged lovers (cf. CXLIX) when
speaking of ‘bloody days’ (11). The Latin motto has been added by a different
hand. The nouns ‘Innocentia’, ‘Veritas’ and ‘Fides’ are grouped round ‘Viat’
as though these qualities must protect him from the enemies who have
besieged him (cf. Psalm 17:9; Psalm 16 in the Vulgate (MT)).

1 wealth: well-being.
3–4: ‘Do not venture too fast into the gate (i.e. at court) through which you
may return or not only according to the disdain of others.’ Cf. OED press
v.1, 16, quotation from Coverdale (1535).
8 health: welfare.
8 debate: variance.
13 estate: high status.
The bell-tower showed me such sight
That in my head sticks day and night:
There did I learn out of a grate,
For all favour, glory or might,
That yet circa Regina tonat.

By proof, I say, there did I learn
Wit helpeth not defence to earn,
Of innocency to plead or prate:
Bear low, therefore, give God the stern.
For sure, circa Regina tonat.

CXLIV

Live thou gladly if so thou may,
Pine thou not in looking for me,
Since that despair hath shut thy way—
Thou to see me or I to see thee.

Make thou a virtue of a constraint,
Deem no fault where none is worthy:
Mine is too much, what needs thy complaint?
God he knoweth who is for me.

Cast upon the Lord thy cure,
Pray unto him thy cause to judge,
Believe, and he shall send recure:
Vain is all trust of man’s refuge.

CXLVI

Accused though I be, without desert,
None can it prove: yet ye believe it true.
Nor never yet since that ye had my heart
Intended I to be false or untrue:
Sooner I would of death sustain the smart
Than break one thing of that I promised you.
Accept therefore my service in good part:
None is alive that ill tongues can eschew.
Hold them as false, and let not us depart
Our friendship old in hope of any new.
Put not thy trust in such as use to feign,
Except thou mind to put thy friend to pain.

A face that should content me wonders well
Should not be fair, but lovely to behold,
With gladsome cheer all grief for to expel;
With sober looks so would I that it should
Speak without words such words as none can tell.
The tress also should be of crisped gold:
With wit and these might chance I might be tied,
And knit again the knot that should not slide.

18 grate: the grating of a prison.
24 Bear low: i.e. sail with the wind, and humbly.
24 stern: cf. XCVIII. 83.
3 thy: so B, perhaps for the.
5 Cf. Tilley, V73.
9–11: Similar to XCIV, 12–14.
11 recure: help.
12: ‘It is useless to expect shelter from man.’ Cf. Psalm 60:11.

1 wonders: i.e. wondrously.
2 lovely: (P, T, N) loving, kind (cf., e.g., XII, 2). B: cumley, a weaker contrast with fair.
5 cheer: expression. (Cf. LXII, 15.)
6 crisped gold: cf. XCVII, 69. Possibly another ref. to Elizabeth Darrell.
7: ‘If she had brains in addition to these qualities, I might be tempted into a firm relationship.’
CXLVII

Your looks so often cast,
Your eyes so friendly rolled,
Your sight fixed so fast
Always one to behold,
Though hide it fain you would
Yet plainly doth declare
Who hath your heart in hold
And where good will ye bear.

Fain would you find a cloak
Your burning fire to hide,
Yet both the flame and smoke
Breaks out on every side:
Ye cannot love so guide
That it not issue win,
Abroad needs must it glide
That burns so hot within.

For cause yourself doth wink
Ye judge all other blind,
And that secret you think
That every man doth find;
In waste oft spend you wind
Yourself from love to quit,
For agues of that kind
Will show who hath the fit.

Causes you yet from far,
And all to wrap your woe;
Yet are you never the near,
Men are not blinded so.
Deeply oft swear you no,
But all those oaths are vain,
So well your eye doth show
The cause of all your pain.

CXLVIII

Pass forth, my wonted cries,
Those cruel ears to pierce
Which in most hateful wise
Doth still my plaints reverse.
Do you, my tears, also
So wet her barren heart
That pity there may grow,
And cruelty depart.

For though hard rocks among
She seems to have been bred
And with tigers full long
Been nourished and fed,
Yet shall that nature change
If pity once win place,
Whom as unknown and strange
She now away doth chase.

38 cheer: mien; mood.
39 stays: appliances for stopping.
40 reverse: send back.
And as the water soft
Without forcing of strength
Where that it falleth oft
Hard stones doth pierce at length,
So in her stony heart
My plaints at length shall grave
And, rigour set apart,
Cause her grant that I crave.

Wherefore, my plaints, present
Still to her my suit
As it through her assent
May bring to me some fruit.
And as she shall me prove,
So bid her me regard
And render love for love,
Which is an just reward.

B. UNASCRIBED POEMS

CXLIX

In mourning wise since daily I increase,
Thus should I cloak the cause of all my grief;
So pensive mind with tongue to hold his peace
My reason sayeth there can be no relief:

17–20: Cf. LXXXII, 2–4; the idea may have come to W from Petrarch or Serafinno (cf. Nott, Rollins, MT).
29 prove: find to be true through trial (Rollins).

An elegy on Anne Boleyn's supposed lovers (Lord Rochford, Henry Norris, Francis Weston, William Brereton, Mark Smeaton), executed two days before her in 1556 (cf. ML, 27–36). W probably did not witness the execution from his cell in the Tower, for it took place on Tower Hill, but he may well have written this poem (cf. CXLIII), presumably soon after his release (cf. 28). Lord Rochford (21) was A. B.'s brother, and like her made himself unpopular by his arrogance (cf. ML, 26). But his poetry, of which now next to nothing is known, was held in great esteem.
1: 'As I daily grow more skilled in mourning . . . '
Ah! Weston, Weston, that pleasant was and young,
In active things who might with thee compare?
All words accept that thou diddest speak with tongue,
So well esteemed with each where thou diddest fare.
And we that now in court doth lead our life
Most part in mind doth thee lament and moan;
But that thy faults we daily hear so rife,
All we should weep that thou art dead and gone.

Brereton farewell, as one that least I knew.
Great was thy love with divers as I hear,
But common voice doth not so sore thee rue
As other twain that doth before appear;
But yet no doubt but thy friends thee lament
And other hear their piteous cry and moan.
So doth each heart for thee likewise relent
That thou givest cause thus to be dead and gone.

Ah! Mark, what moan should I for thee make more,
Since that thy death thou hast desired best,
Save only that mine eye is forced sore
With piteous plaint to moan thee with the rest?
A time thou haddest above thy poor degree,
The fall whereof thy friends may well bemoan:
A rotten twig upon so high a tree
Hath slipped thy hold, and thou art dead and gone.

And thus farewell each one in hearty wise!
The axe is home, your heads be in the street;
The trickling tears doth fall so from my eyes
I scarce may write, my paper is so wet.
But what can hope when death hath played his part,
Though nature’s course will thus lament and moan?
Leave sobs therefore, and every Christian heart
Pray for the souls of those be dead and gone.

Thou sleepest fast, and I with woeful heart
Stand here alone sighing and cannot flee;
Thou sleepest fast, when cruel Love his dart
On me doth cast alas so painfully;
Thou sleepest fast, and I all full of smart
To thee my foe in vain do call and cry:
And yet methinkes thou that sleepest fast,
Thou dreamest still which way my life to waste.

Dido am I, the founder first of Carthage,
That as thou seest mine own death do procure
To save my faith, and for no new love’s rage
To flee Ilarbas, and keep my promise sure.
But see fortune, that would in neither age
Mine honest will in perfect bliss assure:
For while I lived she made my day short,
And now with lies my shame she doth report.

Venus in sport to please therewith her dear
Did on the helm of mighty Mars the red.
His spear she took, his targe she might not steer;
She looked as though her foes should all be dead,

methinkes: probably not parenthetical, for cf. It. Credo.

Dido: Queen and supposed founder of Carthage, she committed suicide out of loyalty to her dead husband when pressed into a new marriage with Ilarbas. Virgil, however, makes her a contemporary of Aeneas (cf. CIV. 1), with whom she falls in love upon his arrival in Africa.

day: so MS., perhaps in error for, e.g., days.

report: rumour abroad.

Venus (promiscuously in love with Mars) acc. to a traditional conceit conquered best naked, not armed (cf. MEW. 177). The point is here combined with an allusion, also traditional, to the huge phallus of Priapus, by which, as a god of fruitfulness, he was often represented.

mighty . . . red: cf. CT, A 1969.
So wantonly she frowneth with her cheer.
Priapus can smile and said, 'Do 'way for dread,
Do 'way, madame, these weapons great and grim.
I, I for you am weapon fit and trim.'

CLIII

'Comfort at hand, pluck up thy heart!
Look low, see where it doth stand!
Since the redress of all thy smart
Doth lay so good a hand,
Pluck up thy heart.

Pluck up thy heart! Why droopest thou so?
So said I, my thought.
And from the hill I looked low
And with mine eye I sought
Comfort at hand.

Comfort at hand mine eye hath found.
My thought, therefore be glad:
If she be there may heal thy wound,
Why shouldst thou then be sad?
Pluck up thy heart.

Pluck up thy heart! A mourning man
Doth get no good by woe.
Be glad alway, for whoso can
Shall find, whereso he go,
Comfort at hand.

Comfort at hand go seek and find,
Look if there be redress!
If not, abide a better wind:
In hope of some release
Pluck up thy heart.

---

Do 'way, do 'way, ye little wily prat!
Your slyly slinking cannot ye excuse,
Nor words dissimuled cannot hide that
That will 'pear out if often ye it use.
If ye think other, yourself ye do abuse:
For heartily love unspied long to last
If ye essay, your wits sore ye waste.

If it be possible that from a fire great
The black smoke shall not issue out,
Or afore a cripple to halt and counterfeit
And be not spied, then quickly go about
Us to beguile: for truly without doubt
We know the craft, the looks and the price,
Wherefore trust me it is hard to bleach our eyes.

If that we to you of this do speak
For good will, to make ye leave your folly,
Then will ye not stint till ye be wreat,
And ready to swear and still will deny
That that is true, yet will ye never apply
To your own faults, but always ye excuse.
Leave, fie, for shame! Ye make men to think and muse!

Ye think to cloak that cloaked cannot be,
And think to hide that open is in sight.
Alas! me thinketh it is a great pity
Yourself to bring in such a plight,
That should us cause to think ye light.
Leave off therefore! In faith ye are to blame:
Ye hurt yourself and loseth your good name.

---

1 prat: trickster; or perhaps (MT) prater.
2 words: MS. wordes (cf. 7 wyttes, 13 Lokes; also 8 fyer)—possibly dissyllabic, but the lines vary in length.
3 dissimuled: i.e. dissembled.
4 hand: i.e. of cards (?).
5 heartily: i.e. heartily; heartfelt.
6 Cf.: C. & C., IV, 1457–8, 'It is ful hard to halten unspied/Before a crewel, for he kan the craft'. Proverbial, cf. Tilley, H60.
7 trust ... eyes: i.e. 'believe me, it is hard to deceive us'.
8 loseth: perhaps 'destroy' rather than 'lose'.

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6 can: (OED can v.2) began, did.
CLV
Defamed guiltiness, by silence unkept,
My name all slanderous, my fault detect
(Guilty: I grant that I have done amiss),
Shall I never do so again, forgive me this.

Betrayed by trust, and so beguiled,
By promise unjust my name defiled
(Wherefore I grant that I have done amiss),
Will I never do so again, forgive me this.

Accept mine excuse for this offence,
And spare not to refuse me your presence,
Unless ye perceive ye do refrain
From doing amiss, while I live, again.

CLVI
Once in your grace I know I was,
Even as well as now is he.
Though fortune so hath turned my case
That I am down and he full high,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he that did you please
So well that nothing did I doubt,
And though that now ye think it ease
To take him in and throw me out,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he in times past
That as your own ye did retain,
And though ye have me now outcast,
Showing untruth in you to reign,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he that knit the knot
The which ye swore not to unknit,
And though ye feign it now forgot
In using your newfangled wit,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he to whom ye said:
‘Welcome, my joy, my whole delight!’
And though ye are now well apaid
Of me, your own, to claim ye quit,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he to whom ye spake:
‘Have here my heart, it is thy own!’
And though these words ye now forsake,
Saying thereof my part is none,
Yet once I was.

Once I was he before rehearsed,
And now am he that needs must die,
And though I die, yet at the least
In your remembrance let it lie
That once I was.

‘Presumably the poet gave away his mistress’ name to a friend under pledge of secrecy’ (MT).
2 slanderous: shameful.
10: He innocently suggests he does not deserve to be near her, then makes plain it is the other way round.
11–12: i.e. ‘unless you abstain from doing further wrong’, with the implication, ‘if you continue to refuse me your presence I will assume that you have done amiss’ (S).
3–4: A reference to the wheel of Fortune. 7 doubt: fear; suspect.
11 times: disyllabic.
19 newfangled: cf. XXXVII, 19.
19 wit: ingenuity.
25 apaid: satisfied.
31 rehearsed: told of.
CLVII

Quondam was I in my lady's grace
I think as well as now be you,
And when that you have trod the trace
Then shall you know my words be true,
That quondam was I.

Quondam was I. She said 'for ever':
That 'ever' lasted but a short while.
Promise made not to disperse,
I thought she laughed—she did but smile:
Then quondam was I.

Quondam was I: he that full oft lay
In her arms with kisses many one.
It is enough that this I may say:
Though among the mo now I be gone,
Yet quondam was I.

Quondam was I: yet she will you tell
That since the hour she was first born
She never loved none half so well
As you. But what although she had sworn,
Sure quondam was I.

CLVIII

She that should most, perceiveth least
The unfeigned sufferance of my great smart:
It is to her sport to have me oppressed.
But they of such life which be expert
Say that I burn uncertain in my heart.
But where judge ye? No more! Ye know not.
Ye are to blame to say I came too late.

9, 19 entreated: treated.
11 unvised: i.e. ill-advised; imprudent.
13 But... not: but I did not reach my purpose.
20 let see: i.e. 'let us see'; cf. XL, 21.

1 spit: (1) spite; (2) broach; (3) saliva. (Spit of can mean 'in spite of'.)
2 fantasy (6 fancy): amorous inclination, love.
10: Cf. Tilley, W86.
Who is afraid? Yea, let him flee,
For I full well shall bide the brunt.
May grease their lips that list to lie
(Of busy brains as is their wont),
And yet against the prick they spurn:
My fancy is too hard to turn.

For I am set and will not swerve,
Whom faithful speech removeth nought;
And well I may thy grace deserve,
I think it is not dearly bought.
And if they both do spit and spurn,
My fancy is too hard to turn.

Who list thereat to list or lour,
I am not he that ought doth reche:
There is no pain that hath the power
Out of my breast this thought to seche.
Then though they spit thereat and spurn,
My fancy is too hard to turn.

14 *bide the brunt*: cf. ML, 196.
17: ‘And yet they kick against the prick’; proverbial, after Acts 9:5, cf. Tilley,
F433.
21 *deserve*: earn.
26 *reche*: i.e. *reck*, but also *reach*, spit.
28 *seche*: i.e. *seek*, drive out by attack.