THE DARLING BUDS OF MAIE

A LETTER AND A DEDICATION

THE HAND-WRITTEN LETTER

> *Sinc distanc bares me from so great hapenes as I can seldom hear from you, which when I do is so welcom as I esteme nothing more worthie, and for your love which I dout not of shall be equaled in ful mesure, but lest my lines to tedius weare, and time that limets all thinges bares me of wordes, which eles could never ses to tel howe dear you ar, and with what zele I desire your retorne, than can wish nothing more then your hartes desire, and wil ever contineu; your afectina sister,*

THE PRINTED DEDICATION

> ***I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen only, if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a god-father, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honor to your hearts content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation. Your honors in all duty,***

The Letter, in sweet Roman (italic) hand, was sent about 1593 by the Queen's Maid-of-Honour, Mary Fitton aged fifteen, to her married sister, Anne Newdigate. She signed it **Mary Phytton.** The Dedication was of *Venus And Adonis* (Registered 13th April 1593) to the Earl of Southampton and signed (in print) ***William Shakespeare.***

On analysis the Letter and the Dedication are remarkably similar. Had it been realised that Mary Fitton signed as Phytton, or that her lover called her May, the mystery of the Shake-Speare Sonnets might have been resolved many years ago. The title: The Darling Buds of Maie., get it?

CHAPTER ONE – THE MYSTERIES OF THE SHAKE-SPEARE SONNETS

The original punctuation of the Sonnets has been retained as it provides rhythm. It is at odds with modern punctuation which helps clarify sense. Commas, colons and full-stops then indicated pauses of different lengths. In breathing-in the poetry one hears the heartbeats of the two lovers and this, their correspondence in verse.

SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS a small, eighty-page book, was published In 1609. In it, one-hundred-and-fifty-four sonnets were followed by a poem, *A Lover's Complaint,* which told of the seduction and de-flowering of a maid by a young lord.

Today a sonnet is classified as a fourteen-line poem, each line having ten syllables. The sense is generally developed in three blocks of four lines, *quatrains*, ending with a two-line *couplet*. The rhyming patterns vary with up to seven different sound endings, for example, abab, cdcd, efef, gg. Each line is in the form of an iambic pentameter, having five *feet*. In Elizabethan times a sonnet was simply a poem.[1] However, in the latter half of the 16th century it became the fashion to compose in this fourteen-line, Italian style made popular by the diplomat-soldier-poet, Sir Philip Sidney. Over half the two-thousand published Italian-style sonnets of that era can be shown to have connections with the Sidney family.

This book explains that, despite all we have been led to believe, William Shaxper of Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, did *not* write the *Shake-Speare Sonnets*. A bastion of spin, false evidence and vested interest supports a myth. Even the name itself, Will-Shake-Spear, has been a four-hundred-year *elephant in the room*; any literate or for that matter illiterate person in the late 16th century would have smiled if not laughed out loud on seeing or hearing the name for the first time – it is a euphemism for the sexual act or masturbation. *Will* was an allusion to genitalia, male or female – it survives in today's *willie* – one of the things we were not taught in English Literature. One only has to read the salacious if not downright uncouth *Sonnet 135* for validation of the then meanings of *will*!

> *Wilt thou, whose **will** is large and spacious,*
> *Not once vouchsafe to hide my **will** in thine?*

Conventional understanding is that in the first 126 Sonnets the *renown'd Bard*, in his late thirties, wrote platonic love poems to a young nobleman not yet of age. This relationship somehow ended and, without explanation, in Sonnets 127-152 he *turn'd* his

[1] *Greene's Funeralls* (1593) is a poetic tribute of fourteen *sonnets* to the late playwright Robert Greene, compiled by R B, Gent; thought to be the poet, Richard Barnfield. Only one of the poems is in the style of what today would be called a sonnet.

attentions to a lady more mature than him who had dark looks and a darker character, the so-called *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. The first quatrain of Sonnet 127;

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were, it bore not beauty's name;
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame

The theme of darkness recurs through these latter twenty-eight sonnets, the lady's *raven-black* eyes,[2] her being in mourning, her bad character and his dark or foul moods. They expose the thoughts and passions of an infatuated young man, believing himself in love with, and lusting after a more mature woman stigmatized by a *bastard shame*. Sometimes he hates the woman, at times he hates himself more.

All sorts of arguments have been put forward to suggest the Brad was not bisexual. The conventional understanding has stood the test of time only because there has been no better explanation, but it is completely wrong. An assumption made by some *literati* is that the Sonnets were written in the main before 1599 because two sonnets, Sonnets 138 & 144, had appeared slightly differently in 1599 in a small book of twenty-one poems, *The Passionate Pilgrim* by *W Shakespeare*.

What I have unearthed is that the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* was part of a correspondence in verse between two lovers, a gifted young earl and a vivacious and highly intelligent daughter of the gentry. We are fortunate to have this legacy of their love, their lust, their passion, their humour and their sad experiences. Yet, twenty years after the first edition of this book, I found evidence which suggests that these two lovers were victims of a dirty-old-man's perfidy.

London's Court at the end of the sixteenth century was a community of nearly two thousand people. At its head the Queen was served by her administrators, many of whom were Boleyn relatives, and staff, including a hierarchy of maids and servants each with their own function in the massive beehive. Physically closest to the Queen were the half-dozen maids-of-honour, well-educated, favoured daughters of nobility and gentry, skilled in the arts of music, song, recitation, dance, cards, embroidery and horsemanship – each had an allocated horse in the Queen's stables. The women were effectively wards of the Queen who in return looked after and helped keep the Queen amused. They had a reputation of being virtuous (some were not) and like foster-daughters would have made an ageing Queen feel young.

It was around 1597 when a seventeen-year-old courtier, fresh from studies, started to woo one of the Queen's maids. By January 1601 the maid was known to be six-months

[2] A portrait of the lady in question has he eyes heavily made up with *mascara*. Black eyes do not exist.

pregnant. The man admitted paternity and the Queen, his godmother to boot, ordered them to marry. He refused and invoked the Queen's fury who sent him to prison and placed the maid under house arrest. It is now, in through the first seventeen *Shake-Speare Sonnets*, the pregnant woman implores her lover to take a wife and sire progeny.

At the end of March the baby was "lost" soon after birth and although her hold over the man slackened, her love and passion for him endured; it was mutual. Over the next years she wrote at least one-hundred-and-eight more sonnets addressed to him, the tone changing with circumstances and her many moods. The first of the sequence, the most famous and considered by many the most beautiful, was Sonnet 18: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* Some of the man's poetic, interspersed responses during their seven-year affair are the twenty-eight *Dark Lady Sonnets*. They were not the only poems he wrote to her.

In April 1600 the young man, who on 19th January had become an earl on the death of his father, was released from prison but barred from Court. In May the disgraced and strumpeted maid left London alongside her parents to return to their home in the north. However, separation could not destroy their love, passion and the power of lust they felt for each other. A stream of sonnets expressed her fluctuating emotions as she absorbed and countered the rough winds and vicissitudes that life away from Court threw at her. Almost certainly it was she who wrote the long but incomplete poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, describing her being seduced, ending by asking whether in the light of experience would she again be taken in – and indeed admitting she would!

At the end of 1604 the earl married an heiress – for her wealth and status – while, domiciled near Wolverhampton in Staffordshire, the former maid was *straying* with a distant cousin, an Admiral. The Admiral, a married man whose wife, daughter of the Lord High Admiral, was clinically insane following the stillborn birth of their only child, had provided the *strumpeted* maid with a home, a sense of security and *as far as he knew* a couple of children. He died suddenly in strange circumstances in 1605. On the rebound the woman married a naval captain (another William) who had served under the Admiral and through marriage regained social respectability. Marriage probably ended the affair with the Earl. In September 1609, the same year the Sonnets were published, her husband believing himself close to death made his will and promptly died. Two years later she remarried and evidence suggests it was a good marriage.

On face value, the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* were registered to publisher, Thomas Thorpe, in London on 20th May 1609, and printed around this time for someone who gave their initials as T.T. [3]. Thomas Thorpe never used T T as his initials. As the book contains

[3] Although the Stationers' Register ascribes rights for the *Sonnets* to publisher Thomas Thorpe whose initials coincide with the title page and the Dedication, Thorpe never, in his many other publications used the initials TT. In a dedication to John Florio of 1610 (just a year later) he signs his name Th. Th.. He may have been chosen to register the Sonnets *because* of his initials. There is no trail of publishing rights being sold or passed on before John Benson's 1640 edition of the Shake-speare Poems (omitting: Sonnets 18; 19;

typographical errors it is *assumed* that the poetry was pirated and printed in a hurry; two overly broad assumptions which are wrong.

The *Sonnets* were prefaced by an unusual dedication to a *Master W. H.,*,again signed T. T., consisting of thirty words on thirteen lines, with a full-stop after each word. The book is completed with *A Lover's Complaint,* a narrative poem telling of the seduction of a maid by the young lord who promised to marry her, enjoyed her body and then reneged. Some commentators say that because of *Complaint*'s inferior quality and many unique words, it cannot be by Shakespeare – that it was no more than a publisher's space-filler. Other commentators profess that the poem strongly resonates with the *Shakespeare* narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594).

Anyone trying to make sense of the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* quickly realises there are too many inconsistencies and so much more to the Sonnets than simple explanations can render. For instance academics conveniently neglect that on half a dozen occasions the author proclaims anonymity, *my name will be buried where my body is,* and yet *Shake-Speare* is blazoned across the title page. It is patently obvious that *Shake-Speare* was a pseudonym, yet what academic would dare admit it, like denying God; so generations of historians and academics failed to uncover the quite sensational real-life story underpinning the *Sonnets*, asking us instead to swallow their concocted theories. Indeed the two authors needed to obscure their identities (as would any married man and married woman having an affair) and they succeeded for nearly 400 years.

The reality is that virtually all the poetry was created by *two* covert lovers, over about seven years, starting in January 1601. The Sonnets are part of a correspondence between a woman and a man, both given to writing sonnets; the man almost out of habit – it was a family *thing* – the woman (I guess) to impress him. The *Shake-Speare* pseudonym masked their identities, avoided scandal and proved to outwit posterity. Evidence shows it was the woman who had the poetry published. The initials TT *are* significant but nothing to do with Thomas Thorpe; they are a phonetic monogram, marrying the second T halfway down the leg of the first T creates an F married to a T. (More later)

The poetry is at worst interesting, at times repetitive but at best brilliant and illuminating. It derives from every recess of their hearts and minds. It was a true gift which, with its own words, repeatedly cried out to be set in print and published. Sonnet 18 famously ends, *so long as men can breathe and eyes can see, so long lives this and this gives life to thee*; and so it has. Their legacy is that today one can enter the minds of the brilliant but often confused, distressed, and shamed mistress who for a brief moment in time aspired to be one of the great countesses of England, and of the Earl who jilted her – he had his reasons – and shattered her dreams.

43; 56; 75; 76; 96; 126 ; and with other poems. This collection was published on the tenth anniversary of the Earl Pembroke's death. The Thorpe entry in the Stationers' Register may be a forgery.

Sonnets 17 and 135 illustrate two ends of a spectrum of emotions. In S17 the Maid, heavily pregnant with his baby, wrote with love to her lover:

Sonnet 17

Who will believe my verse in time to come
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb
Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.
If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
And in fresh numbers[4] number all your graces,
The age to come would say, This poet lies;
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.
So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue,
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage
And stretched metre of an antique song.
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice in it, and in my rhyme.

Contrast this with S135 some years later. The courtier now *not* happily married, but still in love, lust, jealous, frustrated, neglected and for some reason angry with his mistress, became grossly insulting; probably when he finds she has married someone called William. I have emboldened the word **will**, a euphemism for *either* sexes' genitalia.

Sonnet 135

*Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy **Will**,*
*And **Will** to boot, and **Will** in overplus;*
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
*To thy sweet **will** making addition thus.*
*Wilt thou, whose **will** is large and spacious,*
*Not once vouchsafe to hide my **will** in thine?*
*Shall **will** in others seem right gracious,*
*And in my **will** no fair acceptance shine?*
The sea, all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store;
*So thou, being rich in **Will**, add to thy **Will***
*One **will** of mine to make thy large **Will** more.*
Let no unkind no fair beseechers kill,
*Think all but one, and me in that one **Will**.* [5]

[4] A *number* = verse or poem.

Sonnet 136 continues in the same vein.

Shake-Speares Sonnets has been the great mystery of English literature. The small book of apparently rambling poetry has never yielded its full potential – simply because nobody has understood the circumstances in which the poetry was written. Only knowing the history can one find the ultimate enjoyment in each word, line and verse. We enter the minds of the two highly intelligent young people, elevated at times as soaring skylarks by the joys of their love, sonnets their toys, essaying with black ink on leaves of paper, with bathos, pathos and humour, to reach and touch each other's heart.

This book unravels the mystery; at last one can empathise with the intense passions and the psychology as the strumpeted and shamed maid, a mistress approaching the edge of madness, awaiting her distanced lover but clawing her way back to a new reality and a new life away from Court. Set in their true context, one finds the verses so personal, emotional and on occasion so lascivious, derogatory or scandalous that the work could only have been published if the identities of the characters were deliberately obscured; and then other characters; who were the Rival Poet and Captain Ill?

To me it is the greatest love story, not because of the storyline, there are more interesting stories in the Shakespeare plays, but because it was real and spawned the Shake-Speare Sonnets. It all hinged on no more than a few minutes' sex in a private chamber.

The first edition of this book was published in 2004. Since then I continued my research *to prove myself wrong* (and failed) gently modifying the text as more information became known. The book has not changed in essence. However, during Covid-lockdown I discovered why the young Earl would not marry the maid of honour. Here is not the time for a spoiler but it came as a complete surprise and explains so much. In updating this book I recently found another thread which proved to be sinister.

This story directly involved Queen Elizabeth, her First Minister, Robert Cecil, the Lord High Admiral, Charles Howard, and other celebrities of those days who today are faint shadows. The poet Richard Barnfield, Lady Mary Sidney Wroth and Admiral Sir Richard Leveson are names known to but a few historians although everybody who enjoys the Shakespeare plays *Twelfth Night,* ought to recognise Sir William Knollys, the Queen's second cousin (or half-nephew), Comptroller of her Household, in the guise of *Malvolio*.

In Elizabethan times it would have been considered vulgar for a member of the nobility to have their poetry or dramatic work published under their own name. Publishing the works of one's own pen was seen to be the domain of the lower-classed scholars and

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[5] For the text I have referred back to an Internet facsimile of the original 1609 printing held in the Huntingdon Library. Other help has come from the *Norton Shakespeare; A Shakespeare Glossary* by C. T. Onions; *A Dictionary of Shakespeare's Sexual Puns and their Significance* by Frank Rubinstein; the Ardern, the Cambridge and the New Penguin series of plays.

wordsmiths, exclusively male, some of whom prostrated, importuned or climbed over each other to gain notice, attention and advancement through patronage. If the male head of a great family was not approachable, a circuitous route was to dedicate work to his wife. One woman in particular, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess Pembroke,[6] wealthy in her own right and a great patron and contributor to the literary arts, was the recipient of many fawning dedications from begetters of poems, plays and books.

For the ennobled, publishing anonymously or under a pseudonym would circumvent such impropriety. Four great earls, Derby, Leicester, Oxford, and Pembroke are thought to have been exceptional poets or competent playwrights. But it was not just the nobility who had cause to obscure their identities; for a woman to publish work under her own name was unheard of. It was not until King James was on the English throne and some years after the death of Queen Elizabeth that the first collections of verses composed by women were published under their own names; Aemelia Bassano Lanier (1611) and Mary Sidney Wroth (1621).[7] Lanier, a putative candidate for the *Dark Lady*, had been the mistress of Lord Chamberlain, Henry Hudson, whereas Mary Sidney Wroth (Mary Wroth) was the niece of Mary Sidney Herbert and widow of Sir Robert Wroth, a hunting companion of the King. In widowhood Mary Wroth was mistress to her first cousin, William Herbert, Earl Pembroke.

There was, however, one earlier poem published in 1595 but written by a lady with a *sacred name,* who also used the initials T.T.. This was in the book of poetry *Cynthia* by Staffordshire poet, Richard Barnfield, the subject of Chapter 5.

The Register of the Stationers' Company [8] for 1609 shows:

20 May; Tho. Thorpe. Entered for his copie under the handes of master Wilson and master Lownes Wardenes a booke called Shakespeares sonnettes vjd.

Shake-Speares Sonnets was printed the same year by George Eld for someone whose professed initials were T T. They were prefaced by the following odd, but carefully crafted dedication of thirty words, on thirteen lines, with full-stops after every word:

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[6] Mary Sidney married Henry Herbert the second Earl Pembroke.

[7] Mary Sidney Wroth was Countess Pembroke's niece by her brother Robert Sidney, later 1st Earl of Leicester, second creation. The first creation was the Countess' uncle, her mother's brother, Robert Dudley.

[8] The Register of the Stationers' Hall in London recorded the right to print or publish a work; the fee was 6d (vid). The printer would exhibit the document, sometimes before completion or pending publication, to the Stationer's clerk. It is curious that the warden did not write down what he saw, which would have been SHAKE-SPEARES Sonnets and book usually mean a play.

TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF.
THESE.INSVING.SONNETS.
M^{r}.W.H. ALL.HAPPINESSE.
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OVR.EVER-LIVING.POET.
WISHETH.
THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTVRER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T. T.

The title page stated "*never before imprinted"* but two of the sonnets had appeared in 1599 in the anthology of poems *by W. Shakespeare* entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim*.[9] In fact, six of the poems in *The Passionate Pilgrim* are identifiable works of poets other than *Shakespeare*, two by Richard Barnfield. Three had appeared in the play *Love's Labour's Lost* and three others look like unused verses from the Shakespeare poem, *Venus and Adonis*. Authorship of seven poems remains unknown.

The first *Shakespeare* works, as they later became known, had started to appear anonymously around 1590 but no author's name was ascribed until 1598 other than for the two narrative poems *Venus and Adonis* (registered April 1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594). *Venus and Adonis* was described by the author as *"the first heir of my invention"* – a curious epithet when one considers that three *Shakespeare* plays, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3* had already been performed*. Venus* and *Lucrece* were reprinted many times (because they were mildly pornographic) and it was these poems that promulgated the name *William Shakespeare*. However, it was not before 1598 that a play, *Richard II*, bore the name *William Shake-speare* on its title page. The same year Richard Barnfield, in an eighteen-line poem, named Shakespeare with poets Edmund Spenser, Samuel Daniell and Michael Drayton:

And Shakespeare thou, whose hony-flowing Vain,
(Pleasing the World) thy Praises doth containe.
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet, and chaste)
Thy Name in fames immortall Book have plac't.

Such was the nativity of the Shakespeare name. A quarter of a century later, in 1623, *Mr William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and Tragedies* was published containing

[9] Printed by Thomas Judson for William Jaggard. The twenty-one poems of *The Passionate Pilgrim* are given at Appendix-1. The title may well reflect Romeo's first meeting with Juliet.

thirty-six plays, almost half of which had never been published. This *First Folio* (folio sized paper) was dedicated to the brethren, earls of Pembroke and Montgomery, brothers William and Philip Herbert. An amazing coincidence – between 1603 and 1619 Philip lived in a village called Stratford on the banks of the Wiltshire Avon in a house owned by his brother and previously their father! They were the sons of Henry Herbert the second Earl of Pembroke (died 1601) and his Countess, Mary Sidney Herbert (1561-1621), sister of the late poet-soldier, Sir Philip Sidney.

On the title page of the *First Folio* is a portrait engraved by Martin Dro es hout of a lightly moustached man supposed to be the likeness of William Shakespeare. On close examination one sees an oversized head, slightly feminine in looks, stuck on to a tailor's dummy with one of the sleeves back to front. The facing, left-hand page displays advice from Ben Jonson

To the Reader:

This figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut:
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to outdo the life:
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then surpass
All, that ever was writ in brass.
But, since he cannot, Reader look
Not on his Picture, but his Book.

The poem is devoid of the letter M. M was gone and who was M?

M for Mary was how the two Earls' late mother Mary Sidney Herbert signed her name.

It was in the early 1590s that a highly-intelligent, literate, passionate and beautiful lass from the northern English county of Cheshire left the black-and-white timbered country home of her childhood. Escorted by her highly respected father she steadily travelled south to a new life in London. Still a teenager, she had been appointed to be a Maid of Honour to the Queen. Her father would entrust his daughter to the care of his friend, Sir William Knollys, Comptroller of the Queen's household and a second cousin to the Queen, then in his fifties. In retrospect from what ensued; it looks as if Knollys, lusting after his friend's teenage daughter, arranged her appointment. She enjoyed writing poetry and struck up a literary collaboration with Richard Barnfield whom I believe was her tutor.

Under the Queen's protection, care and scrutiny, the maid consolidated her popularity at and by 1600 the tall, young woman appears to have become a *leader of the pack.* [10] She watched, perhaps with envy, as some of her friends and colleagues married. There is evidence that she had a crush on one young, unmarried Earl but he was more interested in one of her colleagues. As the century ended she fell in love with the young, handsome and gifted heir to a most respected earl (and possibly the richest in England), two years her junior. He too composed verse and they shared this love of poetry and of theatre. Again, there is evidence to suggest he gifted her with an anthology of poems, *The Passionate Pilgrim*, compiled in 1599 the year of her twenty-first birthday. The maid steadfastly resisted the pressure of the young man's smooth tongue, his tokens of love and persistent advances. But eventually with tears in his eyes and only after his having *sworn his troth* – promising that he would marry her – did she finally succumb. The sex was good[11] and she became pregnant.

Promises! Puh! He refused to marry her – or anyone else for that matter. This was the third marriage proposal that had been put the young man, not yet twenty-one.[12] The Queen was incensed; not only had her maid of honour been defiled but the young courtier, her godson to boot, had defied her by refusing to marry. His father having just died, now an earl, he was incarcerated in the Fleet Prison. The maid was put under house arrest and the story circulated that the child had died soon after birth. The Earl was released the following month with a doctor's note, all coinciding with his coming of age. Barred from Court, out of favour, the young man ultimately showed political astuteness by tying his flag to the mast of James VI of Scotland, subsequently James I of England.

Plague was rampant in London in 1603 when the new king made the long journey south to claim his throne. He did not hang about in the diseased city and it was the young

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[10] The Queen's favourite was Margaret Radcliffe, depicted in *Twelfth Night* as Viola. After hearing of the awful death of her twin brother, Alexander, (*Sebastian*) after a skirmish in Ireland in August 1599, Margaret became anorexic, and her life wasted away. In her last days she was nursed by the Queen, dying in the Queen's arms that November. Ben Jonson wrote a poignant epitaph for the tombstone in Westminster Abbey. The name *Sebastian* conjures up St. Sebastian whose body was pierced by many arrows; Don Paterson in his *Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets* uses the expression a *sanctified porcupine* which raises a spectre of Sir Philip Sidney whose emblem was a Porcupine. In *Twelfth Night* the twins confirm their identities, saying their father died on their thirteenth birthday. In reality, Sir John Radcliffe of Ordsall in Salford, Lancashire, died in 1590 on what could very well have been their fifteenth birthday. On Twelfth Night 1601, a year after the twins died, they reappeared like spirits to the delight of the Court; *Twelfth Night,* Act 5.1, l-232

Viola: "*If spirits can assume both form and suit, you come to fright us."*

Sebastian: *"A spirit I am indeed,...."*

[11] *A Lover's Complaint,* Chapter-3, Stanza 43.

[12] Elizabeth, daughter of Sir George Carey; Bridget de Vere daughter of the Earl of Oxford; 1599, a niece of Charles Howard (Lord Nottingham). He may have refused to marry the pregnant maid; many men in such a predicament waited to see if the unborn child survived, but perhaps reminiscent of of Benedict in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

earl who for three months entertained him and his entourage at his country home near Salisbury in Wiltshire. At the coronation he was one of the earls who held the canopy over the King and, after formally swearing his allegiance, he demonstratively greeted his King with a kiss on the cheek or was it on the lips? It took courtiers by surprise. Two years later the Earl's loyalty was rewarded when the King made him a Knight of the Garter. The bisexual King James would remain very fond of him but more so his younger brother, appointed groom of the King's bedchamber, an intimate position. The relationship between James and the younger Earl was intense; alone at night only the young man could lift the King from his depressions. For his favours he earned an earldom in his own right. The futures of these two brothers were assured and their fortunes augmented. In 1604 the reluctant earl finally married a dwarfish and unattractive heiress with more than a half-decent dowry [13] and potentially half of a massive estate. The Earl and his Countess were to live apart.

Ostracized, vilified and shamed, the former maid of honour returned to her ancestral home one hundred and seventy miles away. Her mother, profoundly embarrassed and very angry, refused to allow her daughter to live in the house. For a while the young woman lived in the nearby rectory and later found refuge with her sister in Warwickshire. Estranged from the love of her life, she composed sonnets expressing her emotions, transcribing them into the copybook he had given her. There is evidence of her being in Wales and around 1603 she moved into a second-cousin's property in Staffordshire where she finally settled, had children, married, had children, was widowed, remarried and had more children; dying in 1641.

When the *Sonnets* with its *Lover's Complaint* were published, the former lovers, married (but not to each other), used the pen-name *Shake-speare* and successfully hid their identities for nearly four hundred years. When one follows the real-life story that inspired these fantastic verses one can enjoy poetry in a way never before experienced. In Stanzas 7 and 8 of *A Lover's Complaint* we read that the maid tore up the man's letters so what remains for us are these verses through which one enters the minds of two very gifted people, lovers with their senses heightened, a man certainly in lust and an ambitious woman desperately in love.

Why am I so convinced that here are the solutions to the mysteries of the Shake-Speare Sonnets? The answer is that everything fits. Clearly, there were no obvious statements as to whom the protagonists were – otherwise there would be no mystery. What clues were left have defeated a hundred and fifty years of investigations by some brilliant scholars. Both lovers had keen minds, probably better than most of the investigators who have tried to identify them. In fact they went out of their way to preserve anonymity; from Sonnets 72 and 76:

72 O, lest your true love may seem false in this,

[13] The dowry was then £3,000, equivalent to nearly £0.75m today.

That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me nor you;

76 Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did proceed?

This is a true story. It is the literary glass slipper that slides effortlessly on to Cinderella's foot. All the facts marry and fit on. No inventions have been made for the sake of glossing over cracks. No convoluted, barely believable barrister-type stories have been concocted to explain inconsistencies as happens throughout the classical mythology of the Bard. No facts have been conveniently ignored that would negate the discoveries. However, quite a number of assumed facts that would complement and support have *not* been presented and I leave this extra supporting evidence to be rediscovered by others. In researching this book I have as a matter of principle tried to prove myself wrong. In this I have failed.

I never set out to discover who wrote the *Shake-Speare Sonnets*. The story emerged through a number of accidents and a determination spurred on because I felt so close to the truth. The book is a mixture of history, forensics, facts, probabilities and possibilities – but nowhere do I allow conjecture or whim to transmute into “fact” as is the wont of *everyone* who has written a history of the Bard. I have researched hard and diligently to disprove my own findings because the responsibility of being right is simply enormous. Hard facts are still appearing and each one adds to the body of evidence.

In March 2004 I knew nothing about the Shakespeare Sonnets; all I knew was that H. E. Bates had used *The Darling Buds of May* as the title of a book, later made into a television series by Granada Television. Today I find the Sonnets’ content breath-taking, and they must be even more so for any woman who has been desperate through love. I still marvel at (most of) the *Shakespeare* plays. The analysis, research and development of the body of knowledge that has been derived from the plays themselves is a tribute to some great minds; I doubt if any other secular body of text gives a better understanding of ourselves. The big BUT is that to best understand *Shakespeare* fully one needs to know the writers’ intention, the real context in which the plays and poetry were written, who made up the audience they had to appeal to. For instance, how does one explain why the magnificent frivolity of *Twelfth Night* be is sandwiched juxtaposed with the sombre, psychological genius of *Hamlet*? And did a thread link Beatrice, Rosalynde, Olivia, Viola and Ophelia in a sequence of plays?

I have climbed the many steps to the top of Ludlow Castle in Shropshire and looked down on the thick, fortified walls and across the river into Wales. It is not hard to imagine three siblings, Philip, Mary and Robert Sidney being on the same spot nearly five centuries ago; this was their childhood home. High up, shaken by rough winds, one can

be *King of the Castle*, enjoying a delusion of power that lasts only until the long descent into reality. The Sidney family had no delusion of power. They were powerful; but they also were very human and their great passion, away from politics, was literature and drama.

There are two academics whom I need single out. Margaret Hannay, Professor of English at Sienna College, for her book *Philip's Phoenix*, and Sheila Cavanagh, Associate Professor of English at Emory University for her *Cherished Torment*. I read their books again trying hard to find evidence to disprove what I had found. The quality of their research is astounding and helped me understand so much about the lives of the protagonists. I resisted the temptation to abstract huge tracts from their works to block-fill the background. This is essentially a book about *SHAKE-SPEARES SONNETS.*

CHAPTER TWO - THE PROTAGONISTS

The young man who in 1600 seduced the maid was William Herbert (sometimes Harbert or Harbart), the son and heir of Henry the second Earl Pembroke and his Countess, Mary Sidney. It was William Herbert who composed Sonnets 127-152, the so-called *Dark Lady Sonnets,* during the course of a seven-year relationship. Indeed, most commentators have concluded that William Herbert was *Master W. H*., the object of the Bard's homosexual love; but it was a woman's love, not a man's that poured forth from Sonnets 1-126.

The woman was the maid of honour, Mary Fitton (Mal / Mall / May Phytton) of Gawsworth, Cheshire, thought to be the model for Olivia in *Twelfth Night.*[14] [15] George Bernard Shaw and others had already associated Mary Fitton with the *Dark Lady of the Sonnets,* although the *Dark Lady's* eyes were described as black and Mary's eyes were a slate-blue.[16] Mary Phytton wrote Sonnets 1-126 and almost certainly the poem, *A Lover's Complaint* (by *William Shake-Speare).*

Aged twenty on the death of his father in January 1601, William Herbert became the third Earl Pembroke. He would die without an heir in 1630, the day following his fiftieth birthday, to be succeeded by his brother, Philip. He was a gifted man with many titles including Lord Warden of the Stanneries (the tin mines of Devon & Cornwall), Governor of Portsmouth, Knight of the Garter, Member of the King's Privy Council and from 1615 to 1625 held the office of Lord Chamberlain.[17] As Chancellor of Oxford University he helped

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[14] Leslie Hotson's *The First Night of Twelfth Night* provides an excellent analysis of the play. Mary Fitton was then six month's pregnant and in Act-1 iii we find, *"Are they to take dust like Mistress Mall's picture?"* Dust was slang for semen and picture would have sounded like pitcher, a vessel.

[15] Mary Sidney Wroth's 1621 allegory, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (Urania),* recalls her knowledge of the two lovers, the characters *Antissia* and *Amphilanthus*. The Countess of Montgomery was Susan de Vere, the wife of William Herbert's brother, Philip, and daughter of Edward, 17th Earl of Oxford. Mary Wroth was William's first cousin and in widowhood, mother of two children by him. *Antissia* means *Opponent*. [*Cherished Torment* by Sheila T. Cavanagh. The first identification of Mary Fitton as *Antissia* was by Josephine A Roberts].

[16] Olivia's eyes in *Twelfth Night,* Act 1.5, are grey. Mascara was used even in those days!

[17] One of the Lord Chamberlain's duties was licenser of plays in the City of London, Westminster and other areas. The various Lord Chamberlains were:
1557 William Howard, 1st. Lord Effingham; Richard Leveson's wife's grandfather.
1572 Thomas Radcliffe, 3rd Earl Sussex - married Katherine, Mary Sidney's sister.
1585 Henry Carey, 1st. Lord Hunsdon, the Queens cousin - Aemelia Lanier's lover
1596 William Brooke
1597 George Carey, 2nd. Lord Hunsdon, son of Henry, the Queen's cousin..
1603 Thomas Howard, 1st Earl of Suffolk - William Knollys' father-in-law.
1613 Robert Carr, 1st Earl of Somerset
1615 William Herbert, 3rd. Earl of Pembroke; Mary Fitton's lover.

fund Broadgate Hall which changed its name to Pembroke College and in 1615 conferred a degree on the poet Ben Jonson. He speculated massively in the Virginia Company[18] and helped finance the colonisations of Bermuda and Newfoundland. In 1604 he married Mary Talbot, co-heiress of the Earl of Shrewsbury but their one child born after more than a decade of marriage died soon after birth.[19] Mary Talbot was described *as dwarfish and unattractive* [20] and was not celebrated in portraits other than one of 1619 (by Cornelius Janssen van Culen) when she was thirty-nine which shows a youthful face and a hint of roundness, undeveloped breasts, and shortness of body. Without distinction she survived her husband until 1649.

Hugh Sanford, one of William Herbert's tutors and his father's secretary, had predicted that William would not live into his fifty-first year. This prediction is recorded in the same document where he describes the Earl's character:

> *He mends his mind to follow the means to attain riches with a little covetousness, but on honourable occasion shall spend from it. He is vigilant and apt to fall into quarrel by hastiness. He is of a lofty mind and delights in magnanimity . . . Courteous and affable to his friends but cannot bear injury or cross in his reputation. He is bountiful to his friends . . . because of his regard for honour and reputation . . shall be very dainty in the choice out of jealousy and suspicion.*[21]

William Herbert lived fifty years but not a day more. His remains and those of brother Philip and their parents lie in the family vault under the choir in Salisbury Cathedral [22] near their family home, Wilton House, through whose grounds flow tributaries of the

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1625 Philip Herbert, 1st. Earl of Montgomery (William's brother & 4th. Earl of Pembroke.)

[18] 1607, tobacco - Virginian car plates show they celebrated 400 years in 2007. Pembroke was the second largest (adventurer) single stockholder, investing £400.

[19] Mary Talbot, 24 year old daughter of Gilbert, 7th Earl of Shrewsbury and Mary Cavendish, has been said to be malformed or dwarfish or unattractive. The Shrewsburys and the Pembrokes had a history of intermarriage. The dau. of 4S, Anne, marries 1P; Catherine, dau. of 6S marries 2P and Mary dau. of 7S marries 3P.

[20] Portraits of her sister, Althea, can be seen in Arundel Castle, West Sussex.

[21] Hannay, op .cit. page 211. Elsewhere Edward Hyde, 1st Earl Clarendon, praises William Herbert and adds his being *immoderately given up to women* – which has resonated through history. Hyde was born at Dinton near Salisbury in 1609 and was aged 21 when Herbert died aged 50. Clarendon's comments were clearly hearsay and lack authority.

[22] Beneath the pulpit in the choir is a brick vault containing several generations. Nearby is a modern dedication to the Pembrokes below which is an epithet to Mary Sidney.

> *Underneath this sable herse / Lies the subject of all verse, / SIDNEY's sister, PEMBROKE's mother; / Death! ere thou hast slain another, / Learn'd and fair, and good as she, / Time shall throw a dart at thee.*

Wiltshire Avon. [23] This was the Avon that Ben Jonson wrote about in his First Folio dedication *To the memory of my beloved the author, Mr William Shakespeare and what he hath left us*, and adds *"Sweet Swan of Avon! What a fight it were, to see thee in our waters yet appear, and make those flights upon the banks of Thames, that so did take Eliza and our James!"* [24]

Mary Fitton, twice widowed, died in Staffordshire in 1641, aged 63. Three children of her nine known pregnancies survived her. She requested to be buried in the picturesque family church at Gawsworth, where she was brought up and where there is a touching memorial to her father. His sarcophagus originally had effigies of Alice, his wife, seated alongside, with Sir Edward's head resting on her hand, and at each corner kneeling effigies of their four children. Today's visitors to the church can still see the weary face of Alice Fitton, her two sons in armour to the front and behind the attractive bosom sisters, Anne and Mary (with a chipped nose), dressed in black robes (*mourning weeds*); the recumbent statue of her husband is long lost.

This was not a love affair between rustics (Audrey and William in *As You Like It*) but involved the very movers and shakers of that era. William's father, Henry Herbert, 2nd. Earl Pembroke was thought to be the wealthiest man in England and Wales. William's mother was the sister of Sir Philip Sidney, who completed her late brother's work *Astrophel and Stella* which recounted Philip's passion for the teenage Penelope Devereux-Rich. Penelope was the beautiful daughter of the beautiful Letitia Knollys, sister of Sir William Knollys of whom we shall read more. An aunt, Katherine, married Lord Huntingdon; another aunt, Frances, Countess of Sussex, left £5,000 to found Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Philip and Mary Sidney's uncle was Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester whose third wife was the same Letitia Knollys whom he scandalously married in secret to the chagrin and fury of Queen Elizabeth. Power, wealth, influence and intrigue hovered malevolently interwoven all around these two lovers. Mary Fitton's father and grandfather had held high rank in Ireland and had served under the Pembrokes.

The word *begetter* in the Dedication, *the only begetter of these ensuing sonnets,* can have a number of interpretations but means either the person who wrote the Sonnets or the person who inspired their being written, or both. The Sonnets are effectively in four sections; Sonnets 1-17, 18-126, 127-152 and 153-154. Slightly differing precursors of Sonnets 138 &144 were published in 1599 which could conveniently but erroneously be interpreted that Sonnets numbering up S138 antedated 1599.

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[23] The Stratford *Avon* flows into the Severn; the Wiltshire *Avon* into the English Channel.

[24] It is perceived wisdom to associate the Swan, Globe and Rose theatres on the Thames' South Bank. However, as the Shakespeare plays were for the consumption of the Court, they would have been performed in the royal palaces at Greenwich, Whitehall, Hampton Court, Nonesuch and Windsor all of which are on the banks of the Thames as was Baynard's castle, the Pembroke's London home.

There was a tradition of sonnet-writing in the Sidney family. It started with the Earl of Surrey, Philip Sidney's great uncle, Philip Sidney himself, succeeded by his siblings Mary and Robert and finally followed by Mary's son William and Robert Sidney's daughter, Mary. By composing in sonnet format the outsider, Mary Fitton, would have demonstrated she could match any Sidney. Sonnet-writing was not unique to the Sidneys but extended to their prodigies of Samuel Daniell, Michael Drayton and others.

Chronologically, what happened first was the seduction of Mary Fitton and her becoming pregnant. This is described by Mary in her poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, although some years may have passed before it was written. Sonnets 1-17 follow; here the now pregnant Mary bombards the adolescent William Herbert with reasons and arguments imploring him to marry and have children.

If one tries reading these first seventeen sonnets standing in different people's shoes one could posit that they could have been composed by any one of a number of people, William's mother, his cousin Mary Sidney (Wroth), the courtesan Aemelia Lanier, his aunt or uncle, certainly someone with great poetic ability who knew, cared for and loved him. One notion has it that William's mother, Countess Pembroke, commissioned *Shake-speare* to write the seventeen sonnets to honour his seventeenth birthday but facts embedded in the content are completely at variance. Common sense and various nuances favour them to be from the pen of a young, unmarried woman. It is hard to reconcile Mary not being the author of Sonnets 1-17, in fact the first four lines of Sonnet 11 forcefully imply as much.

The 108 sonnets (18-125) which form the core of the publication start after the baby is born and illustrate how Mary Fitton loved William Herbert literally to distraction. Some half-dozen years later, having gone through the well-defined clinical stages of grief, she signs off with S126, a sonnet whose missing couplet is represented by two sets of empty brackets – as if Mary Fitton was firmly saying, "here *is* the *End of the Story*." They are very clearly the writings of a woman pining for her lover, often from a distance.

By not printing the sonnet blocks in their chronological order and subsequently appending *A Lover's Complaint*, the confusion made it impossible to make overall sense or identify the two lovers. Further, the chronology was confounded (intentionally or unintentionally) by the insertion late in the sonnet sequence of sonnets 138 & 144 which had been published (with differences) in the *Passionate Pilgrim* a year before the love affair really got going.

The correct sequence

A Lovers Complaint, [25] (the seduction of the maid)

Sonnets 1-17, (the maid asking the young man to marry)

Sonnets 18-125, (The maid's sonnets) ending with 126.

Sonnets 153 & 154 - the envoie.

[25] I believe *A Lover's Complaint* was written in South Wales around 1603.

The *Dark Lady* Sonnets, 127-152 (excluding 138 & 144), were written as part of a correspondence with the first 126 sonnets and are spread over the same seven years. The first 126 Sonnets *are* in chronological order; the *Dark Lady* sonnets are not.

The *Shake-Speares Sonnets* appear to have had only modest circulation but thirteen copies of the original still exist. It would be normal to publish a print run of some hundreds but I suspect this was a limited edition of some tens. They were not reprinted until 1640, the same year Mary Fitton made her will, when all but eight sonnets were published alongside many other poems (not by Shake-speare) under the title *Shake-Speare's Poems*.[26] Many copies have of the 1640 edition survived proving its popularity. From within the sonnets Mary Fitton's poetry cried out to be published for its own sake to preserve them for posterity.

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee,

Publishing in 1609 when Mary's husband was close to death may have been a way to ensure editorial control and ownership of the intellectual property, before losing control.

Richard Barnfield's name has been mentioned. Some poetry attributed to him is said to be as good as *Shakespeare's.* Chapter Five discusses Barnfield in depth. After leaving Oxford in 1592 he produced small books of poetry in 1594, 1595 and 1598 and an enlarged second printing of his 1598 works in 1605. Barnfield's 1594 book was a translation from Latin of homoerotic verses. His later work *was* influenced by Mary Fitton, as will be explained.

At least two people wrote the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* yet time and time again I wavered, having recurring thoughts that Richard Barnfield who was in the right place at the right time had a hand in writing them or that Henry Wriothesley, the Earl of Southampton, was the object of her love. Indeed, it is certain that Barnfield was well known to Mary – they could have been childhood friends or sweethearts in Staffordshire, they were probably very good friends in London; as adults they could have been lovers in Staffordshire (perhaps a wild supposition when I sense Barnfield was gay). Each time I had doubt I would churn over the evidence and side with Mary. I sensed that Mary's monogram was stamped on her work and finally, in a momentous moment, I saw her, at least I saw her name peeping out from the corner of one of her creations as if winking to confirm my conviction.

Just over a year after the death of Mary Sidney, the dowager Countess Pembroke, William Herbert's mother, the *First Folio* of Shakespeare plays was finally printed and

[26] If this was Mary Fitton's anthology of poems then the title holds.

published. It brought together thirty-six scripts of plays that had been performed or written by a range of acting companies over thirty years.[27]

During 1586, thirty-seven years earlier, in the space of six months, the Countess had tragically lost her father, mother and favourite brother, the famous poet, courtier, soldier and scholar, Sir Philip Sidney. These painful losses had followed the death in 1584 of her three year old daughter, Katherine. For two years she mourned, remaining at the Pembroke family seat at Wilton. Then one day with great flamboyance [28] she came out of mourning and in the next few years assembled at Wilton and in London what effectively was a college of literary[29] and musical excellence capable of producing, as Polonius half-jests in the *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark (2.2)*, *tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited.* The Countess was known to be the very capable director of all this literary effort but it seems that the *known* output falls far short of her capacity.[30] There is something missing and that is *Drama*, drama that the Sidneys and the Herberts were known to have delight in.

Two years before writing the first edition of this book the BBC asked the public to identify the greatest Briton. My first vote went to William Shakespeare who I believed was the supreme genius who single-handedly had given us all these fantastic plays, and through them had so richly improved the English vocabulary and our way of talking to each other. My perception has changed completely but I still love and am enthralled by *Shakespearean* drama. Now, however, I know that Shake-Speare is a pen name and that the *Works of William Shakespeare* should be interpreted in the genitive – meaning *ascribed-to* or *owned-by.* The W, as in William, could derive from the *pheon* emblem of the Sidney family which is a vertical arrowhead like a letter V with a vertical line through the middle making it like a W. The Sidney *pheon* was retained as an emblem after their marriages by both William's mother, Mary Sidney Herbert, and his cousin, Mary Sidney Wroth. Recalling that publishing was considered vulgar, if the Countess indeed was a driving force, and I believe she was, it appears that all involved respected a code of silence, whether out of loyalty or in their own self-interest – they had much to lose and little to gain from losing their patrons.

Publishing historical plays also had a political edge and carried risk. There is still controversy about the alleged death in 1593 of the playwright, Christopher Marlowe.[31]

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[27] It begs the question of who could have identified the plays and also obtained all the scripts some of which had not been published.

[28] A huge procession left Wilton to take up residence at Baynard's Castle, the Pembroke's home in London. It was on the bank of the Thames immediately East of Blackfriars.

[29] The Countess was patron to, at one time or another, Edmund Spencer 1552-99, Samuel Daniell 1562-1619, Nicholas Breton 1555-1625, Thomas Moffat; Thomas Nashe 1567-1601, Gabriel Harvey 1555-1631; John Donne 1572-1631, Ben Jonson 1572-1637, and others.

[30] Margaret P Hannay - *Philip's Phoenix.*

[31] Plays Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus, the Jew of Malta, and Edward II, and an unfinished poem, Hero and Leander.

This followed his false betrayal under torture by his roommate, another playwright, Thomas Kyd.[32] Marlowe, like Kyd, had been accused of promoting atheism. A warrant had been issued for his arrest and he presented himself voluntarily at court. He was released pending trial but a week later Marlowe was either stabbed to death at a house in Deptford or escaped England and another cadaver put in his place – if so probably that of his Cambridge colleague, John Penry. Officially, Penry had been hanged two days earlier, just a two miles away, convicted of having printed the satirical documents known as the *Mar-prelate Tracts* which had attacked the hierarchy of the established Protestant Church. Aside from his own play-writing Marlowe had a connection to the Herberts and Sidneys through his patron, Thomas Walsingham, whose cousin was Frances Walsingham, Mary Sidney Herbert's sister-in-law.[33] In the last hundred years documents have been discovered that disprove the story that Marlowe was killed in a tavern brawl which suggests either a state-assassination or a plot to allow him to escape.

The Sonnets appear to contain mistakes that should have been corrected or emended at printing. I believe the instruction was given to print exactly what was written as the lines contain cryptic clues and riddles, and the person who had them published knew that to change a letter or a word might destroy hidden meaning; Sonnet 66 reads just like a crossword. As they stand, therefore, they appear to hold their original integrity. The numeracy identified with the Sonnets should be respected – it is as if Mary Fitton said to herself, *this is Sonnet number 60 in the copy book, I'll use the number of minutes in an hour as a motif*.

For a better understanding of the Elizabethan text I recommend the paperback *The Arden Shakespeare – Sonnets* edited by Katherine Duncan-Jones; she has academic ability I could never aspire to and regrettably a blind faith in the conventional wisdom. Invaluable reading has been Margaret P. Hannay's book, *Philip's Phoenix, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke* in which I sense she senses that many other original manuscripts went through the Countess's hands.[34]

Here are some of the players but first, from a contemporary court lampoon:

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[32] Kyd never recovered from the torture and died the following year.

[33] Can one give credence that aged fifteen Christopher Marlowe impregnated Mary Sidney Herbert at Canterbury in 1579; or that Marlowe returned to England and was hidden at Wilton? In 1591 Marlowe was sent back a prisoner to England from Holland by Countess Pembroke's brother, Robert Sidney, Governor of Flushing. Sidney stated that Marlowe, a scholar, claimed he is known to the Earl of Northumberland and to Lord Strange (heir to Lord Derby).

[34] I read Philip's Phoenix specifically for any information that would prove me *wrong.* All I found was a superb and wonderfully researched book which has helped explain some small detail. *Greenwich . . . He leapes, he daunces, he singes . . . he makes his horse runne with more speede . . ."*

The Reindeer was embossed,[35]
The White Doe she was lost,
Pembroke struck her down,
And took her from the Clown.

The Reindeer, Queen Elizabeth I 1533 – 1603

Monarch from 1558,

William Herbert, 3rd. Earl Pembroke, 8th April 1580 – 9thApril 1630

Lord Chamberlain; founder of Pembroke College, Oxford;
Helped finance the development of Virginia and Newfoundland; he was born in London and buried in Salisbury Cathedral alongside his parents.
The first Folio of Shakespeare plays is dedicated to him and his brother.
He was once a vain and precocious adolescent.

The White Doe (or Hind)
Mary Fitton 24/6/1578 – 19/9/1641[36]

daughter of Sir Edward Fitton, Deputy President of Ireland
Born in Ireland or London, her baptism is registered at Gawsworth, Cheshire. She fell in love with William Herbert and suffered the scandal when he jilted her while carrying his child. Once an exuberant young lady, her death at the age of 63 is registered at Tettenhall in Staffordshire.
In her will she requested she should be buried at Gawsworth.

The Clown, Sir William Knollys, 1547 - 1632

He promised to look after Mary Fitton at Court but fell in love with her. He is parodied as *Malvolio* in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

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[35] foaming with anger

[36] The register of Gawsworth Church has the baptisms of the three siblings interlined; Edward 1/2/1573; Anne 6/10/1574 and Mary 24/6/1578. It is probable the children had been born and baptised in Ireland where her father was serving. The Register entry for 1578 reads: *Mary Fitton, daughter of Edward Fitton Esquire was christned June 24th.*

William Herbert's uncle, Henry Sydney, wrote to his secretary in London on 26th June 1576 from Dublin Castle. *The Queen has lately given the keeping of the House of Athlone with appurtenances to Sir Edward Fitton during her Majesty's pleasure. Truly I take no exception to the fellow for we are good friends yet I thought such a thing as that should not be passed without my privetie.*

His mother was the Queen's cousin. In 1595 he was Comptroller of the Queen's Household and member of the Privy Council. Under Charles I he became Earl Banbury.

Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess Pembroke 1561-1621

Mother of William and a great patron of the arts
Her father was Lord President of Wales and Lord Deputy of Ireland
Her uncle was Robert Dudley, First Earl of Leicester, her brother the poet-soldier, Sir Philip Sidney.

Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Leveson; c1569-August 1605.

Licensed privateer and Privy Councillor,
Leveson and Mary Fitton, who had a common great-grandfather,
had two children, William and Anne. His grandmother was also a Mary Fitton. He was born and buried in Staffordshire.

Richard Barnfield, Oxford graduate, translator and poet; 1574-1621

A friend of Mary Fitton and probably of Richard Leveson
born and buried in Staffordshire

Mary Sidney Wroth, 18/10/1586-1652.

Daughter of Robert Sidney, second Earl of Leicester. In 1621 she published a massive allegory of contemporary court life in which Mary Fitton and William Herbert are depicted as lovers, *Antissia* and *Amphilanthus*. Mary Wroth had always loved her first cousin, William Herbert. Widowed young, she lived with him in London and bore him two children – one at the same time as his wife.

Research is never exhaustive but with each new, hard fact I found they it would fit effortlessly fitted into the jigsaw. I have never had to disregard, bury or eliminate a fact that was uncomfortable or did not fit. There has been no explanation from which I have shied away. Truth is an interesting commodity. If you add or mix truth with truth you get truth. If you add truth to a lie, or a lie to truth, you get a lie. Given the truth one can face up to a lie. When one meets the truth, or is close to seeing the full picture, the pieces of the jigsaw easily fit; Cinderella's slipper without twisting or contortions comfortably fits; to a tee. I have tried my best to prove myself wrong - being right is an awesome responsibility. I had expected at best a modicum of antagonism or academic denial. The academic world has greeted my findings with complete silence. Perhaps the ultimate acknowledgment that I am right. I leave open to others the opportunity to help

consolidate the facts here uncovered. My wife tells me that I *will* be discovered, but only twenty-five years after my death!

However much a rogue William Herbert appeared, I believe that he loved Mary Fitton for many years and liken the situation to the ambivalence portrayed between the characters Ophelia and Hamlet where one never can tell whether Hamlet loved Ophelia; I believe he did; but then – why did he so savagely reject her? *Get three to a nunnery!* There is an answer.

So many people have been so close to the truth. To some, who have been researching the early poetry of female writers, I owe a debt; I really am grateful. Without their research I would never have got to the corner of the right street. We all seem to have been there at one time or another. I just happened to see a much misread sign that made me turn that last corner into the winding alley of Time. What I find hard to believe is that nobody has suggested that the Sonnets were written by a woman; then again, perhaps someone did and, in what used to be a male-dominated academic world, got laughed out of court. One thing the Sonnets are not – they are not homoerotic.

My skin creeps when I think that half a century ago I enjoyed watching *Twelfth Night* in open air theatre at Gawsworth Hall, Mary Fitton's childhood home. The play was set against the backcloth of the timbered, Elizabethan manor house, but I only recall it was *Twelfth Night* because, during what was supposed to be a humorous scene between Olivia and Viola, a black cat walked across the lawn behind them, turned his back on the audience, squatted and defecated on a flower bed. The two actors enthused by the laughter little realised that it was for the cat's delivery, not theirs. But strutting the lawns that evening were the very ghosts of Sir William Knollys (Malvolio in his cross-gartered, yellow stockings), Margaret Radcliffe (Viola), Alexander Radcliffe (Sebastian) Mary Fitton (Olivia), and by extension, as I will explain later, Ophelia in *Hamlet*, the Jailor's Daughter in *Two Nobel Kinsmen*, the magnificent Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Helena in *All's Well,* and others.

Mary Fitton's poem, *A Lover's Complaint*, forms the next chapter. The 329-line poem has forty-seven, seven-line stanzas and relates the story of a courtship between a woman and a younger male whose;

> *Small show of man was yet upon his chin;*
> *His phoenix down began but to appear*
> *Like unshorn velvet on that termless skin.*

CHAPTER 4 introduces the Sonnets.

CHAPTER 5 examines the works of the poet Richard Barnfield.

CHAPTER 6 gives background to Mary Fitton, extracted from a nineteenth century book in which she and her sister Anne Newdigate are the subjects. The text contains many nuggets of historical fact although I do not subscribe to all of the editor's interpretations.

CHAPTER 7 presents the opening seventeen sonnets written by Mary Fitton.

CHAPTER 8 shows connections between the Sonnets and the plays, *Hamlet* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*.

CHAPTER 9 contains Mary Fitton's Sonnets 18-126. They relate to her going through five stages of grief. There are a number of allusions to the play *As You Like It.*

CHAPTER 10 summarises.

It would have been very much smoother for me to author this story as a blockbuster novel, but I don't have that particular ability. Even if I did, to do so would have required me to conjure up or invent some folklore in order to fill in gaps of knowledge and time. To do this would have been quite inappropriate when the very object has been to strip away the old paint and find out what is underneath. I ask you to excuse my untutored style and my anxiety to share with you the pathos, the passions and the discoveries.

Finally, I have noted a substantial number of *small* bits of evidence that support my thesis which I have *not* included – for two reasons. Firstly, they would clutter the text and you might think I am trying to make an impression by simply throwing everything at you. Secondly, I am leaving them to be rediscovered, helping consolidate the findings in other's minds.

What I discovered was a real-life drama almost like a modern soap. There is so much we will never know about Mary Fitton, but we do know she outlived at least two lovers and two husbands and there is a suspicion it is thought she tried to have one killed. How dark a lady was she?

CHAPTER THREE – A LOVER'S COMPLAINT

A Lover's Complaint was printed following the one-hundred-and-fifty-four sonnets *Shake-Speares Sonnets*. The poem is, in fact, the prequel to the Sonnets and should have been printed first. The 343-line poem tells of the seduction of a maid by a young lord and how, after he (with a tear in his eye) offered her marriage, – *O, what a hell of witchcraft lies in the small orb of one particular tear!* – she had surrendered her body up to him. Sonnets 1-17 follow logically, with the young lord being pressed to marry and have progeny. It makes perfect sense.

The poem starts: *From off a hill whose concave womb re-worded, a plaintful story from a sistering vale.* It says the concave hill was reflecting the voices to the next valley but then where exactly was the observer if he could also see what was happening? The first seventy lines are recounted by this observer who watches an ageing woman sitting by a stream in the process of destroying the many love tokens she had been gifted. An old parson ambles over and sits down beside her and she tells her story. From the surfeit of detail it is transparent that the author is telling her own story. It is incomplete as the ending does not revert back to the observer who started the story. Here is a brief summary:

> The unseen commentator watches an old man approach an unhappy younger woman. He notes that the woman is beginning to lose her good looks and he witnesses her destroying reminders, letters and trinkets, mementoes of a love affair, taking them out of a basket and throwing them into a stream. The old man sits near her and asks if she would like to tell him what the matter is. She relates that she had allowed herself to be seduced by a young man of handsome looks, well brought up, well-dressed and a very competent horseman. Many women had sought him out but she had fallen for him although he admitted he was promiscuous; even telling of a nun who had yielded herself. However, she would not give herself to him and so he started to court her. He denied ever having loved another woman; the many gifts women had given him meant nothing and he offered them all to her. At last he admits that the woman has defeated him and that he has fallen in love with her; with a great outpouring of tears he promises to marry her and she was seduced. Then with his back-word on marriage, she realises what really has happened, and that this has been the cause of her sadness over all the years. Finally, however, she admits she would still succumb to a man of such charms – this being the very nature of women.

A Lover's Complaint
by William Shake-Speare

1 From off a hill whose concave womb re-worded [37]
A plaintful story from a sistering vale,
My spirits to attend this double voice accorded,
And down I laid to list the sad-tuned tale;
Ere long espied a fickle maid full pale,
Tearing of papers, breaking rings a-twain,
Storming her world with sorrow's wind and rain.

2 Upon her head a platted hive of straw,
Which fortified her visage from the sun,
Whereon the thought might think sometime it saw
The carcass of beauty spent and done:
Time had not scythed all that youth begun,
Nor youth all quit; but, spite of heaven's fell rage,
Some beauty peep'd through lattice of sear'd age.

3 Oft did she heave her napkin to her eyne,
Which on it had conceited characters, [38]
Laundering the silken figures in the brine
That season'd woe had pelleted in tears,
And often reading what contents it bears;
As often shrieking undistinguish'd woe,
In clamours of all size, both high and low.

4 Sometimes her levell'd eyes their carriage ride,
As they did battery to the spheres intend;
Sometime diverted their poor balls are tied
To the orbed earth; sometimes they do extend
Their view right on; anon their gazes lend
To every place at once, and, nowhere fix'd,
The mind and sight distractedly commix'd.

5 Her hair, nor loose nor tied in formal plait,
Proclaim'd in her a careless hand of pride
For some, untuck'd, descended her sheaved[39] hat,

[37] This looks like an anagram of Cwmafon (near Port Talbot) or Cwmavon (near Pontypool), both in South Wales. Coombe Abbey in Warwickshire, the home of John Harrington of Exton, was 12 miles from Arbury Hall the home of Mary Fitton's sister, Anne. Harrington entertained his first cousin, William Herbert, there.
[38] The handkerchief was embroidered with silk lettering.

Hanging her pale and pined cheek beside;
Some in her threaden fillet still did bide,
And true to bondage would not break from thence,
Though slackly braided in loose negligence.

6 A thousand favours from a maund she drew *(basket)*
Of amber, crystal, and of beaded jet,
Which one by one she in a river threw,
Upon whose weeping margent [40] she was set,
Like usury, applying wet to wet,
Or monarch's hands that let not bounty fall
Where want cries some, but where excess begs all.

7 Of folded schedules had she many a one,
Which she perused, sigh'd, tore, and gave the flood;
Crack'd many a ring of posied gold and bone
Bidding them find their sepulchres in mud;
Found yet more letters sadly penn'd in blood,
With sleided [41] silk feat and affectedly
Enswathed, and seal'd to curious secrecy.

8 These often bathed she in her fluxive eyes,
And often kiss'd, and often gan to tear:
Cried 'O false blood, thou register of lies,
What unapproved witness dost thou bear!
Ink would have seem'd more black and damned here!'
This said, in top of rage the lines she rents,
Big discontent so breaking their contents.

9 A reverend man that grazed his cattle nigh,
Sometime a blusterer, that the ruffle knew
Of court, of city, and had let go by
The swiftest hours, observed as they flew,
Towards this afflicted fancy fastly drew,
And, privileged by age, desires to know
In brief the grounds and motives of her woe.

10 So slides he down upon his grained bat,

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[39] An interesting adjective relating to the shape of sheaves of corn. The Fitton emblem included three sheaves also part of the Cheshire coat of arms. See Sonnet 12.

[40] Bank of the river; this rare word occurs in Act VI of Pericles; registered 20th May 1608. The Sonnets were registered on 20th May 1609.

[41] A further reference to silk; sleided were thin strands of silk fit for embroidery. The word appears only once elsewhere – in Pericles, Act IV.

And comely-distant sits he by her side;
When he again desires her, being sat,
Her grievance with his hearing to divide:
If that from him there may be aught applied
Which may her suffering ecstasy assuage,
'Tis promised in the charity of age.

11 'Father,' she says, 'though in me you behold
The injury of many a blasting hour,
Let it not tell your judgment I am old;
Not age, but sorrow, over me hath power.
I might as yet have been a spreading flower,
Fresh to myself, If I had self-applied
Love to myself and to no love beside.

12 'But, woe is me! too early I attended
A youthful suit; it was to gain my grace;[42]
Of one by nature's outwards so commended
That maidens' eyes stuck over all his face:
Love lack'd a dwelling, and made him her place;
And when in his fair parts she did abide,
She was new lodged and newly deified.

13 'His browny locks did hang in crooked curls;
And every light occasion of the wind
Upon his lips their silken parcels hurls.
What's sweet to do, to do will aptly find:
Each eye that saw him did enchant the mind,
For on his visage was in little drawn
What largeness thinks in Paradise was sawn.

14 'Small show of man was yet upon his chin;
His phoenix down began but to appear
Like unshorn velvet on that termless skin
Whose bare out-bragg'd the web it seem'd to wear:
Yet show'd his visage by that cost more dear;
And nice affections wavering stood in doubt
If best were as it was, or best without.

15 'His qualities were beauteous as his form,
For maiden-tongued he was, and thereof free;

[42] *To gain her grace;* this would imply that she positioned herself to become a countess.

Yet, if men moved him, was he such a storm
As oft 'twixt May and April is to see,
When winds breathe sweet, untidy though they be.[43]
His rudeness so with his authorized youth
Did livery falseness in a pride of truth.

16 'Well could he ride, and often men would say
'That horse his mettle from his rider takes:
Proud of subjection, noble by the sway,
What rounds, what bounds, what course, what stop he makes!' And
controversy hence a question takes,
Whether the horse by him became his deed,
Or he his manage by the well-doing steed.

17 'But quickly on this side the verdict went:
His real habitude gave life and grace
To appertainings and to ornament,
Accomplish'd in himself, not in his case:
All aids, themselves made fairer by their place,
Came for additions; yet their purposed trim
Pieced not his grace, but were all graced by him.

18 'So on the tip of his subduing tongue
All kinds of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep:
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will.

19 'That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young, of old; and sexes both enchanted
To dwell with him in thoughts, or to remain
In personal duty, following where he haunted:
Consents bewitch'd, ere he desire, have granted;
And dialogued for him what he would say,
Ask'd their own wills, and made their wills obey.

20 'Many there were that did his picture get,
To serve their eyes, and in it put their mind;
Like fools that in th' imagination set
The goodly objects which abroad they find
Of lands and mansions, theirs in thought assign'd;

[43] These two lines reflect *the rough winds that blow the darling buds of Maie.* Sonnet 18.

And labouring in moe pleasures to bestow them
Than the true gouty landlord which doth owe them:

21 'So many have, that never touch'd his hand,
Sweetly supposed them mistress of his heart.
My woeful self, that did in freedom stand,
And was my own fee-simple, not in part,
What with his art in youth, and youth in art,
Threw my affections in his charmed power,
Reserved the stalk and gave him all my flower.

22 'Yet did I not, as some my equals did,
Demand of him, nor being desired yielded;
Finding myself in honour so forbid,
With safest distance I mine honour shielded:
Experience for me many bulwarks builded
Of proofs new-bleeding, which remain'd the foil
Of this false jewel and his amorous spoil.

23 'But, ah, who ever shunn'd by precedent
The destined ill she must herself assay?
Or forced examples, 'gainst her own content,
To put the by-past perils in her way?
Counsel may stop awhile what will not stay;
For when we rage, advice is often seen
By blunting us to make our wits more keen.

24 'Nor gives it satisfaction to our blood,
That we must curb it upon others' proof;
To be forbode the sweets that seem so good,
For fear of harms that preach in our behoof.
O appetite, from judgment stand aloof!
The one a palate hath that needs will taste,
Though reason weep, and cry, 'It is thy last.'

25 'For further I could say 'This man's untrue,'
And knew the patterns of his foul beguiling;
Heard where his plants in others' orchards grew,
Saw how deceits were gilded in his smiling;
Knew vows were ever brokers to defiling;
Thought characters and words merely but art,
And bastards of his foul adulterate heart.

26 'And long upon these terms I held my city,
Till thus he gan besiege me: 'Gentle maid,
Have of my suffering youth some feeling pity,
And be not of my holy vows afraid:

That's to ye sworn to none was ever said;
For feasts of love I have been call'd unto,
Till now did ne'er invite, nor never woo.

27 ''All my offences that abroad you see
Are errors of the blood, none of the mind;
Love made them not: with acture they may be, *(action)*
Where neither party is nor true nor kind:
They sought their shame that so their shame did find;
And so much less of shame in me remains,
By how much of me their reproach contains.

28 ''Among the many that mine eyes have seen,
Not one whose flame my heart so much as warm'd,
Or my affection put to the smallest teen,
Or any of my leisures ever charm'd:
Harm have I done to them, but ne'er was harm'd;
Kept hearts in liveries, but mine own was free,
And reign'd, commanding in his monarchy.

29 ''Look here, what tributes wounded fancies sent me,
Of paled pearls and rubies red as blood;
Figuring that they their passions likewise lent me
Of grief and blushes, aptly understood
In bloodless white and the encrimson'd mood;
Effects of terror and dear modesty,
Encamp'd in hearts, but fighting outwardly.

30 ''And, lo! Behold these talents of their hair,
With twisted metal amorously impleach'd,
I have received from many a several fair,
Their kind acceptance weepingly beseech'd,
With th'annexions of fair gems enrich'd,
And deep-brain'd sonnets that did amplify
Each stone's dear nature, worth, and quality.

31 ''The diamond, why, 'twas beautiful and hard,
Whereto his invised properties did tend; *(envied?)*
The deep-green emerald, in whose fresh regard
Weak sights their sickly radiance do amend;
The heaven-hued sapphire and the opal blend
With objects manifold: each several stone,
With wit well blazon'd, smiled or made some moan.

32 ''Lo, all these trophies of affections hot,
Of pensived and subdued desires the tender,
Nature hath charged me that I hoard them not,
But yield them up where I myself must render,

That is, to you, my origin and ender;
For these, of force, must your oblations be,
Since I their altar, you empatron me.

33 ''O, then, advance of yours that phraseless hand,
Whose white weighs down the airy scale of praise;
Take all these similes to your own command,
Hallow'd with sighs that burning lungs did raise;
What me your minister, for you obeys,
Works under you; and to your audit comes
Their distract parcels in combined sums.

34 ''Lo, this device was sent me from a nun,
Or sister sanctified, of holiest note,
Which late her noble suit in court did shun,
Whose rarest havings made the blossoms dote;
For she was sought by spirits of richest coat,
But kept cold distance, and did thence remove,
To spend her living in eternal love.

35 ''But, O my sweet, what labour is't to leave
The thing we have not, mastering what not strives,
Playing the place which did no form receive,
Playing patient sports in unconstrained gyves?
She that her fame so to herself contrives,
The scars of battle 'scapeth by the flight,
And makes her absence valiant, not her might.

36 ''O, pardon me, in that my boast is true:
The accident which brought me to her eye
Upon the moment did her force subdue,
And now she would the caged cloister fly:
Religious love put out Religion's eye:
Not to be tempted, would she be immured,
And now, to tempt, all liberty procured.

37 ''How mighty then you are, O hear me tell!
The broken bosoms that to me belong
Have emptied all their fountains in my well,
And mine I pour your ocean all among:
I strong o'er them, and you o'er me being strong,
Must for your victory us all congest,
As compound love to physic your cold breast.

38 ''My parts had power to charm a sacred nun,
Who, disciplined, ay, dieted in grace,

Believed her eyes when they to assail begun,
All vows and consecrations giving place:
O most potential love! vow, bond, nor space,
In thee hath neither sting, knot, nor confine,
For thou art all, and all things else are thine.

39 ''When thou impressest, what are precepts worth
Of stale example? When thou wilt inflame,
How coldly those impediments stand forth
Of wealth, of filial fear, law, kindred, fame.
Love's arms are peace, 'gainst rule, 'gainst sense, 'gainst shame,
And sweetens, in the suffering pangs it bears,
The aloes of all forces, shocks, and fears.

40 ''Now all these hearts that do on mine depend,
Feeling it break, with bleeding groans they pine;
And supplicant their sighs to you extend,
To leave the battery that you make 'gainst mine,
Lending soft audience to my sweet design,
And credent soul to that strong-bonded oath
That shall prefer and undertake my troth.'

41 'This said, his watery eyes he did dismount,
Whose sights till then were levell'd on my face;
Each cheek a river running from a fount
With brinish current downward flow'd apace:
O, how the channel to the stream gave grace!
Who glazed with crystal gate the glowing roses
That flame through water which their hue encloses.

42 'O father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear!
But with the inundation of the eyes
What rocky heart to water will not wear?
What breast so cold that is not warmed here?
O cleft effect! cold modesty, hot wrath,
Both fire from hence and chill extincture hath.

43 'For, lo, his passion, but an art of craft,
Even there resolved my reason into tears;
There my white stole of chastity I daff'd,
Shook off my sober guards and civil fears;
Appear to him, as he to me appears,
All melting; though our drops this difference bore,

His poisoned [44] me, and mine did him restore.

44 'In him a plenitude of subtle matter,
Applied to cautels, all strange forms receives,
Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,
Or swooning paleness; and he takes and leaves,
In either's aptness, as it best deceives,
To blush at speeches rank to weep at woes,
Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows.

45 'That not a heart which in his level came
Could 'scape the hail of his all-hurting aim,
Showing fair nature is both kind and tame;
And, veil'd in them, did win whom he would maim:
Against the thing he sought he would exclaim;
When he most burn'd in heart-wish'd luxury,
He preach'd pure maid, and praised cold chastity.

46 'Thus merely with the garment of a grace
The naked and concealed fiend he cover'd;
That th' unexperient gave the tempter place,
Which like a cherubin above them hover'd.
Who, young and simple, would not be so lover'd?
Ay me! I fell; and yet do question make
What I should do again for such a sake.

47 'O, that infected moisture of his eye,
O, that false fire which in his cheek so glow'd,
O, that forced thunder from his heart did fly,
O, that sad breath his spongy lungs bestowed,
O, all that borrow'd motion seeming owed,
Would yet again betray the fore-betray'd,
And new pervert a reconciled maid.'

By now one has forgotten the original narrator who could read initials embroidered on a handkerchief from a distance, and the reverend man that grazed his cattle nigh.

The poem leaves us with a pregnant, strumpeted maid and a lover who will not marry her. One would expect the woman to plead with the man to marry her – and that is exactly the theme of the first seventeen sonnets.

[44] Poisoned - a euphemism for making pregnant.

CHAPTER FOUR - INTRODUCTION TO THE SONNETS

The Shake-Speare Sonnets form part of a seven-year correspondence in verse between the two lovers, Mary Fitton and William Herbert.

When they were printed the first 126 Sonnets were typeset from Mary's copybook (or a copy from her copybook) and are in chronological order. They are addressed by Mary to William. Of these the first 17 sonnets are thematic; Mary, heavily pregnant, is repeatedly hinting and asking the young man, now Earl Pembroke, to take a wife and have children. His sonnets, 127 to 152, were on loose leaves and are not in order. In the last two printed Sonnets, 153-154, we find Pembroke comes to terms with the futility, recording for posterity that his attention had once been drawn to a *Maid of Dian,* whom he calls *Mistress* - indicating a Maid of Honour of Queen Elizabeth, Mary Fitton.[45]

William Herbert, author of the *Dark Lady* sonnets, was so living in the moment that, as he composed, he hardly made any contemporary reference or of the passage of time. In fact, the word *time* is totally absent making them quite distinct from Mary's Sonnets, 1-126, where *time* appears fifty-three times.[46] Always writing of the present, the almost frenzied, William[47] described his experiences, emotions and thoughts.

William Herbert gave birth to (begot) Sonnets 127-154 and, on the other hand, he was the begetter, meaning inspirer, of Sonnets 1-126. His actions also gave rise to (begot) through Mary Fitton, the poem *A Lover's Complaint*. However, I strongly suspect that sonnets 138 & 144 were originally composed by Sir William Knollys and addressed to Mary Fitton, jealous of the relationship he watched develop at Court between Mary whom he adored, and the young William Herbert. Thus, in today's world of spin one can easily interpret that William Herbert was the *only* begetter and can trust the Dedication, *TO THE ONLY BEGETTER OF THESE ENSUING SONNETS, M^{R}. W. H.*.

William Herbert, born just before midnight on 8th April 1580, on birth assumed the courtesy title, Lord Herbert of Cardiff. After education under tutors at Wilton he was sent to Oxford at the age of twelve. He first appeared at Court, albeit briefly, at the age of fifteen and returned aged seventeen. William Herbert and Mary Fitton were high-profile

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[45] *From the Ardern Sonnets*: It is thought the last two sonnets derive from a sixth-century, six-line epigram translated - *Here beneath these plane trees, exhausted love was sleeping softly. He had entrusted his torch to the nymphs but the nymphs said to one another, "Come on, why are we waiting? Let's put out the torch and with it quench the fire in human hearts." But the torch set light even to the waters, and the Nymphs of Love have filled the bath with hot water ever since.* The two similar sonnets cover four themes. William introduces a Maid of Dian (Maid of Honour of the Queen) as having aroused him. He also plays with the metaphors of hot baths used to cure venereal diseases which cause a burning sensation when urinating.

[46] Time; times; hour; hours; minutes; days; years appears ninety-seven tmes in Sonnets 1-126 and only three times in Sonnets 127-154.

[47] Interpreted by some commentators as onanism.

characters that it is almost certain that they knew each other from that time if not before as their parents were involved in administering Ireland. There are indications that the number seventeen is significant to their subsequent relationship.

One can imagine the puppy-love of an over-sexed, precocious, seventeen-year-old youth for a handsome maid of honour and any other woman attracted to the young man – perhaps by the earldom he would inherit. By the time he was nineteen William had had time to write poetry, make conquests and believe himself skilled in the language of seduction as Mary Fitton attests in *A Lover's Complaint,* Stanza 30, where we read of the young man's *deep-brained sonnets*.

A range of suggestions have been made as to the identity of the *Dark Lady.* The candidature of Aemelia Lanier, a mistress to a Lord Chamberlain, is interesting. Aemelia Lanier was Mediterranean-looking, married, played the virginal,[48] was not shy of men or noblemen, and was close to the Court where she entertained the Queen and the courtiers. She was cultured, and years later demonstrated literary ability with some excellent poetry. There were other candidates, from courtiers to alehouse-keepers, to prostitutes, and as many theories, including Oscar Wilde's and George Bernard Shaw's, all of which quickly break down under analysis.[49] The character Rosaline in the play *Love's Labour's Lost* is imbued with the same darkness of complexion as the *Dark Lady of the Sonnets*. Some people, therefore, assume them to be the same, and that Shake-speare was enjoying Aemelia Lanier as his mistress in 1594-5 when she already was Lord Hunsden's mistress – clearly preposterous. Lord Hunsden was then Lord Chamberlain and his players were the Chamberlain's Men one of whom we are told, William Shaxper of Stratford, was an actor. Was this actor's libido so out of control that he would risk having an affair with the mistress of the most powerful person in the theatrical world and a first cousin of the Queen?

Another candidate for the *Dark Lady* was the red-headed Mary Sidney Wroth, William Herbert's first cousin. In Ben Jonson's 1606 *Masque of Blackness* Mary Wroth had performed with the Queen, Lady Anne Herbert, William's sister, and other ladies of the Court, all made up as women of the Niger [50]. Mary Wroth had both the genius and capability to have written the Sonnets. Her history, however, made an awkward fit as she did not suffer exile from the Court, nor was she strumpeted although she did lead a separate lifestyle to that of her husband. William Herbert, it seems, had a predilection with the name Mary. His wife whom he married in November 1604, six weeks after his cousin, Mary Sidney, married Sir Robert Wroth, was Mary Talbot.[51] William part-financed

[48] An early piano that looks like a small writing desk. See Sonnet 128.
[49] The historian A. L. Rowse examined the many theories and concluded that the *Dark Lady* was Aemelia Lanier in *Simon Forman, Sex and Society in Shakespeare's Age,* 1974*.*
[50] William Herbert is known to have had a nickname of *Niger*.
[51] The Talbot papers show discussions of the suitability of the match took place in Nov. 1603.

his cousin's dowry and Sir Robert never knew that the first £200 he received was a wedding gift *to the bride* from the officers of the army in Holland, commanded by his father-in-law, Robert Sidney. William Herbert's £1,000 (of £3,000) was not forthcoming until he himself had married.[52] In 1621, in her allegorical *Duchess of Montgomery's Urania,* Mary Wroth told the story, amongst many others, of Pembroke (*Amphilanthus*), herself (*Pamphilia*) and Fitton (*Antissia*). By then Mary Wroth had been living with Pembroke for six years with their two children and she would have known the history of Mary Fitton from gossip, as a witness or how William chose to tell it.

The essence of William Herbert's twenty-eight sonnets was an infatuation for an older woman. There is usually a significant difference in maturity between a twenty-one year old woman who has been at Court for five years and a young man of seventeen fresh from the country. Mary Fitton later writes of William Herbert's charm, and guile, in two stanzas from *A Lover's Complaint:*

18 So on the tip of his subduing tongue
All kind of arguments and question deep,
All replication prompt, and reason strong,
For his advantage still did wake and sleep.
To make the weeper laugh, the laugher weep,
He had the dialect and different skill,
Catching all passions in his craft of will,

25 For further I could say *this man's untrue*,
And knew the patterns of his foul beguiling;
Heard where his plants in others' orchards grew;
Saw how deceits were gilded in his smiling;
Knew vows were ever brokers to defiling;
Thought characters and words merely but art,
And bastards of his foul adulterate heart.

William Herbert was captivated by the expansive character of Mary Fitton. Fortunately or unfortunately, Mary fell deeply in love; it was a fatal attraction.

In the next chapter I introduce Mary's friend and probably her tutor, the poet Richard Barnfield, and also Vice-Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, a second cousin of Mary Fitton's, who *looked after her* after she left London in disgrace.

[52] A factor of 250 would indicate current values.

CHAPTER FIVE – RICHARD BARNFIELD, POET

> "Indeed, there seems to be some as yet unexplained connection between Shakespeare and Barnfield. ….. Barnfield's *Cynthia* is prefaced by a floridly over-written commendatory poem by one 'T.T.', …."
>
> Arden; Shakespeare's Sonnets, edited by Katherine Duncan Smith; 2003

It is time to identify T T.

Only scholars of homoerotic Elizabethan poetry (of which there isn't much) are ever likely to read the works of Richard Barnfield, born Staffordshire, 1574. Between his leaving Oxford University and turning thirty Barnfield produced four small books of poems from which, centuries after his death, a single poem would gain attention; yet from lean biographical gleanings we find that Richard Barnfield somehow appeared to know more about *Shakespeare* than anyone else.

Actually, only two poets of the Elizabethan era authored homoerotic verse. One with certainty was Barnfield's works in the 1590s. The other *apparently* was William Shake-speare in the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* (1609) where 125 sonnets of love were addressed to a young man. When I came across the quotation (above) the thought crossed my mind; was it possible that *Shake-speare* was a Barnfield pseudonym and there was, in fact, only one poet who dared put his head above a taboo parapet? If so, was there then some chain of connections ? Richard Barnfield knew or indeed *was* William Shakespeare ? who knew William Herbert – who knew Mary Fitton? It was a tenuous theory that needed to be explored and put to rest. Fully expecting one more research cul-de-sac, this path had an unexpected outcome. I was able to establish that it was Richard Barnfield and Mary Fitton who were directly connected, an indication he was sometime Mary's tutor in London, that they appear to have collaborated in writing poetry, became neighbours in Staffordshire and there were absolutely indisputable social connections. O*f all the gin joints*…. !

It was late in the nineteenth before Richard Barnfield achieved modest notice as the pace of study of the Shake-Speare works accelerated. It was Barnfield who in 1598 was the first person to name *Shakespeare* in verse. In the fourth verse from one of his *Diverse Poems* that complete his book, *The Encomion of Lady Pecunia*, he praises Shakespeare's poetry alongside that of Edmund Spenser,[53] Samuel Daniell[54] and Michael Drayton.[55]

[53] Edmund Spenser c1552-1599; *Fairie Queene*, 1596.

Live Spenser ever, in thy Fairy Queen:
Whose like (for deepe Conceit) was never seen.
Crownd mayst thou bee, unto thy more renown,
As King of Poets with a Lawrell Crown.

And Daniell, praised for thy sweet-chast Verse:
Whose fame is grav'd on Rosamonds black Herse.
Still mayst thou live: and still be honored,
For that rare Work, The White Rose and the Red.

And Drayton, whose well-written Tragedies,
And Sweet Epistles, soare thy fame to skies.
Thy learned Name, is aequall with the rest;
Whose stately Numbers are so well addrest.

And Shakespeare thou, whose hony-flowing Vaine,
Pleasing the World thy praises doth obtaine.
Whose Venus, and whose Lucrece (sweet, and chaste)
Thy name in fames immortall Book have plac't.

Live ever you, at least in Fame live ever:
Well may the Body dye, but Fame dies never.

Barnfield's poem was acknowledging the *entourage/literary college* of Countess Pembroke, Mary Sidney Herbert, whether at the Pembroke's Wilton House in Wiltshire, their Baynard's Castle in London or Penshurst Place, the Sidney family home in Kent. Spenser, Daniell and Drayton, were linked to the Countess through patronage. Barnfield especially prided himself on his friendship with Michael Drayton, a poet and playwright whom he and his colleagues affectionately called *Rowland.* Harry Morris in his *Amyntas and the Sidney Circle* (PMLA 1959) identified Richard Barnfield alongside Abraham Ffraunce and Thomas Watson as three more Penshurst poets.

Now, no history of *Shake-speare* can avoid the cleric, Francis Meres', *Paladis Tamia* printed in 1599. In it a comprehensive essay compares poets and playwrights, ancient and modern. Its renown is that, inter alia, it has a first ever listing of *Shakespeare* plays, eleven recognisable titles and *Love's Labour Won*. The essay is invariably not placed in context; the thirty pages are part of a much larger, seven-hundred page book printed relatively soon after Meres' previous and equally large, seven-hundred-and-forty page,

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[54] Samuel Daniell, 1562-1619, a highly commended poet and sometime tutor at Wilton wrote *A History of the Civil Wars between York and Lancaster (The White Rose and the Red).* The first *Shakespeare* plays, Henry VI (1-2-3) and Richard III covered the same period.

[55] Michael Drayton, 1563-1631, born Hartshill, Warwickshire, known to his poet friends as *Rowland*. He had a lifelong friendship with the daughter of his former master, Anne Goodere, who married Henry Rainsford of Clifford Chambers in Gloucestershire, one mile from Stratford-upon-Avon. William Shagsper's son-in-law, John Hall, was Drayton's doctor treating him for constipation. In 1600 Drayton co-authored the *Shakespeare* play *Sir John Oldcastle.*

Wits Commonwealth, 1597. The sheer bulk and range of subjects would suggest the two books could only have been produced in collaboration with a number of contributors.

In the essay "Meres" uniquely names Barnfield as his *singular friend* and also refers to an obscure line in Barnfield's poetry; perhaps more than an inkling that Richard Barnfield ghost-wrote the essay. I believe that his friendship with Mary Fitton and with Countess Pembroke yielded a reliable list of *Shake-speare* plays that had been performed at Court.

Previously, authorship of the narrative poems, *Venus & Adonis* (1593) and *The Rape of Lucrece* (1594), were attributed to *William Shakespeare* because quite simply this was the name that appeared under their dedications to Henry Wriothesley, the then twenty-year-old Earl of Southampton. Contemporary readers would have recognised this might well have been a pseudonym ??the words *Will Shake Spear* creating an image of onanism. *Will*, a euphemism for genitalia, would certainly not have been lost on Elizabethans and if here you have raised an eyelid in disbelief take a couple of minutes to read Sonnets 135 and 136.

My belief is that *Venus & Adonis* was written and presented as a Valentine to Southampton, followed months later by *The Rape of Lucrece* this time to celebrate his coming of age. *Venus*, a poem weak in character and presentation was, however, healthily pornographic. *Lucrece*, a better poem, dealt with sexual repression and violence and by 1598 each had been reprinted several times reflecting their commercial success. Both stories derive from sixteenth-century translations of Ovid and it was these poems – and not plays – which first promoted the *Shakespeare* name or brand. Not before 1598 did a play's title page carry the name; *Love's Labour's Lost* was *newly corrected and augmented by W. Shakespere, the play having been presented before her Majesty last Christmas*. [56] One should note *corrected and augmented* does not mean originally *written by.*

Late in the 19th century some of the gay literati of California embraced Barnfield's poetry but he still remains a figure of the shadows having little biographical flesh on the bones of his poetry. What we do know is that he was four years older than Mary Fitton, born to Richard Barnfield and his wife, Mary Skrymsher, and baptised at Norbury in Staffordshire on 13th June 1574. His mother died giving birth to his sister and from a poem dedicated to his aunt [57] it appears that the siblings were brought up by their mother's sister, Elizabeth Skrymsher, at Johnson's Hall in nearby Eccleshall. Barnfield was an undergraduate at Brazenose College, Oxford (1589-1592). Still a minor at the age of 20

[56] "1598" then lasted until 24th March 1599, so the play could have been performed at Christmas 1597 or Christmas 1598. Although the Arden Shakespeare *Love's Labour's Lost* suggests a authorship early in the 1590's, the listing of flowers in the final song Act 5.2, *When daisies pied and violets blue* .... came from Gerard's *Herbal* (1597). Whoever *newly augmented* the play had access to the *Herbal* with an active interest in flowers.

[57] 1605 reprint of *Pecunia*.

he surprisingly appears to have had what it took to produce and have published the first of his four books of poems.[58] His age does not preclude his being the Robert Greene's *upstart crow.*

It was from the Arden *Sonnets* and the reference to Barnfield's *Cynthia* of 1595 which alerted me to the initials TT in the heading of the following commendatory poem, part of the preface to the main work.

T. T. in commendation of the Authour his work.

Whylom that in a shepheards gray coate masked,
(Where masked love the nonage of his skill)
Reares now his Eagle-winged pen, new tasked,
To seale the by-clift Muse sole-pleasing hill:
Dropping sweete Nectar poesie from his quill,
Admires faire CYNTHIA with his iuory pen
Faire CYNTHIA lov'd, fear'd, of Gods and men.
Downe sliding from that cloudes ore-pearing mounteine:
Decking with double grace the neighbour plaines,
Draws christall dew, from PEGASE foot-sprung fountain,
Whose flower set banks, delights, sweet choice contains:
Nere yet discoverd to the country swains:
Heere bud those branches, which adorn his turtle,
With love made garlands, of heart-bleeding Mirtle.
Rays'd from the cynders, of the thrice-sact town:
ILLIONS sooth-telling SYBILLIST appears,
Eclipsing PHOEBUS love, with scornefull frown,
Whose tragicke end, affords warm-water tears,
(For pitty-wanting PACOE, none forbears,
Such period haps, to beauties price ore-priz'd:
Where JANUS-faced love, doth lurk disguiz'd.

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[58] *1594* ***The Tears of an Affectionate Shepheard. Containing the Complaint of Daphnis for the love of Granymede;*** dedicated to Lady Penelope Rich.
London: Printed by John Danter for T. G. and E. N;. 54 pages. Published anonymously; (Thomas Gubbin / EN (sic) is Thomas Newman.)
Translated from a Latin homoerotic text; lovers, Daphnis and Ganymede were both male; Ganymede a euphemism for a catamite, the passive partner in a homosexual relationship.

1595 ***Cynthia with Certain Sonnets (20) and The Legend of Cassandra;*** **dedicated** to William Stanley, Earl of Derby. London: Printed for Humfrey Lownes; 70 pages.*1598* ***The Encomion[58] of Lady Pecunia: Or, The praise of Money; with some Poems of Diverse Humours.***[58] London Printed by G. S(haw). for John Jaggard; 62 pages. In 1599 two of the poems were printed in the *Passionate Pilgrim*.

1605 (repeat) ***Lady Pecunia, or The praise of Money. Also A Combat betwixt Conscience and Couetousnesse. Together with, The complaint of Poetry, for the death of Liberality.*** *Newly corrected and inlarged, by Richard Barnfield;* London: Printed by W. I(aggard). and are to be sold by John Hodgers 54 p.

Nere waining CYNTHIA yeelds thee triple thanks,
Whose beams unborrowed dark the worlds fair eie,
And as full streams that ever fill their banks,
So those rare Sonnets, where wits tipe doth lie,
With Troian Nimph, doe soare thy fame to skie.
And those, and these, contend thy Muse to raise
(Lark mounting Muse) with more then common praise.

Barnfield thanks *his Mistress* (TT is a woman) who bore *a sacred name* (e.g. Mary) with the following poem. This commendation is arguably the earliest published poem written by an English woman. Barnfield's reply:

To his Mistress.

Bright Star of Beauty, fairest Faire alive,
Rare president of peerless chastity;
(In whom the Muses and the Graces strive,
Which shall possess the chiefest part of thee:)
Oh let these simple lines accepted be:
Which here I offer at thy sacred shrine:
Sacred, because sweet Beauty is divine.
And though I cannot please each curious ear,
With sugared Notes of heavenly Harmony:
Yet if my love shall to thy self appear,
No other Muse I will invoke but thee:
And if thou wilt my faire Thalia be,
I'll sing sweet Hymns and praises to thy name,
In that clear Temple of eternal Fame.
But ah (alas) how can mine infant Muse
(That never heard of Helicon before)
Perform my promise past: when they refuse
Poor Shepherds Plaints? yet will I still adore
Thy sacred Name, although I write no more:
Yet hope I shall, if this accepted be:
If not, in silence sleep eternally.

T.T. had called herself the *Troian Nimph*: can it be a coincidence that ***Troian Nimph*** is an anagram of ***Mari Phitonn***? [59]

It is not. Let me try to explain how TT was Mary Fitton's phonetic monogram. Firstly it plays on Mary and marry – to join together. She *marries or fits a T on;* **FIT - T- ON.** So, draw one capital letter T; now, *FIT ON* (or *marry*) a second T so that the left edge of the

[59] The family then signed their name with a Ph and not an F.

second T is touching the middle of the upright of the first T, two T's giving the semblance of a combined F and T.

I felt I had more than a tenuous connection between the TT of the Sonnet's dedication and Mary Fitton being "TT". Was this just over-imagination? It wasn't. TT is strategically placed elsewhere in the Sonnets.

A year later, 1599, two Barnfield poems were printed in a little celebrated booklet *The Passionate Pilgrim* by *W. Shakespeare;* the first a sonnet, *In Praise of Musique and Poetrie*, dedicated to *Maister R. L.*; the second, *An Ode.*[60] I believe *Maister R. L* is Sir Richard Leveson (1569-1605) then a ship's captain (master) later a Vice-Admiral.

Richard Leveson's mother [61] and Mary Fitton's father were first cousins. In 1588, the year of the Spanish Armada, Leveson married Margaret, a daughter of Charles Howard, Lord Effingham, the Lord High Admiral (1534-1624). Howard was married to the Queen's first cousin, Catherine Carey and was also a cousin of Ann Boleyn. Richard Leveson was then seventeen and serving under his father-in-law as a volunteer on the fleet's flagship, the *Ark Royal*. After routing the Spanish fleet Howard was created Earl Nottingham and went on to serve the Queen as a most eminent Privy Councillor, diplomat and ambassador. Leveson's marriage to his daughter was tragic; when their first child died at birth Lady Margaret became insane and would her life apart from her husband, under supervision, at his Oxley Hall near Wolverhampton. Leveson had been knighted by Earl Essex in 1596 having served with distinction at the siege of Cadiz, In 1604 he was promoted to Vice-Admiral of the Fleet commanding much active service at sea. His principal home was at Lilleshall on the Shropshire border visited by his cousins Mary Fitton and her sister, Anne Newdigate; six miles from Norbury where Richard Barnfield was baptised. Barnfield rented land from Leveson's father.

Mary Fitton grew up at Gawsworth south of Macclesfield in Cheshire [62] and when the Fitton and Leveson families travelled the thirty miles to visit each other they would have passed the imposing *Johnson Hall* at Eccleshall where Barnfield was brought up. It is improbable that the Fittons and the Levesons did not know the Skrymshers and the Barnfields, both families being notable gentry and lieutenants in adjacent counties. The context of their proximity strongly supports a view that the dedicatee, *Maister R L,* of Barnfield's sonnet *In Praise of Musique and Poetrie* was indeed the naval officer Richard Leveson.[63]

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[60] Another sonnet from *Pecunia* praised the poetry of the Scottish King, James VI. A line from this poem and Barnfield's name are mentioned in Meres' *Palladis Tamia* of 1598.

[61] Also named Mary Fitton.

[62] At the time of her birth Mary Fitton's father was Lord President of Munster in Ireland and her grandfather was buried, in state, in Dublin Cathedral. The Fittons also rented n London.

[63] *Master* would have meant a ship's master. There is a sonnet sequence by an R. L. which precedes a translation of a Spanish story into English. Richard Leveson was an ambassador to Spain in 1604.

And there were more connections. Sir Francis Leigh of Newnham Regis in Warwickshire (d.1625) had two daughters, Juliana and Alice. Juliana married Richard Newdigate, Mary Fitton's nephew, and Alice married Barnfield's first cousin, John Skrymsher, with whom he grew up.[64] The sisters' mother was the daughter of Thomas Egerton, Viscount Brackley, whose manor at Harefield in Middlesex had been owned by the Newdigates. Francis Leigh's mother was a first cousin of Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke. Richard Barnfield's grandfather, Thomas Skrymsher, married Dorothy Gatacre of Gatacre near Ellesmere in Shropshire. Years later Mary Fitton's daughter married John Gatacre of Gatacre. The Fitton/Newdigate and Barnfield/Skrymsher, Leigh/Harrington (Sidney) families were in the same social milieu and it is barely conceivable that Mary Fitton and Richard Barnfield were not well known to each other, other than it appears he served as her tutor in London.

Sir William Knollys, Comptroller of the Queen's household, (parodied as *Malvolio* in *Twelfth Night*) to whom Sir Edward Fitton entrusted his daughter Mary, was a member of Elizabeth's and James' Privy Councils with Leveson's father-in-law. Knollys and Leveson both corresponded with Mary Fitton's married sister, Anne Newdigate, at Arbury Hall near Nuneaton in Warwickshire. There is just one letter in Mary's hand; it is to Anne wishing her many happy returns.

When Leveson died on 2nd August 1605 after a short but strange illness Mary Fitton was living in one of his properties, Perton Hall near Wolverhampton, where she had security of tenure. There was a contemporary allegation that Leveson had sired two bastard daughters with Mary Fitton (despite spending considerable time at sea).[65] It is evident from subsequent litigation that Leveson accepted Anne, born to Mary Fitton in 1603, as his own child and, two days before making his will dated 25th March 1605, he made an arrangement with Sir Edward Fitton and others, concerning a lease, to raise a massive £10,000. [66] The will left a financial provision for an unnamed person and others whom one can guess to be Mary Fitton and their children;

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[64] In Barnfield's *Pecunia,* he dedicates a poem to Master Edward Leigh of Grays Inn, London. Was Edward related to Sir Francis Leigh a first cousin to Robert & Mary Sidney through the Haringtons of Exton where Robert Sidney and his nephew, William Herbert, spent their Christmas in 1602, forty-four miles or a day's ride from Arbury?

[65] *Gossip from the Muniment Room* relates Sir Peter Leycester's accusation that Leveson had sired two daughters. The author of *Gossip,* Lady Newdigate, considered it *unlikely* that Mary and Richard Leveson had produced two bastards. However the Register at Tettenhall church in Staffordshire has; 9th January 1607 William Fitton buried. On 4th April 1625 Robert Charnock married Anna Fitton alias Leveson. If Anna had just come of age she was conceived in summer 1603; her marriage portion was a fabulous £4,000.

[66] Worth £2.5m. The bulk of his estate went to his cousin and Privy Councillor, Sir John Leveson. This branch became the Leveson-Gowers, later the Dukes of Bridgwater. It is possible that the famous Bridgwater Library collection of Shakespeare Quartos had passed down this line.

Which said sum of one hundred pounds yearly during the continuance of the fore said lease . . . shall be employed by them to such uses and purposes and such person and persons as I shall appoint unto them by some private instruction from myself.

Leveson's father-in-law, Charles Howard, the Earl of Nottingham, was married to Catherine Carey (died 1602) daughter of Henry Carey, the first Lord Hunsden. Howard for many years sponsored a company of stage players known as the Admiral's or Nottingham's Men whereas Henry Carey sponsored the Chamberlain's Men. One imagines theatrical family rivalry and I sense these theatre groups were the interests of the countesses rather than of their husbands.

We know for certain that Mary Fitton was jilted by William Herbert but, quite *hypothetically* and I stress *hypothetically*, what if William Herbert also had a flirtation with Richard Barnfield and that *both* Barnfield and Mary albeit for very different reasons left London at about the same time? This question exemplifies that the love poetry of a passive male partner would be similar to that of a woman's, and certainly it would be difficult to differentiate. Barnfield wrote *gay* poetry yet it was Pembroke on his long awaited return to the Palace of Westminster who astonished the Court in 1603 when he had the effrontery of kissing the new King on the face or mouth.[67] A decade later James would admit to a homosexual relationship with the Duke of Buckingham; what he did not admit was his earlier intimacy with the Groom of his Bedchamber, Philip Herbert, William's younger brother, whom he rewarded with the Earldom of Montgomery. Can one see femininity in the young William Herbert's face? In Sonnet-3 Mary Fitton reminded William, born in April, of the softness of his face:

Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime;

Were the Sonnets at all homoerotic? Homoerotic words which Barnfield uses in his early poetry such as bee, honey, mouth, lips, fee, debt, arrow, dart, pipe and purse are almost completely absent from Sonnets 1-126. Conversely the same sonnets contain the very feminine images of flowers, appearing thirteen times, (cf. *Hamlet's* very feminine *Lady of the Flowers,* Ophelia). There are instances in the Sonnets where a male-male situation does not ring true, especially when Mary appears to be pregnant. Sonnet 50:

The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods duly on, to bear that waight [68] in me,

[67] "The Earl of Pembroke, a handsome youth, who is always with the King, and always joking with him, actually kissed his Majesty's face, whereupon the King laughed and gave him a little cough [cuff]." *Ardern Shakespeare*

[68] A play on waite meaning a chap or fellow.

As for Barnfield's sexuality, the *Ode* that ended Barnfield's *Pecunia* started off in homoerotic vein, expressing the author's passion for a young, male shepherd, Ganymede, but ended:

.... But yet (alas) I was deceiu'd,
(Love of reason is bereau'd)
For since then I saw a Lass,
(Lass) that did in beauty pass,
(Pass) faire Ganymede [69]as far
As Phoebus doth the smallest star.
Love commanded me to love;
Fancy bade me not remove
My affection from the swain
Whom I never could obtain:
(For who can obtain that favour,
Which he cannot grant the craver?)
Love at last (though loath) prevailde;
(Love) that so my heart assailde;
Wounding me with her faire eies,
(Ah how Love can subtelize,
And devize a thousand shifts,
How to work men to his drifts)

Her it is, for whom I mourn;
Her, for whom my life I scorn;
Her, for whom I weep all day;
Her, for whom I sigh, and say,
Either She, or else no creature,
Shall enjoy my love: whose feature
Though I never can obtain,
Yet shall my true love remain:
Till (my body turn'd to clay)
My poor soul must pass away,
To the heavens; where (I hope)
It shall find a resting scope:
Then since I loved thee (alone)
Remember me when I am gone.
Scarce had he these last words spoken,
But me thought his heart was broken;
With great grief that did abound,

[69] A male shepherd, cup-bearer to the gods, epitomising a youthful male beauty.

(Cares and grief the heart confound)

In whose heart (thus riv'd in three)
***Eliza** written I might see:*
In characters of crimson blood,
(Whose meaning well I understood.)
Which, for my heart might not behold,
I hyed me home my sheep to fold.

Here a young woman appears to have caused a turning point for Barnfield as his subsequent works were not homoerotic. So who was the unattainable lass whom he could not hope to reach? It could have been anyone – or could it? Barnfield has given *Eliza(beth)* as the reason. Possibly it was the name of the girl but more likely the impediment he referred to was Queen Elizabeth; he recognised a warning sign – one did not mess with a maid of honour, a surrogate daughter of the Queen. Mary Fitton was attractive, lively, intelligent and poetic but to Barnfield she would have been off-limits especially if he was in a position of trust as tutor to the maids.

From the evidence, TT is Mary Fitton, the *Troian Nimph;* she and Barnfield were friends and it was she who helped enhance Barnfield's twenty sonnets in *Cynthia*. Later I will show where the TT monogram is deliberately embedded in the Sonnets.

Two Barnfield sonnets stand out; [70] both are from his 1598 *Pecunia* which he attributes to his *unriper years.* They, for whatever reason, appeared in *The Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599 as poems of W. Shakespeare:

To his friend Maister R. L. – In praise of Musique and Poetrie.

If Musique and sweet Poetrie agree,
As they must needes (the Sister and the Brother)
Then must the Love be great, twixt thee and me,
Because thou lou'st the one, and I the other.
Dowland to thee is dear; whose heauenly tuch
Upon the Lute, doeth rauish humaine sense:
Spenser to me; whose deep Conceit is such,
As passing all Conceit, needs no defence.
Thou lou'st to hear the sweet melodious sound,
That Phœbus Lute (the Queen of Musique) makes:
And I in deep Delight am chiefly drownd,

[70] Sonnet XIV is my favourite: *Here; hold this glove (this milk-white cheveril glove) / Not quaintly overwrought with curious knots, / Nor deckt with golden spangs, nor silver spots; / Yet wholesome for thy hand as thou shalt prove. / Ah no: (sweet boy) place this glove near thy heart, / Wear it, and lodge it still within thy breast, / So shalt thou make me (most unhappy) blest. / So shalt thou rid my pain, and ease my smart / How can that be (perhaps) thou wilt reply, / A glove is for the hand, not for the heart, / Nor can it well be prov'd by common art, / Nor reasons rule. To this, thus answer I: / If thou from glove do'st take away the g, Then glove is love: and so I send it thee.*

When as himself to singing he betakes.
One God is God of Both (as Poets faigne)
One Knight loves Both, and Both in thee remain.

John Dowland (1563-1623) was a composer of songs at Court 1596-1598 before he left for Denmark. To appreciate his music one would have had to be at Court.

The other outstanding "Barnfield" poem, number twenty-one in *The Passionate* Pilgrim, is about the widowed wife of King Pandion and relates how so-called friends will pander to her in her widowhood. It may relate to the late Admiral Sir John Hawkins and his wife Mary Vaughan.[71] Pandion is the generic for the sea bird, the Osprey, also known as a fish-hawk. In Greek mythology Pandion was the father of Philomela (Nightingale). The sense of the poem (Appendix-2) leans towards Margaret Vaughan, the wealthy widow of the navigator, privateer, slave-trader, Admiral, Sir John Hawkins, who had died at sea in 1595. Richard Barnfield may have had some familiarity with the Hawkins' household.

Mary Fitton would have known Margaret Hawkins as a lady of the Queen's bedchamber, and Mary's cousin, naval Captain Richard Leveson, would have known Sir John Hawkins. We read in the *Sonnets* that Mary Fitton had maritime ties; Sonnet 66:

. . . And captive-good attending Captain ill.
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.

and Mary Wroth in her allegory, *Urania*, certainly has *Antissia* (Mary Fitton) experiencing a number of maritime adventures.[72]

The body of evidence connecting Richard Barnfield with Mary Fitton is substantial. Within high probability we have found the Mary Fitton-Richard Barnfield connections. After leaving London in disgrace bringing shame on her family and removing to Perton in Staffordshire, Mary Fitton would have renewed acquaintance with her neighbour, Richard Barnfield, and she owned to having had two children by Richard Leveson. In *Sonnet 110* we read:

Alas 'tis true, I have gone here and there
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,

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[71] Hawkins died off Puerto Rico on 12th Nov 1595. He had accumulated massive wealth through privateering and was the first trader in African slaves. During 1588 he served as a naval commander facing the Spanish Armada under the Lord High Admiral, Charles Howard. Widowed in 1591, Hawkins married Margaret, daughter of Charles Vaughan and Elizabeth Baskerville. Brought up in Wales, Margaret had been a Lady of the Bed Chamber to the Queen and later provided a home for Mary Fitton's last months of pregnancy.
[72] Including being captured by pirates; which is what happened to Marina in *Pericle*s. The name Marina is not derived from either of the play's two sources, Gower and Twine. It first appeared in the *Third Folio.*

Made old offences of affections new.

Reviewing the clues:

- Troian Nimph
- TT
- The sacred name
- Connections between the families of Fitton, Leveson, Leigh, Barnfield, Skrymsher, Holcroft and Talbot.
- The proximity of the protagonists in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Shropshire and Cheshire.
- The naval connections between two Admirals.
- The poem to Master R. L.
- The young woman whom Barnfield met and collaborated with in London.
- In Mary Wroth's *Urania,* echoes of *Antissia* (Mary Fitton) reconciling with and marrying the estranged and wrongfully disinherited *Dolorindus.*

Again in *Urania*; Antissia having a tutor who thought he could compose better than Ovid (the source of *Venus* and of *Lucrece*), and her writing poetry and plays.

If William Shaxper of Stratford-upon-Avon could be linked to any one of the plays in the first Folio with so many clues it would be incontroversial evidence that he wrote drama. There is no such evidence; whatsoever.

The next chapter gives biography about Mary Fitton. The information mainly derives from *Gossip from a Muniment-Room* (1897) written by Lady Newdigate-Newdegate who transcribed contemporary letters from and to the Fittons including letters to Anne Newdigate, Mary's sister. Her research also identified Mary's two husbands, Captain William Polewhele and John Lougher, the will of the first husband and Mary's will with its references to her children. We will find that Mary Fitton was meditative, excitable and moody.

One should not underestimate the role played by Sir William Knollys.

CHAPTER SIX – MARY FITTON

Anne Newdigate (1575-1618), Mary Fitton's sister, lived her adult life at Arbury Hall near Nuneaton in Warwickshire.[73] In the dining room are two portraits of Mary. One shows her at fourteen standing alongside the elder Anne; the other as a young adult dressed in an iconic, elaborate, orange, court gown decorated with an unusual motif of three-dimensional caterpillars and moths.[74] Her eyes are a dark slate-blue; her dark, slightly reddish-brown hair lighter than that of her sister's. Across the dining room hangs a painting of their second cousin and one of Mary's lovers, Sir Richard Leveson.

In 1897 Lady Anne Emily Newdigate-Newdegate (Lady Newdigate), wife of the five-time-great-grandson of Anne and John Newdigate, having found letters in the Arbury muniments room, wrote biographies of Anne and Mary in *Gossip from a Muniment-Room* (*Gossip*). The book's cover is embossed with lilies and pansies, the emblems of the Newdigate and Fitton families. From *Gossip* evolved a theory that Mary Fitton was the *Dark Lady of the Sonnets* – a theory firmly refuted by Lady Newdigate in the book's second edition, pre-empting twentieth-century historians who simply viewed Mary Fitton as a strumpet because of the scandal of her pregnancy by Earl Pembroke.

From letters printed in *Gossip* we learn that Mary appeared to play loose and fast with her guardian at Court, the pompous Sir William Knollys, a much older, married man and Comptroller of the Queen's household. Yet, despite the near forty-year age gap, Sir William genuinely loved Mary and the ridiculous Knollys-Fitton saga was parodied in the Shakespeare play *Twelfth Night* (*Malvolio-Olivia*). In this chapter we will read reports of Mary being over-familiar with the Queen, and of her being seen running dressed as a man through London streets to meet William Herbert.[75] Contemporary letters tell of William Herbert admitting paternity of the child, said to be stillborn, of the scandal when he refused to marry Mary, and of the lovers being dismissed from Court in January 1601.

On Mary's shamefaced return home to Gawsworth in May 1601, her mother bemoaned the humiliation brought on the Fitton name. In the years that followed, rumours were not unfounded that Mary Fitton had carried two children out of wedlock. She would be twice widowed and by the time of her death in 1641 she had at least nine pregnancies by four men.

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[73] Arbury has the distinction of another famous female author who used a man's name. Mary Ann Evans, 1819-80, George Eliot, was born at Arbury Farm and lived there for twenty years.

[74] Thomas Moffet, Mary Sidney Herbert's physician, dedicated a poem, *Silkworms and their Flies*, to the Countess. Perhaps there is a connection. His daughter was one Little Miss Moffet.

[75] It is 1.3 miles from Westminster to Baynard's Castle. His father the second Earl Pembroke was still alive.

When I first suspected that someone called Mary had penned the Sonnets I had quickly, and with very good reason, identified Mary Sidney Wroth, William Herbert's first cousin, as a strong candidate. Mary Wroth wrote beautiful poetry and was in the unique position to have written Sonnets 1-126; however, the big *but* is that the sonnets indicate distance and time separating the lovers, whereas it was clear that the two cousins lived near each other and in London both stayed at Baynard's Castle; they often saw each other. The lightbulb-moment came when reading a footnote to Page-36 of *Gossip* that I realised that Mary Fitton was a possible author of the Sonnets, especially knowing she had been the girlfriend of William Herbert, *Master W. H.*.

Sir William Knollys

Lady Newdigate wrote: "A writer in Literature of Nov. 4th, 1897, gives us an interesting sonnet addressed to *Mistress Mary Fitten by the author of a quaint and rare volume printed in 1599* [76] *and entitled:*

> *A Woman's Worth Defended against all the Men in the World, proving them to be more perfect, excellent, and absolute in all virtuous Actions than any Man of what quality so-ever. Written by one that hath heard much, seen much, but knows a great deal more. This testimonie of my true hart's zeale,*
>
> *Faire and (for euer honord) vertuous maide:*
> *To your kind fauor humbly dooth appeale*
> *That in construction nothing be mis-saide.*
> *Those fierie spirits of high temperd wit,*
> *That drink the dewe of Heaven continually:*
> *They could have graced you with termes more fit,*
> *Then*[77] *can my lowlie, poore, weake ingenie.*
> *Let not my love (yet) nightly pass respect,*[78]
> *Devoted onely to your excellence:*
> *Winke woorthy Virgin at my lines defect,*
> *Let will extenuate what ere offence.*
> *It is no bountie that is giuen from store,*
> *Who giues his hart, what gifts can he giue more?"*

Clues suggest that the author was the Privy Councillor, Sir William Knollys, Mary Fitton's guardian. Knollys had recognised something special and attractive in Mary Fitton – but she was not a leg-up on his socio-political ladder. Knollys was already far the better

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[76] Translated from French by Anthony Gibson; publisher J Wolfe.

[77] *fit-then*

[78] *Willy* in the initial letters - **w**eake **i**ngenie. **L**et (<u>not</u> my) **l**ove (**y**et) nightly pass respect.

connected; his late mother and the Queen were first cousins (or half-sisters). His letters to Mary's sister, Anne, anticipate that one day Mary would become his wife. However, when in 1605 his aged wife was put to rest, he forewent Mary and, aged 58, married eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Thomas, 1st Lord Suffolk. Her lover provided him with two sons.

Having read Knollys' sonnet and its dedication I started to examine the background of this *Maid* in whom Knollys saw, "*those fierie spirits of high temperd wit....*"

This chapter takes abstracts from *Gossip*. In various letters much is said or can be implied. If you know *Malvolio*'s stylised speech in *Twelfth Night* you will hear it again in Sir William Knollys' letters. The playwright must have known Knollys' foibles very well – there are supposedly sixteen references to him in the play. The narrator of the text that follows is mainly Lady Newdigate. Her research is generally accurate; she writes.

It was about 1595 that Mary Fitton, being seventeen years old, began her Court life. Sir Edward Fitton, in his natural anxiety for his young daughter's welfare in her new and trying position, made interest on her-behalf with a personage of importance at the Court who was now Comptroller of the Household and, later on, Treasurer. This was an old friend, Sir William Knollys, son of Sir Francis Knollys, and first cousin once removed to the Queen on her mother's side. At this time Knollys was upwards of fifty years old, and had been some time married to Dorothy, daughter and co-heiress of Lord Bray, and widow of Edmund Brydges, Lord Chandos, who had been left her husband's sole executrix and the possessor of much wealth for her life. [79] *In his will Lord Chandos grants her this life interest, as his most faithful and loving wife, for her obedience truth and faithful love towards him. Though Dorothy was a valuable prize as regards her wealth, she must have been considerably older than her second husband, and we have reason to believe he chafed at the chain that prevented his marriage with a younger and fairer spouse. The earliest letter we find from Sir William Knollys is addressed:*

> To my verye lovyng frend Sr Edward Fytton, Knight.
>
> Sir Edward, I am sorry your disease should so trouble you, as it deprives me of your company whilst you remain in London, but I will by no means that you trouble yourself with going abroad, but since you must undertake so great a journey, be careful to make yourself strong until you go. I wish I were at liberty to accompany you to Arbury & so to Drayton.[80] I will not fail to fulfil your desire in playing the Good Shepherd & will to my power defend the innocent lamb from the wolfish cruelty & fox-like

[79] Lady Chandos was a godparent to Mary Sidney Herbert.
[80] Drayton Basset, his brother Henry's country place in Warwickshire.

subtlety of the tame beasts of this place, which when they seem to take bread at a man's hand will bite before they bark; all their songs be Syren-like, and their kisses after Judas fashion, but from such beasts deliver me and my friends. I will with my counsel advise your fair daughter, with my true affection love her and with my sword defend her if need be. Her innocency will deserve it and her virtue will challenge it at my hands, and I will be as careful of her well doing as if I were her true father. Touching yourself I will say only this, that your love to me is not unrequited & that whensoever any occasion shall be offered wherein I may stand you in stead, I will never fail to use my uttermost power. In the mean time with my best salutations to yourself and my Lady, wishing you both health & happiness,I remayne ever, Your assured lovyng ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

Thus Mary Fitton was launched on her Court life under powerful protection, but the innocent lamb soon turned out to be an arrant coquette and Sir William's professions of fatherly affection rapidly grew warmer and blossomed into ardent love, which he confides in a series of letters to her sister, Anne. Sometimes he veils his sentiments in the language of parable, but more often they are expressed in the frankest terms, apparently with no compunctions in regard to the existing Lady Knollys.

Mrs Newdigate,

Your kind letter to your dear sister I have seen, wherein I find that though you be nearly joined by the law of nature, yet are you more surely united in the bond of love which exceedeth all bands and bringeth with it in the end a blessing where it is truly continued. Your thanks I accept as a recompense sufficient for my lines, but your excuse of not presuming to write again I nothing allow, seeming thereby to make my white staff an argument of your sloth, if I may so say, but to you & yours I desire neither to be head nor foot, but in that equal proportion where friendship is like to continue surest & longest & what is dear to you is dearest to me. Wherefore once again I will bid you the base, hoping you will not always keep the goal in silence. Some reasons methinks might breed a better sympathy between us, for I imagine we both having too much do yet want, though in divers respects our summer is turned to winter, the one by the airy element, the other by the earthly. The fairest flowers of our gardens be blasted, yours in the bud by some unwholesome easterly wind, [81] mine in the leaf by the hoar frost and the difference is that because the wind may change your hopes may revive & by reason of the

[81] One assumes that Anne kept her sister, Mary Fitton, informed of these letters. This line calls to mind Sonnet 18.3, *rough winds do shake the darling buds of Maie.*

continual frosts my looking for any fruit of my garden is in vain, unless the old tree [his wife!] be cut down & a new graft of a good kind planted. But I leave to parable and in plain English wish you what you most desire. As for me my hopes being desperate & fortune ever frowning, were it not that by the sunshine of some pleasing thoughts I were somewhat relieved I should die both in hope & heart. Yet hope is the only food I live by & patience is my pillow to rest upon, both which I wish you to make your companions as remedies against all diseases of the mind. If I have been too long blame the matter which leadeth me along, if too bold with you let my desire to provoke you to a lyterall quarrel be my excuse, & if too open impute it to my trust. But it is time to leave troubling you any longer & forgetting myself.

Wherefore wishing you all health & happiness both of body and mind I desire to be esteemed in the number of your best friends, both for the love I bear to your father & all his & for your own worthiness, remaining ever this 20th of May, Your assured ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

It seems difficult to find any excuse for this writer's open avowal of impatience at the impediment that obstructed the desired end to his courtship of the attractive maid of honour. Neither is it easy to understand how Anne, the excellent Anne of whom nothing but good is known, could by her sympathy permit these frank avowals of Sir William's love for her sister. He even seemed so sure of her approval and co-operation as to ask for her prayers on his behalf in a subsequent letter. Here we find the disadvantage of a one-sided correspondence. There may have been extenuating circumstances of which we know nothing.

The letters which follow are given verbatim, for were they to be curtailed, or any sentences omitted, their historical interest and value would be injured. They have been considered of sufficient importance to have been preserved for nearly three hundred years in the muniment room at Arbury, though never yet made known, even to the immediate members of the family. It is also necessary to remember that letters of this period were written with infinite pains and much consideration, and consequently have a value far superior to the hasty scrawls of today. From their style and superscription they appear to have been invariably sent by hand, and months often intervened between their dates. We must now let Sir William continue the tale of his tantalising courtship. In his next letter he refers to Anne's hopes of becoming a mother, her previous expectations having been disappointed, as we may gather from his former remarks:

Honorable Lady,

The more you go about to disable your own worthiness the more do you make it shine in yourself & by that means bring me farther indebted to so great a kindness. The least good thought of your well-wishing mind is a recompence sufficient for my small power to afford you what you are worthy of, but such as they are command and think

that your Dearest Dear doth not wish you better than I do. As God hath blessed you with increase so blessed be you ever & freed from all discontents, & though myself can not but be now upon the stage & play his part who is cloyed with too much & yet ready to starve for hunger, my eyes see what I can not attain to, my ears hear what I do scant believe, & my thoughts are carried with contrary conceits, my hopes are mixt with despair & my desires starved with expectation, but were my enjoying assured, I could willingly endure purgatory for a season to purchase my heaven at the last. But the short warning, the distemperature of my head by reason of the toothache & your sister's going to bed without bidding me goodnight will join in one to be a means that for this time I will only trouble you with these few lines scribbled in haste, and wishing you all happiness, a good delivery of your burden and your sister in the same case justifiable, I leave you to God's good protection, myself to your dearest sister's true love and her to a constant resolution to love him only who cannot but ever love her best & thus with my best salutations I will ever remain, Your most assured ffrend, I would fayne saye brother, W. KNOLLYS.

In the next letter Knollys became still more outspoken:

Honorable sister (I cannot choose but call you so because I desire nothing more than to have it so).

Your fair written letter & more fairly indited I have received & read more than once or twice seeking to find there which so much you endeavour to put me in hope of. It is true that winter's cold is the murderer of all good fruits in which climate I dwell & do account it as a purgatory allotted to me for my many offences committed against the Highest, the rather because I am more observant & devoted unto his creature than to himself, from which to be delivered since there is no means but the devout prayers & orasions of my good friends. Let me entreat your fair self to pierce the heavens with your earnest & best prayers to the effecter & worker of all things for my delivery & that once I may be so happy as to feel the pleasing comfort of a delightful summer, which I doubt not will yield me the deserved fruit of my constant desires, which as yet no sooner bud by the heat of the morning sun, but they are blasted by an untimely frost, so as in the midst of my best comforts I see nothing but dark despair. I could complain of fortune which led me blindly into this barren desert where I am ready to starve for want of my desired food & of myself that would suffer my reason to be betrayed by my will in following so blind a guide. But to all my wounds I will apply your plaster which is patience, a virtue I must needs confess, but having in a sort lost her force because it is forced. Continue, I earnestly entreat you, your prayer for my delivery, and your best means for my obtaining that without the which I am not myself, having already given my best part to whose I am more than mine own. But I

must cry silence lest I speak too loud, committing this secret only to your self to whom as I wish all happiness and your own heart's desire, so will I ever remain, Your most affectionat brother, W. KNOWLESSE

Anne's first child, a daughter, was born in [May] 1598. The godparents or gossips *chosen for the baby were Lady Fitton, the grandmother; Anne's greatest friend, Elizabeth Lady Grey and Sir William Knollys. Sir William Knollys accepted the post of Gossip to Anne's little daughter in the next letter, and at the same time he tendered advice on a subject that is not usually considered one of the duties of godparents.*

To my very Lovyng ffrend Mrs Anne Newdygate.
How desirous I am in person to perform the office of a godfather mine own heart knoweth & you should have seen if I were within mine own power, but such is my bondage to this place as I have neither liberty to please myself nor satisfy my good friends' expectation, amongst which I must account you in the foremost rank, as well for your own worthiness as for being so nearly united both in nature & love to those which I honour much & who may more command me than all the world besides. But my thoughts of that party I will leave to be discovered not by this base means of pen & paper but by myself. Accept I pray you of my lawful excuse for not coming myself, assuring you that I will be ever ready to perform any friendly duty to you. I have entreated my brother Blunt[82] to supply my place in making your little one a Christian soul & give it what name it shall please you. Imagine what name I love best and that do I nominate but refer the choice to yourself, and if I might be as happy to be a father, as a godfather, I would think myself exceeding rich, but that will never be until one of your own tribe be a party player. I should like nothing that you play the nurse if you were my wife. I must confess it argueth great love, but it breedeth much trouble to yourself & it would more grieve you if sucking your own milk it should miscarry, children being subject to many casualties. But you may tell me I am more curious in this point than I need, but I speak it in friendly council not meaning either to contrary your own will or dissuade you from your resolution if by a reasonable persuasion yourself think not good to alter your purpose. Thus without further compliments, wishing you a happy mother of many children & your own heart's desire, with my best salutations I commend you to God & will ever remain
Your assured poore ffrend & gossepp; W. KNOLLYS.

[82] Sir Christopher Blount, brother-in-law, married to his sister Lettice Knollys.

The suggestion of the writer in regard to the naming of his goddaughter was carried out. She was christened Mary; but Sir William's advice on a more domestic matter was not as effective. Anne was too devoted a mother to abandon any duty towards her child. Henceforth this correspondent always addresses her as his Gossip.

> Fair Gossip,
> The conveniency of this bearer and the desire I have not to be behind with you in any kindness is cause that I may not leave you unsaluted. The many testimonies you have made of your worthy respect of me bind me to be thankful by all the means I may, and you shall ever be assured I will not fail to perform the part of a true friend whensoever you shall have cause to try me. I am sorry I cannot assure my coming to Arbury being under the command of a greater power but if it be possible for me to break loose but a little I will, God willing, see Drayton and take Arbury in my way. Until then I recommend you to your best delights & thus wishing you as much happiness as your heart can think with my best salutations to yourself & my blessing to your little one I remain ever, Your verye assured ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

Amongst all Anne's numerous correspondents we only find one letter from her sister, Mary. This is written in a scrawling hand [83], is more than usually ill-spelt, and contains nothing of interest. It is given here because it shows the affectionate terms existing between the two sisters:

> *To my dearest syster Mrs. An Newdigate.*
>
> *Sinc distanc bares me from so great hapenes as I can seldom hear from you, which when I do is so welcom as I esteme nothing more worthie, and for your love which I dout not of shall be equaled in ful mesure, but lest my lines to tedius weare, and time that limets all thinges bares me of wordes, which eles could never ses [84] to tel howe dear you ar, and with what zele I desire your retorne, [85] than can wish nothing more then your hartes desire, and wil ever contineu;*

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[83] I disagree! This is an artist's *Roman* (Italic) hand; note how she spelled her surname. Mary's handwriting is in the Roman, Italic, style and in *Twelfth Night Act 3.iv,* Malvolio, on finding the dropped letter, says, *I think we do know the sweet Roman hand.*

[84] cease

[85] The *return* of Anne's birthday, 6th October; in looking through the sixty-four *Muniment-Room* letters one occasionally finds a comment to the effect, *nothing of interest, kept for sentimental reasons*. I think this was one such letter all her other letters being destroyed.

your afectina sister. . .Mary phytton

Sir William Knollys at this time had other troubles to distract him in addition to his hapless love affair. He wrote his next hurried letter when much disturbed by the disgrace of his nephew, the reckless Earl of Essex.

Fair Gossip,

I must crave pardon for my so long silence, not grown by a negligent forgetfulness of so good a friend, but forced by a distraction I have had concerning the Noble Earl of Essex[86], which hath made me careless to satisfy myself or my friends. I leave to you to imagine the discomforts I take hereof when your sister is fain to blame me for my melancholy & small respect of her, who when I am myself is the only comfort of my heart. She is now well & hath not been troubled with the mother[87] of a long time. I would God I might as lawfully make her a mother as you are. I would be near both at Arbury to shun the many griefs which this place affordeth & she should enjoy the company of the most loving & kind sister that ever I knew. My heart is so full of sorrow at this time for my lord of Essex being dangerously sick before his restraint, as I am scant myself. Receive therefore I pray you these ragged lines from a broken head as a remembrance of [a] most faithful friend who will ever be ready to do all good offices wherein I may stead you. Thus leaving for this time abruptly with my best wishes of your best desires, I commend you to God & will ever remain, Your assured lovyng gossepp & ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

In the next letter Mary Fitton appeared to be encouraging her elderly lover with hopes that she would be willing to wait for him until he was free to marry her.

Fair gossip,

Your uncle's sudden departure and my coming by chance to London when he was ready to take his journey is cause you must look for no compliments at this time, only you shall know that true affection is as well expressed in few words as in many & I assure myself your wisdom doth not measure love by lines. So as having saluted you with my best commendations & assured you that I will be ever ready to perform toward you all the good offices of a true friend: the best news I can send you is that your sister is in good health & going to the Court

[86] Around end 1598/early 1599, after Essex's return from Ireland.

[87] Hysterical passion; so called as being imagined peculiar to women. Mary had moods.

within 2 or 3 days, though I think she could be better pleased to be with her best sister upon some conditions.[88] Her greatest fear is that while the grass groweth the horse may starve & she thinketh a bird in the bush is worth 2 in the hand. But both she and I must have patience & that will bring peace at the last. Thus in some haste with my best salutations to your self, and my kindest blessing to my daughter. I wish you your heart's desire & will remain ever, Your ffaythffull ffrend & gossepp, W. KNOLLYS.

This is the last letter in which the writer and Mary seem to have been on the best of terms. A cloud intervened, which will be explained in due course:

Honorable gossip,

Your few lines but very pithy and significant were very welcome to me & I think I shall be forced in as brief manner to return you mine by reason of this bearer's hasty departure, but with them a very thankful & brother-like acceptance of your kind remembrance. It was against my will I saw you not this summer. I had purposed it but being restrained of my liberty by necessary state occasions I was disposed of otherwise. It is true that winter's approach hindered my journey to Arbury and so unhappy I am as I never find summer, but being fain to feed upon the dead stalk I live in doubt ever to enjoy the sweet fruit of my summer's harvest. My ground is covered with the bramble & the brier which until it be grubbed & cut up there is no hope of good. It may be you country wits may give council in such a case. Advise me I pray you in this extremity and if I may once bring it to a fruitful soil, I doubt not but you shall be partaker of my longed for husbandry. This bearer hasteth away & I will find some other time to send to you, so as for this time wishing you your heart's desire I remain ever

Your most assured ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

And again:

Fair Gossip,

Having so convenient a messenger though my warning be but short I may not suffer him to pass by you without some salutations which in regard of the humour I am put into though they can be but melancholy

[88] A letter to Robert Sidney from his secretary at Baynard's dated 12th Jan 1599-1600; *Mrs (Mistress)Fitton is sick and gone from Court to her father's. Mrs Onslowe doth exceed the rest in Bravery which is noted. Mrs Southwell is now one of the numbers.* Later he writes; *My Lady (Sidney's wife) goes often to my Lady Leicester, my Lady Essex and my Lady Buckhurst where she is exceeding welcome. She visited Mrs Fitton who has long been sick here in London.* Why such interest in Mary Fitton unless they were concerned or welcomed the growing relationship of Mary with their nephew William Herbert?

yet to one to whom I have been so much beholden as your fair self I will ever be thankful & just. Methinks it is [a] pity that 2 bodies & one mind, so firmly united as your sister's & yours, should not endure so much distance of place, but that you are both bound the one by her Majesty's service, the other by a commanding Husband & yet I that am at the next door [89] do think myself now farther from the place I most desire than in the beginning of my journey. Such is the variety of this world & the uncertainty of this time I must live in frost & snow subject to blasts & all ill winds & shall I fear never be so happy as to possess the fair flower of the summer's garden. I hope you dwell under a better climate where the sun sometimes comforteth though the soil be subject to fogs & mists. Make a virtue of necessity & since your lot fell not to dwell in the land of promise where all things were given that were desired, work your own contentment out of your own worthiness & be ever happier than your unfortunate gossip who will be ever ready to do you respectable service remaining ever, Your affectionate ffrend & gossepp, W. KNOLLYS.

Anne's unfortunate gossepp seems to have been, when at Court, not only figuratively but literally next door to the abode of the Maids of Honour. Sir Nicholas L'Estrange related the following anecdote:

The Lord Knollys (as he became at James I's coronation) in Queen Elizabeth's time had his lodging at Court, where some of the Ladies and Maids of Honour used to frisk and hey about in the next room, to his extreme disquiet a nights, though he often warned them of it. At last he gets one to bolt their own back door when they were all in one night at their revels, strips off his shirt, and so with a pair of spectacles on his nose and Aretine [90] in his hand comes marching

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[89] His bedroom was next to a room used by the Maids of Honour.

[90] The Italian Pietro Aretino, 1492-1556, wrote true pornography. An extract from the Internet, illustrates what these *poor creatures* had to suffer that night:

"No, I wouldn't say he consumed it, because placing his paintbrush, which he first moistened with spit, in her tiny colour cup, he made her twist and turn as women do in the birth throes or the mother's malady. And to be doubly sure that his nail would be driven more tightly into her slit, he motioned to his back and his favourite punk pulled his breeches down to his heels and applied his clyster to the reverend's visibilium, while all the time the General himself kept his eyes fixed on the two other young louts, who, having settled the sisters neatly and comfortably on the bed, were now pounding the sauce in the mortar to the great despair of the last little sister. Poor thing, she was so squint-eyed and swarthy that she had been spurned by all. So, she filled the glass tool with water heated to wash the messer's hands, sat on a pillow on the floor, pushed the soles of her feet against the cell wall, and then came straight down on that great crozier, burying in her body as a sword is thrust into a scabbard."

in at a postern door of his own chamber, reading very gravely, full upon the faces of them. Now let the reader judge what a sad spectacle and pitiful fright these poor creatures endured for he faced them and often traversed the room in this posture above an hour.

In 1600 William Kempe, the Clown in *Shakespeare's* Company, dedicated his *Nine daies wonder to Mistris Anne Fitton, Mayde of Honour to most sacred Mayde Royal Queene Elizabeth.* [91] Anne is plainly a mistake for Mary. It would be conjecturing why Kempe decided on Mary Fitton except there is evidence that she and her family showed great interest in theatre – apart from his ingratiating himself with someone high in favour with the Queen. The book gives an account of a Kempe's journey as he Morris-danced from London to Norwich. Kempe writes in his dedication to Mary:

To shew my duty to your honourable self, whose favours (among other bountiful friends) make me (despite this sad world) judge my heart cork and my heels feathers, so that methinks I could fly to Rome (at least hop to Rome as the old Proverb is) with a Mortar on my head. But in a word, your poor servant offers the truth of his progress and profit to your honourable view; receive it I beseech you, such as it is, rude and plain; for I know your pure judgment looks as soon to see beauty in a Blackamoor, or hear smooth speech from a Stammerer, as to find any thing but blunt mirth in a Morris dancer, especially such a one as Will Kemp, that hath spent his life in mad Jigs and merry jests.

It was in June[92] of this same year (1600) that there was a remarkable festivity at Blackfriars. William Herbert was present, as was also a lady with whom we shall be still further concerned in the sequel. The occasion of this festivity was the marriage of Lord Herbert (son of the Earl of Worcester) with a lady of the Court, Mrs. Anne Russell. The Queen herself attended and having come to Blackfriars by water, she was carried from the water side in a lectica borne by six knights. The bride was conducted to church by the nobleman with whom we are now more particularly concerned, William Herbert (son of Lord Pembroke), and Lord Cobham. The Queen supped and passed the night at Lord Cobham's.

Rowland Whyte, to Sir Robert Sidney, letter of 14th June 1600:

There is to be a memorable masque of eight ladies. They have a strange dance newly invented; their attire is this: each hath a skirt of

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[91] *As You Like It* Act 3.2: Rosalind: *"I was seven of the nine days out of the wonder. . . . I was never so berhymed since Pythagoras' time that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember."* Mary Fitton may well have been born in Ireland.

[92] 16th June 1600, Anne Russell, a Maid of Honour, married Henry Somerset, 5th Earl of Worcester, at St. Martin's Church, Ludgate. Blanche Somerset was the Groom's sister. The wedding is thought to be depicted by the Sherborne Castle painting, *Queen Elizabeth in Procession.*

> *cloth of silver, a rich waistcoat wrought with silks & gold & silver, a mantle of carnation taffeta cast under the arm, and their hair loose about their shoulders curiously knotted and interlaced. These are the Masquers: My Lady Dorothy [Hastings], M^rs^ Fitton, M^rs^ Carey, M^rs^ Onslow, M^rs^ Southwell, M^rs^ Bess Russell, M^rs^ Darcy and my Lady Blanche Somerset.[93] These eight dance to the music Apollo brings, &. there is a fine speech that makes mention of a ninth, much to her Honour & Praise.*

And again, in another letter written shortly afterwards, he says:

> *After supper the masque came in as I writ in my last; and delicate it was to see 8 ladies so prettily and richly attired. M^rs^ Fitton led, & after they had done all their own ceremonies, these 8 lady masquers chose 8 ladies more to dance the measures. M^rs^ Fitton went to the Queen & wooed her to dance; her Majesty asked what she was; " Affection," she said. "Affection!" said the Queen; "Affection is false." Yet her Majesty rose and danced .[94]*

In the next January William Herbert became Earl of Pembroke on the death of his father, Henry, the second Earl Pembroke. The goings on at the Court at this time seem to have been notorious: one Mrs Martin who dwelt at the Chopping Knife near Ludgate told me that she hath seen priests marry gentlewomen at the Court, in that time when that Mrs Fitton was in great favour, and one of her Majesty's maids of honour, and during the time that the Earl of Pembroke favoured her she would put off her head tire and tuck up her clothes and take a large white cloak and march as though she had been a man to meet the said Earl out of the Court. It must have been about this time that Sir William Knollys wrote to Anne in evident distress about Mary's conduct:

> Honorable Gossip,

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[93] Salisbury Papers Vol. 8 p 417 names horses in the Queen's stables in Oct 1598 as Rone Howard (Elizabeth Russell); White Ansloe (Ansloe); Grey Fitton (Fytton); Bay Compton (Ratcliffe); White Smithfield (Carye); Bay Dormer (Russell) and Grey Marcom (Hyde).

[94] One recalls Ophelia's talking to her father about Hamlet. The use of *affection* reflects what the Queen said to Mary Fitton.

Ophelia	He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders Of his affection to me.
Polonius	Affection! Puh! - you speak like a green girl Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

The night of the Masque fits with Mary's conceiving a child born at the end of March 1601.

So much have I been ever beholden to you in your true respectable good opinion of me as I should greatly blame myself & be thought unworthy if I should suffer your letters to return unanswered, not having other means to manifest how much I account myself indebted to you for many kindnesses, especially in your well wishing to me in a matter which most imported me, which I think will be clean extinguished, though I leave nothing on my part to be done for the continuance thereof. But since I know this discourse will nothing please you, let me assure you that no friend you have shall be more ready to do all the offices of a true friend than myself wishing the party I spoke of before so worthy & fair a mind as my gossip hath. But since wishes can not prevail I will hope the best & pray that God will rectify if anything be amiss, accounting myself the unfortunate man alike to find that which I had laid up in my heart to be my comfort should become my greatest discomfort. But why do I trouble you with these things, let me live in your good opinion & I will ever deserve it, & thus wishing you all contentment & your heart's desire. I will ever remain your faythfull frend, W. KNOLLYS.

On 5th Jan 1601 William Herbert wrote anxiously from Wilton to Sir Robert Cecil giving his excuses for not attending the *Twelfth Night* celebrations at Court. His first consideration was shortage of time, but he and his parents, who were also on the list of invitees, would have remained at Wilton as his father Earl Pembroke was terminally ill and died two weeks later. That following day the play *Twelfth Night* was premiered in a gala performance in Westminster Palace in honour of Don Virginio Orsini, the Italian Duke of Bracciano.[95] It would appear from a line in the play, (Act 1, iii: *Are they to take dust like Mistress Mall's picture?* [96]) that the scandal with Mary Fitton was breaking news. William Herbert, therefore, had at least two reasons why he did not want to attend.

I was sent unto by a very friend of mine to come post to the Court, and not to fail of being there to wait on Tuesday at dinner, if I would not utterly lose the Queen's favour: a sentence of little more comfort than hanging: and yet if I had made all the haste I could, I should hardly have been there by the time, receiving the letters but this Monday morning about 8 o'clock; and if I could perchance have been there by the time, I leave to your judgment how fit to wait that day.[97]

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[96] Dust was slang for *semen* and *picture* would have sounded like *pitcher*, a container of liquids. Fabian says, 3.4, *more matters for a May morning*, which is out of context unless the audience heard the word mourning of May (Fitton).

[97] Leslie Hotson's book, *The First Night of Twelfth Night.* HMC Cecil Papers 11.3 confirm the year as 1600-1; attempts to discount his research erroneous place the date one year later.

Mary Fitton seems to have been launched on a mad career that could only end in disgrace. In a letter of January 26th of this year (1601) from Sir John Stanhope to Sir G. Carew we find this paragraph:

> *Of the persecution is like to befall the poor maid's chamber in Court, and of Fytton's afflictions, and lastly her commitment to my Lady Hawkyns, of the discouragement thereby of the rest, though it be now out of your element to think of, yet I doubt not but that some friend doth more particularly advertise you.*

Next month, on February 5th, in the postscript of a letter written from the Court by Sir Robert Cecil to Sir George Carew it is recorded:

> *We have no news but that there is a misfortune befallen Mistress Fitton, for she is proved with child, and the Earl of Pembroke being examined confesseth a fact but utterly renounceth all marriage. I fear they will both dwell in the Tower awhile, for the Queen hath vowed to send them thither.*[98]

Then we come to a letter from Tobie Matthew to Dudley Carleton on March 25th, which contains the following passage:

> *The Earl of Pembroke is committed to the Fleet (prison)* [99] *his cause is delivered of a boy who is dead.*

Thus Mary Fitton's short but brilliant career at Court came to an untimely end in dire disgrace. The maid of honour especially favoured by the Queen and adored by the Comptroller of the Household only seems to have escaped imprisonment in the Tower by commitment to my Lady Hawkyns for her confinement. It is not surprising that her parents were greatly distressed at this shameful catastrophe, though they still apparently hoped that Pembroke could be induced to marry their daughter. Sir Edward Fitton wrote to his daughter, Anne, from London soon afterwards: [100]

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[98] In 1598 Southampton had angered the Queen by impregnating her maid, twenty-nine year old Elizabeth Vernon. They were forced to marry. The following year he was complicit with Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl Essex, in what looked like traitorous dealings with the Irish. On 8th Feb 1601 the two failed to instigate a rebellion in London. Essex was hanged and Southampton imprisoned until James I came to the throne in 1603. In prison Earls would have afforded luxurious treatment and William Herbert's *Baynard's Castle* was about four minutes' walk away, near today's Millenium Bridge. Margaret Hawkins, in whose care Mary Fitton was placed, lived a mile to the east on Mincing Lane, St. Dunstan's Parish, near the Tower of London.

[99] *In Sex in Elizabethan England* Alan Haynes wrote that William Herbert remained phlegmatic while imprisoned, writing verse and refusing to marry his mistress.

[100] 22nd April 1601, two days after William Herbert was released on the grounds of sickness.

Sweet Nan,

I am very sorry that you are not well and so is your good Gossip also who hath him commended to you heartily. I pray you let [me] hear from you as I do. I am in some hope of your Sister's enlargement [101] shortly, but what will be the end with the Earl I cannot tell. So soon as I can you shall hear. I have delivered your letter to my Lady Derby and so praying you if this bearer cannot otherwise do, that you help to hire him a horse to Lichfield to my host at the George: and so with my very hearty commendations I bid you farewell this xxijth of Aprill 1601. Yr loving father & friende, Ed ffYTTON.

There is a letter from Sir Edward Fitton to Sir R. Cecil in Lord Salisbury's collection on this matter. It is dated 16th May 1601 and shows that some pressure had been exercised to induce Lord Pembroke to consent to a marriage, but without effect:

I can say nothing of the Earl, but my daughter is confident in her chance before God and wisheth my Lord and she might but meet before in different scenes. But for myself I expect no good from him that in all this time hath not shewed any kindness. I count my daughter as good a gentlewoman as my Lord is though the dignity of honour (be greater only in him) which hath beguiled her I fear, except my lord's honesty be the greater "vertuoes."

This letter is written from Stanner [102] where Sir Edward (and his wife) were obliged to stop on his road to Cheshire, his daughter being with him, and too weak to travel farther. Thus he had obtained her enlargement from my Lady Hawkyns' keeping, and was carrying her homewards, but apparently in secrecy. Francis Fitton writes to his great-niece, Anne Newdigate, eight days later, on the 24th May 1601:

Mine own sweet niece,

I thank you much for your last of the 14th of this instant (lately by me received) and so likewise for many other before, because I honor you and love you as any the dearest friends you have. I suppose your father by his stolen journey into Cheshire (unknown to me) hath acquainted you with something concerning your sister's estate. How true I know not for I find halting with me in their courses for her. God grant all be for the best but for ought I know & can see I see nothing better nor cause of better hope than before & I wish all things for her good so well as you desire which is all I can do, and so good niece farewell ten thousand times, from my lodginge the signe of the Black

[101] enlargement = release from confinement.

[102] Stanmore in Middlesex, about 12 miles from London.

> Boye, a Chandler's house neare the weste end of the Savoye in the Strand this 24th of Maye 1601.
> Your lovinge uncle & assured poore frind, fRANCYS fYTON.

On release from his confinement the unregenerate Pembroke was rusticated; whereupon he wrote to Cecil;

> *I have not yet been a day in the country, and I am as weary of it as if I had been prisoner there seven year. I see I shall never turn good Justice of the Peace. Therefore I pray, if the Queen determine to continue my banishment and prefer sweet Sir Edward (Fitton) before me, that you will assist me with your best means to go into some other land, that the change of the climate may purge me of melancholy; for else I shall never be fit for any civil society. . . . if the Queen continue her displeasure a little longer, undoubtedly I shall turn clown, for Justice of Peace I can by no means frame unto, and one of the two a man that lives in the country must needs be.*

Finally he obtained leave to travel abroad, but, after the Queen's death, he married the Earl of Shrewsbury's rich, but misshapen daughter [103] with whom he lived unhappily and by whom he had no children. Edward Hyde, Lord Clarendon wrote of the Pembroke marriage that it was, *'most unhappy, for he paid too dear for his wife's fortunes by taking her person into the bargain.'*

In a draft agreement, dated 29th May 1601, William, Earl of Pembroke, offered to buy from his uncle, Sir Robert Sidney, for fifteen hundred pounds a *jewell called the ffether of diomonds* worth, today, between £250,000 and £500,000. Was this to be a present for Mary Fitton? In September Pembroke tried to obtain from the Queen, for Sir Edward Fitton, the patent of the Forest of Dean which contained valuable coal mines [104] and when unsuccessful grumbled, *thereby destroying that poor reputation that I was desirous to preserve – I am disgraced.* As Hannay nicely pointed out, Pembroke could not see the impropriety of asking the Queen to pay for his own irresponsibility.

The next letter from Sir William Knollys must have been written after Mary had left the Court and gone to her faithful sister Anne. In spite of all that had occurred, the infatuated man seems still a victim to her charms: [105]

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[103] I have not found a contemporary note confirming that Mary was small or misshapen. A child Henry was born on 16th April 1620 but lived only a few weeks.

[104] Fitton's son-in-law owned coal mines.

[105] The first two sentences give the impression that Knollys had sown the seeds only for William Herbert to spoil the crop. However, a *Lover's Complaint* made it clear that a young man had been her first.

Fair Gossip,

Sweet & pleasant was the blossom of my love, so comfortable & cordial to my heart as I had therein placed all my delight, I must confess the harvest was overlong expected yet had I left nothing undone in manuring the same but that it might have brought forth both wholesome & pleasing fruit. But the man of sin (Pembroke) having in the night sowed tares amongst the good corn both the true husbandman was beguiled and the good ground abused. How much more unhappy am I who though with all the care & industry I can use to bring this soil to her former goodness, yet is it impossible for me to prevail & God knows I would refuse no penance to redeem what is lost. I write not this to grieve her whom I have so much loved nor your good self, for there can be no greater punishment to me than to be a cause of either your sadness to whom I wish so well without comparison. I know your sister is apt to be melancholy[106] & you can apprehend her grief more deeply than I wish. But you are not alone, neither can either of you be so often remembered with sad thoughts as I am for that which I can not remedy & yet can never cease to grieve at. Be you yet a comforter & I will not be wanting to add anything lying in my power to increase both your contentments, & if you were nearer that some time I might play a part, I would not doubt but to pacify though not thoroughly to purge that humour of melancholy.

Thus leaving you both to God's protection with my best salutations & blessing to my pretty daughter I remain ever Your assured ffrend, W. KNOLLYS.

There are only two more of Sir William's letters to be given. The next refers to the proposed marriage of his niece Letitia Knollys, the daughter and co-heiress of Henry Knollys and Margaret Cave, the latter being first cousin to John Newdigate's mother, Martha Cave:

Fair gossip,

having occasion to send this bearer to Drayton I should fall in good manners & might justly be accounted ungrateful if with some few lines I did not yield you my best thanks for your many kindnesses which I will ever be ready to requite to the uttermost of my power. ……whether your sister be with you or no I know not, but if she be, add something to your love of her for my sake who would desire nothing more of God: than that she were as capable of my love as I have ever meant it, & what will become of it God only knoweth. Let it

[106] This is the second time Knollys refers to Mary having periods of depression.

suffice that my first love shall ever bind me to love her, yourself and all that love her, & thus praying God to send you health & happiness. I remain ever

Your truly affectionate gossepp, W. KNOLLYS.

Burn my letters if you please.

We now come to Sir William Knollys' last letter and give it here, although the date is in advance of the period to which we must return later. It could not have been written until after July 1603, as it is addressed "To my very lovyng ffrend & gossepp my La: Newdigate," and John Newdigate was not knighted until the above date:

Fair & worthy Gossip,

your father being the messenger I may not but answer both your lines with this simple pen & your kindness with whatsoever a true honest heart may afford, desirous still to cherish all the branches of that root into the which my unchangeable love was so firmly engrafted. What it was yourself & the world did know, but what it is my heart only is sensible of, yet may I boldly say no earthly creature is Mistress of my Love, nor is like to be, as not willing to trust a woman with that which was so truly given & so undeservedly rejected. Where to find it I know not, unless it be either hidden in myself or laid up by some who suffer it to rust in some out room of their careless thoughts. But were I not tied to a white staff in court & had liberty I would like a knight adventurer never rest until I found better entertainment for so good a guest. But what spirit guides my pen, or whither do I wander? You may guess at my meaning, she is not far from you that may decipher this riddle & I may boldly say that Mary did not choose the better part, yet let her I pray you know that no man can wish her more happiness & contentment than I do which I will be ready to manifest upon any offered occasion & though her commendations to me in your last letter were very ordinary yet let me be remembered to you both in the best manner I can as one who can not separate his thoughts from the remembrance of former bands. No more at this time, but wishing you & my godson[107] health & happiness I remain ever, Your ffaythffull ffrend & gossepp

W. KNOLLYS.

Excuse me I pray you for not writing to your unkind sister whose so long silence maketh me think she hath forgotten me & herself, I having

[107] Anne's second child, Richard, born before 1602.

deserved more than a few lines, but I am pleased since she will have it so.

In spite of this last touching appeal, Mary does not seem to have been inclined to respond to her old friend's protestations of affection. Consequently, when, in 1605, Dorothy, Lady Knollys, died, and Lord Knollys (as he was created at the coronation of James I.) became released from the ties he had borne so impatiently, it was not Mary Fitton who succeeded to the vacant place. Two months after Lady Knollys' decease[108] her husband married Lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of Thomas, Earl of Suffolk, she being nineteen and her bridegroom sixty-one. In 1614 Lord Knollys was appointed Master of the Wards, and within a short time installed Knight of the Garter. In 1616 he was created Viscount Wallingford, and advanced in 1626 by King Charles I to the Earldom of Banbury. He died in 1632, at the age of eighty-eight.

July 1603; [from her Father]

Good Nan,
God bless you and your sister as my own life, peruse this document and then send it to your mother I pray you ... Your best Gossip & honourable friend commandeth me to tell you he wisheth you both as much heart's ease as to himself & every day saith he shall not be well until he see you both.

Lady Fitton alludes to Sir Fulke Greville's death (15th Nov 1606, aged 70) in the letter next given. It is addressed "to my best and dearest daughter the Ladie Newdygat at Erburie":

My own sweet Nan,

I pray God to bless you and all yours. I am sorry for the death of good Sir Fulke Greville, your good friend and mine; your loss is great as can be of a friend, he was a very old man, it was marvel he lived so long: no doubt but your husband and you shall find his son a very honorable gentleman, and one that will be glad of both your friendships ... Your brother doth enter into physic to-morrow for the pain in his nose. God send it well, Mr Neithsmyth doth doubt but cure him afore Christmas, if please God. ***I take no joy to hear of your sister nor of that boy.*** *If it had pleased God when I did bear her, that she and I had been buried it had saved me from a great deal of sorrow and grief, and her from shame and such shame as never had Cheshire woman, worse now than ever.*[109] *Write no more to me of her. Thank*

[108] 31st October 1605.

[109] The history is told that Mary Fitton's father had been anticipating entertaining the Queen at Gawsworth. As a result of the disgrace he had to cut short a huge project to improve his estate and Mary was banned

my pretty Jack for his token. I will wear it for his sake, and send him another afore it be long. Commend me to Moll, Dick and little pretty Letti. God bless them all.

Let me be kindly remembered to your husband. Praying God to send us all well to meet I end, and will ever remain to you A kynde mother.

A. ffyTTON.

I would wish you to send to your sister this enclosed to see. I have left them unsealed, you may read them and seal them. Good Nan fail not, It standeth much.

Poor mother! what must she not have suffered to write thus about her erring daughter! Stern as she is in the first part, her mother's heart relents in the postscript, whilst Anne, as ever, seems tender and charitable towards this sister's frailty. Notice should be taken of "the boy" referred to in this letter in connection with Mary's disgrace. In the following year she married a certain William Polewhele, about whom there seem to have been different opinions in the family. She is known to have had a son by him, and possibly this was the boy born before her marriage. This son was living in September 1609, the date of William Polewhele's will.

There is not one malevolent comment about Mary in the Newdigate letters. After Mary married William Polewhele her sister Anne went to visit at her home at Perton in Staffordshire – they seem to have been on very good terms; a 1607 letter from Lady Fitton.

> What Dick (her son and Mary's brother) hath written I know not, but this he told me was his answer, that Sir John Newdigate were best to come and answer it himself. It should seem some other had affirmed it; he would not do your brother that kindness as to send for the information given against your husband that he might see it, but fell into railing against you for speaking against the marriage of your sister to Polewhele;[110] it was out of your humor and that he was

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from the family home having to stay at the Rectory from where her ghost is occasionally reported seen wandering around the estate.

[110] ACGO Bridgeman, cataloguing the Arbury portraits, found that Captain Polewhele served with Sir Richard Leveson in 1603. Sir Richard captained the *Repulse* and Captain Polewhele the *Lyon's* Whelpe. Cymbeline, (1609) contains a letter referring to a *Lion's Whelp*; *"as a lion's whelp shall, to himself unknown, without seeking find, and be embraced by a piece of tender air; and when from a stately cedar shall be lopped branches which, being dead many years, shall after revive, be jointed to the old stock, and freshly grow; then shall Posthumus end his miseries, Britain be fortunate and flourish in peace and plenty."*

A Soothsayer interprets the letter at the end of the play; "Thou, Leonatus (cf. *Leontes – A Winter's Tale*), art the lion's whelp; the fit and apt construction of thy name, being Leo-natus, doth import so much. [to

> worthy her. My Lady Frances [111] said she was the vilest [112] woman under the sun. To conclude they did use Dick so unkindly as he hath no great heartburning to go there since Christmas. I had the kindest messages from them that could be and that they would come see me. But Polewhele is a very kave [sic; knave?] and taketh the disgrace of his wife and all her friends to make the world think him worthy of her and that she deserved no better.

At various times Richard Leveson wrote to Anne Newdigate:

> - *commend my service to your sister.*
>
> - *commend me to your sister if she be there [1603].*
>
> - [after July 1603][113] *You and your sister must shortly visit my lodge.*

On 2nd Oct 1603 John Newdigate put property including Arbury in trust for thirteen years to Sir Richard Leveson, his wife's distant cousin, who was having a relationship with Anne's sister, Mary; she carried his child around this time. When Leveson died in 1605 the rights went to Anne and Mary's great Uncle Francis. In September 1609, when Mary's husband died, the property was reassigned.[114]

> [Nov. 1604] Sweet Nan, I have sent you by this bearer an odd Ruff of a new fashion when your sister left it for you and withal a poor remnant of my own which I found in the corner of a trunk and do entreat you to accept on good part.

Cymbeline] The piece of tender air, thy virtuous daughter, which we call *mollis aer* and *mollis aer* - we term it mulier [to Posthumus] which mulier I divine is this most constant wife, who even now, answering the letter of the oracle, unknown to you, unsought, were clipped about with this most tender air."

Mollis is Latin for gentle*, aer* is lower-atmosphere, and *mulier* for wife or woman. Does one hear a phonetic *Mal is here*? The play talks of Britain but is set in Wales with an emphasis on Milford Haven on the Pembrokeshire Coast with Imogen to be found *on the mountains near to Milford (V5).*

[111] Lady Frances Stanley, daughter of Ferdinando, Earl Derby, wife of Sir John Egerton.

[112] Sonnet 71

[113] The guest book at Arbury records the visit in August 1603 of Mary Fitton, with her gentlewoman, manservant and footman.

[114] I believe this letter next was veiled and written to Mary Fitton.

Sweet wife: [27th Jan 1604-5]

In this short space of my arrival in these parts I understand not so much touching your affairs as I desire to know and therefore you must not look for such satisfaction from me now as I hope to send you by my next. But falling aboard some of your friends near Chancery Lane I have now brought them to be of our side albeit they were strongly against us. They do only take it to be my project and no other private humour, and we are all resolved to run one course (viz to sound the pleasure of the great one, how this great God send him us shall be disposed) that thereby your friends may speedily resolve for you, either to entertain the project or to have the honour of refusing it: in the mean Time your own aptness and sufficiency shall be so infused to the Q. as I dare assure you no other will leap over your head: I met yesterday with one of the K's physicians my familiar friend and thinking to extract something from him by way of discourse, at last he told me that there were divers Gentlewomen's names put in to a Bill for this employment, and that the K's physicians were to examine and give their opinions of their aptness for that charge as by tasting of their Milk, etc.. This is probable, but rather than my wife shall be drawn in by this kind of election I'll walk on foot to Arbury to keep her at home. To be short I will use all my best faculties in handling of the business, wherein I'll either join reputation with hope of preferment or I'll do nothing. But already I can assure you that you have had very good offices done for you which shall be continued with my best help and so sweet Nan, farewell,

Yours, Yours

RICHARD LEVESON: This 27th of Jan: 1604 [1604-5]

For want of paper I will write nothing of Mr. Marwood, but you have been too liberal of my purse. Good Nan, send my uncle's business letter away with speed.

1607 Feb. Francis Fitton to John Newdigate

- you are very much beholden to my cousin Polewhele for his diligent care and friendly diligence in labouring about your cause..... In his will he then makes a bequest of his best horse to Mr William Polewhele who married my niece Mistress Marie Fitton.

1611 Francis Beaumont[115] to Anne Newdigate: Anne, now a widow whom he was attempting to court.

[115] The father of the playwright of the same name. The son lived from c1584-1616

> Salute I pray you in my name your Sister, whom the less I know and the more friendly she accepteth it, the more I am beholden unto her. When you see my Counsellor, your only sister, command I pray you unto her moine affectionate love, but not my quintessential, for that is become a confined recusant, having disavowed sacrifice unto all living temples, save only unto the living temple of the fairest and dearest deserving Cynthia.
>
> - I must entreat you when you see my counsellor to commend my heartiest love unto her and tell her that though she be a married wife,[116] yet I will take leave to love her for ever while I carry within me a heart that can love. If her husband will give me this liberty (which is in mine own power to take myself) he shall love my wife (when I have her) as much as pleaseth him, and for his kindness I will love him far the letter. Though I love not you, yet for your sake I love all your generation.

William Polewhele of Perton, county Stafford made his will on 19th Sep 1609. It was proved on 23rd June 1610. His executors were his wife, Mary Polewhele, Sir Walter Leveson and Sir Richard Titchborne. He devised his lands to Mary until his son, William, reached the age of twenty-one. He divided *the parsonage of Brownsover als Rugby county Warwick, one third to his wife, one third to his son William and one third to such child as my wife is now with child of*. The child, Mary,[117] survived to marry John Gatacre of Gatacre but died early leaving a daughter, Anne. Mary Polewhele was mentioned in her sister's will of 1610; her sister died in 1618.

Mary remarried. Her husband, John Lougher, MP for Tenby in 1601, was Sheriff of Pembrokeshire in 1626. From a dispute in 1632 [118] with Charles Howard, the brother of Richard Leveson's widow, we learn that on marriage Lougher had assumed title to Mary's Perton Manor and that Mrs Lougher was accused of cutting down trees. Mary was again a

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[116] It shows Mary Fitton remarrying between 1610 and 1612. In *Urania* Mary Wroth tells of *Antissia* marrying *Dolorindus* who had conspired with her to kill *Amphilanthus*. Was *Dolorindus* Polewhele or Mary Fitton's second husband, John Lougher, or was it figurative? Although Mary Fitton was acting as a counsellor to Francis Beaumont, Arthur Marlowe (op cit, p48) says she was also advising another suitor, Matthew Saunders of Shangton, Leicestershire.

[117] Mary Fitton's nine pregnancies. (1) infant by William Herbert; (2) William, by Richard Leveson (?) aged about six when he died; (3) Anne, by Leveson, who married Robert Charnock of Lancashire (4) William, by William Polewhele, who survived into adulthood, married and had children; (5) Frances, by William Polewhele, who lived a week. (6) Mary, by William Polewhele, (posthumous) whom one assumes married John Gatacre and died early, probably in childbirth; (7) Elizabeth by John Lougher who died before probate was granted after her mother's death; (8) John Lougher who married Mary Wrottesley at Darlaston on 25th January 1633 but died 1637. (9) Lettice who married Thomas Dainton [Denton] on 27th October 1635.

[118] Sutherland Papers

widow by 1636 when she took out letters of administration to her husband's estate. The death of (Captain) John Lougher was recorded at Chester and he was interred at Gawsworth on 8th Jan 1635-6.

Mary Lougher's will of 19th Dec 1640 [119] was first proved in the Prerogative Court of the Archbishop of Canterbury on 5th July 1647: it was proved a second time, before the Probate Court established by Cromwell, on 22nd Sep 1653. The executors were her son, William Polewhele and her daughter Elizabeth Lougher, but probate was granted to William Polewhele alone, as surviving executor.

She bequeathed the lease of Perton to her son William Polewhele; the lease of Rinkeston or Rinteston and Kilkelly, in Pembrokeshire, to her daughter Elizabeth Lougher.[120] She made bequests to her "little grandchild Ann Gattachree"[121], to her son-in-law John Gattachree, his wife and three children. She mentions her son-in-law, Robert Chernnock and gives directions for her burial at Goulsworth, co. Chester.

Thus she apparently continued to flourish like a green bay-tree until 1647 the date of her death when she must have been sixty-nine years old. [122]

The impression one gets of Mary Fitton from Lady Newdigate's book is that she was considered a genteel and respected woman who has been unfortunate to have her head turned and become pregnant by a high ranking man who would not marry her – and she

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[119] I do not believe it is coincidence that, the same year of Mary Fitton's will and the tenth anniversary of Pembroke's death, a John Benson published, but in a different sequence, all but eight of the sonnets, together with *A Lover's Complaint*, the poems of the *Passionate Pilgrim*, sonnets from LLL and AYLI, and some poems by other authors. I would also suggest that the play *The Frolliks* by the female writer E. Polewhele is by Ellen Polewhele, Mary Fitton's granddaughter.

[120] Poor handwriting! Kilgetty 3.5 miles N. of Tenby in South Wales and Reynalton (or Rinaston near Ambleston, eight miles NNE of Haverfordwest). In 1581 there was a court case over property in Kilgetty between Corrington and Polewhele als Phillips. In 10 Char I, 1634-1635, John Lougher sued Sir Richard Phillips over the right and title to occupy premises at lands called Kilgetty and Redwales. The relationship between Mary Fitton, John and Elizabeth Lougher may not be straightforward. Could Elizabeth be a bastard child, stepdaughter or daughter-in-law, or did the child take the name of her stepfather? Arthur Marlowe notes that Elizabeth died at Tenby having given birth. Mary's brother Edward Fitton's wife, Anne (c1571-1644), was daughter and co-heiress of James Barrett of Tenby co. Pembroke. James Barrett's brother's wife was Anne, daughter of a Thomas Lougher. One senses Mary was near Tenby.

[121] Gatacre or Gateacre; £200 is left to Anne Gatacre out of £1,000 owed by Robert Charnock, her son-in-law, who had married Mary Fitton's daughter, Anne (Fitton) Leveson, at Pensford Church, Staffs, in 1626.

[122] Her death is recorded at Tettenhall Church, the parish church of Perton, on 19th Sep 1641 and the register entry is confirmed at Lichfield. She would have been sixty-three years old.

suffered the consequences. Filling in some of the gaps, one sees that she had a mind of her own and today would be considered an *independent woman.*

The Queen selected vivacious and intelligent young women as her maids of honour; at Worcester's wedding Mary Fitton was clearly *Leader of the Pack*. The Queen responded to her like a loving mother. Knollys desperately wanted her despite knowing she was moody but he believed her virtuous; being married he could not marry her. William Herbert, the courtier and poet, did have her, but then was seen by the outside world to discard her. Her parents still loved her, her father rescued her from internment; her mother naturally was deeply shamed by what has happened but still did not lose contact. Mary's marriage to William Polewhele was found acceptable and he received gifts from the family. Widowed from Polewhele, she remarried, mothered her children and left bequests for her grandchildren.

Before she married William Polewhele she had a relationship with Richard Leveson. Having read Leveson's letters addressed to Mary's sister, Anne (Nan), it would appear that the intended recipient was Mary whom he addresses as *wife.* One particular letter indicates that one of the two sisters had experienced a stillbirth, and an attempt by Leveson to get Mary back into favour by nursing the Queen's child.[123]

Clearly there was an intensely passionate side to Mary Fitton which we will find reflected in her sonnets and echoed by her allegorical character, *Antissia*, in Mary Wroth's *Urania.* Mary Fitton's, and for that matter Mary Wroth's, [124] love for William Herbert became passions that, I believe, never really left either of them. Mary Fitton, however, appears to have flaunted the perceived mores of the period by travelling around as an independent woman, entering into relationships with men and making her own decisions. From her poetry one finds she was at times passionate, at times demented, and throughout frightfully astute with her observations, testing the use of the English language to its limits, and sometimes beyond. Remarkably, she had conceit or a vision that her poetry would last the tribulations of time – and, thankfully, she was right.

Francis Beaumont

In *Gossip* we find letters written in 1612 by a Francis Beaumont to Mary Fitton's recently widowed sister, Anne Newdigate. His friend, (Matthew) Saunders, had been wooing Anne and, when rejected, this elderly Francis Beaumont tried his luck – which Anne firmly squashed. Mary Fitton, herself widowed in 1610, had remarried by the time

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[123] A counterpart lease of 20th November 1617 (Shropshire Archives) shows that Richard Leveson left a legacy of £1,000 intended for Mary Fitton.

[124] Sir Robert Wroth was a hunting companion of the King. His death in March 1614 made Mary Sidney Wroth a widow with a child who died aged two. Mary Wroth then caused a minor scandal by living with Pembroke and their two illegitimate children at Baynard's. Pembroke's wife remained at one of the family's houses in Wiltshire.

of these letters and acted in this matter both as the counsellor for Beaumont and, it appears, for Saunders.

The playwrights Francis Beaumont, the son of the same Francis Beaumont who with (Matthew) Saunders was the suitor to Anne Newdigate, and partner John Fletcher wrote a comedy, published in 1616, *The Scornful Lady* which was *acted (with great applause) by the children of Her Majesty's Revels in the Blackfriars*. Beaumont died the same year on 3rd March aged just thirty-two. The characters in the play significantly resemble these four protagonists although the actual relationships in the comedy are different. The parallels are:

Anne Newdigate	T*he Lady*
Mary Fitton	*Martha*, the *Lady's* sister[125] and also *Abigal,* the *Lady's* waiting-gentlewoman.
Francis Beaumont	*Elder-Loveless*, an elder brother.
(Matthew) Saunders	Y*ounger-Loveless,* his prodigal, younger brother.

Three other characters make up four couples;

A *Rich Widow,*	
Harry Welford	Matthew Saunders lived in Welford.
Sir Roger	the *Lady's* curate.

Elder-Loveless and *Welford* are competing suitors of the recently widowed *Lady*. Ultimately, *Young-Loveless* marries the *Rich Widow; Elder-Loveless* marries the *Lady; Welford* marries *Martha* and *Sir Roger* marries *Abigal.*

The author Francis Beaumont was sixteen at the time of the Fitton-Pembroke scandal, so when the play was written, over a decade later, his knowledge of Mary Fitton would have been apocryphal. In *The Scornful Lady*, they have *Young-Loveless* depict *Abigal,* the Lady's waiting-gentlewoman as follows;

ELDER-LOVELESS Why, she knows not you.

YOUNG-LOVELESS No, but she offered me once to know her: to this day she loves a youth of eighteen; she heard a tale how Cupid struck her in love with a great Lord in the Tilt-yard,[126] but he never saw her; yet she in kindness would needs wear a willow-garland at his wedding.[127] She loved all the players in the last Queen's time once over: She was struck when they acted lovers and forsook some when they played Murthers.

[125] Martha has very few lines in the play.

[126] Yard = penis.

[127] Willow denotes mourning.

She has nine Spur-royals,[128] and the servants say she hoards old gold; and she herself pronounces angrily, that the farmer's eldest son, or her mistress husband's clerk shall be, that marries her, shall make her a jointure of fourscore pounds a year; she tells tales of the serving-men.

Is Abigal not Mary Fitton? In 1610, when William Polewhele died he left Mary Fitton one third part of the Parsonage of Brownsover in Warwickshire. The rents of the Parsonage were part of the 1567 endowment of Lawrence Sheriff which founded Rugby School; but they were not fully obtained until 1653 – the very same year that probate was granted on Mary Fitton's will. *In the play, Abigal* married the *Curate* which might parallel the fact that William Polewhele owned a parsonage. A William Polewhele was a minister in that area during the eighteenth century.

Martha, Lady's sister (Mary Fitton), marries *Welford,* (Matthew? Saunders). In real-life this did not happen, but Mary and Saunders seem to have been friends and the play suggests that she offered herself to him. If Mary Fitton felt libelled by the play, she was never able to get her revenge; Francis Beaumont died that same year.

Venus & Adonis

One should twice read the dedications to Shakespeare's *Venus & Adonis*, imagining them first as articulated by a thirty-year old, litigious businessman from the Midlands and alternatively from the lips of one of the Queen's teenage maids of honour, infatuated with the young, unmarried lord in the year of his coming of age; perhaps even written as a Valentine.

I KNOW not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship, nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burden only, if your honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour. But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a godfather, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest. I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your heart's content; which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your honour's in all duty, William Shakespeare (Venus & Adonis)

The love I dedicate to your Lordship is without end; whereof this pamphlet without beginning is but a superfluous moiety. The warrant I have of your

[128] A gold coin of fifteen shillings value often given as a gift. Today's value about £300.

honourable disposition, not the worth of my untutored lines, makes it assured of acceptance. What I have done is yours; what I have to doe is yours; being part in all I have, devoted yours. Were my worth greater, my duety would show greater; meane time, as it is, it is bound to your lordship, to whom I wish long life still lengthened with all happinesse.

Your lordship's in all duety, William Shakespeare (The Rape of Lucrece)

Was it a coincidence that Venus was tall, as was Mary Fitton, that both had grey eyes, and that in the third line of the second verse of *Venus & Adonis* there is an anagram which spells out *Mall Phitons*?

Thrise fairer than my selfe (thus she began)
The fields chiefe flower, sweet above compare,
Staine [129] to all nimphs, More lively than a man
More white and red than doves or roses are:
Nature that made thee with her selfe at strife,
Saith that the world hath ending with thy life.

Was Ben Jonson alluding to Mary Fitton's pregnancy in his contemporary poem;

My Fine Lady Would-Bee, wherefore should you fear,
That love to make so well a child to beare?
The world's reputes you barren but I know
Your 'pothecary and his drugs says no.
Is it the pain affrights that's soon forgot.
Or your complexions loss? You have a pot,
That can restore that. Will it hurt your feature?
To make amends, you are thought a wholesome creature.
What should the cause be? Oh you live at court,
And there's both loss of time and loss of sport,
In a great belly. Write then on thy womb
Of not of the not born, yet buried, here's the tomb.

[129] *Stain* here means *obscures*. S35: *Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun.*

Phaeton

A plaque embedded in a wall of Gawsworth Hall, dated 1570, has a Latin motto

FIT ONUS LEVE.

Apart from FIT-ON, one can also see in reverse LEVE-SUN. Seeing this evidence of a play on the Fitton name, I had anticipated somewhere seeing *Phaeton* in Mary Fitton's sonnets but it had already appeared in 1591, the title of commendatory sonnet in John Florio's book, *Second Fruits*, *Phaeton to His friend Florio*. Although "*Shakespearean"* the poem is considered adolescent; judge for yourself; one reads in the Sonnets many similar turns-of-phrase, albeit here not quite so mature. Mary Fitton would then have been thirteen years old.

Phaeton to His friend Florio

Sweet friend, whose name agrees with thy increase
How fit a rival art thou of the spring!
For when each branch hath left his flourishing,
And green-locked summer's shady pleasures cease
She makes the winter's storms repose in peace
And spends her franchise on each living thing:
The daisies spout, the little birds do sing,
Herbs, gums, and plants do vaunt of their release.
So when that all our English wits lay dead
(Except the laurel that is evergreen)
Thou with thy fruits our barrenness o'erspread
And set thy flowery pleasance to be seen.
Such fruits, such flowerets of morality
Were ne'er before brought out of Italy.

Florio's dictionaries were a source of of phrases within the Shakespeare canon.

CHAPTER SEVEN – THE LEAP YEAR SONNETS, 1 - 17

On 19th Jan 1601 William Herbert's father passed away at Wilton House near Salisbury. A fortnight later, back in London as the new Earl Pembroke, William on being questioned acknowledged paternity but refused to marry the pregnant Mary Fitton. The angry queen despatched him to the Fleet Prison to reconsider. One can only imagine the anguish the isolated young Earl would have suffered when on 5th March his father was laid to rest under the choir of Salisbury Cathedral.

Of Mary Fitton; Sir John Stanhope wrote to Sir G. Carew on 26th Jan 1601; *"Of the persecution which is like to befall the poor maid's chamber in Court, and of Fytton's afflictions, and lastly her commitment to my Lady Hawkyns, of the discouragement thereby of the rest, though it be now out of your element to think of, yet I doubt not but that some friend doth more particularly advertise* you.

Her son was born at the end of March. Seven months earlier, on or about the 16th June 1600 but certainly in the company of the twenty-year-old William Herbert, Mary Fitton had *daff'd her white stole of chastity*. The event that particular day was the wedding of the Earl of Worcester to Mistress Anne Russell, a colleague maid of honour, attended by the Queen with all her Court's royal pomp.

When in 1609 the forty-seven-stanza poem *A Lover's Complaint* was published with the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* Mary Fitton gave her poetic version of the courtship. The last seven stanzas describe why she dropped her guard and succumbed to his battery; in Stanza 40 he offered her the glittering prize, marriage. She writes;

40 Now all these hearts that do on mine depend,
Feeling it break, with bleeding groans they pine;
And supplicant their sighs to you extend,
To leave the battery that you make 'gainst mine,
Lending soft audience to my sweet design,
And credent soul to that strong-bonded oath
That shall prefer and undertake my troth.

41 This said, his watery eyes he did dismount,
Whose sights till then were levell'd on my face;
Each cheek a river running from a fount
With brinish current downward flow'd apace:
O, how the channel to the stream gave grace!
Who glazed with crystal gate the glowing roses
That flame through water which their hue encloses.

42 O father, what a hell of witchcraft lies
In the small orb of one particular tear!
But with the inundation of the eyes

What rocky heart to water will not wear?
What breast so cold that is not warmed here?
O cleft effect! cold modesty, hot wrath,
Both fire from hence and chill extincture[130] *hath.*

43 For, lo, his passion, but an art of craft,
Even there resolved my reason into tears;
There my white stole of chastity I daff'd,
Shook off my sober guards and civil fears;
Appear to him, as he to me appears,
All melting,[131] *though our drops this difference bore,*
His poison'd me, and mine did him restore.

44 In him a plenitude of subtle matter,
Applied to cautels, all strange forms receives,
Of burning blushes, or of weeping water,
Or swooning paleness; and he takes and leaves,
In either's aptness, as it best deceives,
To blush at speeches rank to weep at woes,
Or to turn white and swoon at tragic shows.

45 That not a heart which in his level came
Could 'scape the hail of his all-hurting aim,
Showing fair nature is both kind and tame;
And, veil'd in them, did win whom he would maim:
Against the thing he sought he would exclaim;
When he most burn'd in heart-wish'd luxury,
He preach'd pure maid, and praised cold chastity.

46 Thus merely with the garment of a Grace [132]
The naked and concealed fiend he cover'd;
That th' unexperient gave the tempter place,
Which like a cherubin above them hover'd.
Who, young and simple, would not be so lover'd?
Ay me! I fell; and yet do question make
What I should do again for such a sake.

47 O, that infected moisture of his eye,
O, that false fire which in his cheek so glow'd,
O, that forced thunder from his heart did fly,

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[130] An invented word.
[131] Suggesting they both experienced orgasm but *poisoned* in the next line implies pregnancy.
[132] grace = penis

O, that sad breath his spongy lungs bestow'd,
O, all that borrow'd motion seeming owed,
Would yet again betray the fore-betray'd,
And new pervert a reconciled maid!

Mary Fitton's pregnancy was propitious; William Herbert's aged father was dying; William, himself, just a few months from coming of age and technically a ward of court, had been under constant pressure to marry. Unfortunately, Mary Fitton's father could barely provide a dowry; her sister's husband was known to be in serious debt which Sir Edward Fitton, had covered to his cost. For this (dowry) or some other reason Pembroke would not marry her – or it seems anybody else. When he did marry in 1604 it was to an exceptionally rich heiress who after a decade of marriage produced one short-lived son.

From the Sonnets we learn that as tokens of his love William Herbert gave Mary Fitton a copybook in which to enter her verses (S77) and a portrait (S122). In writing her first seventeen sonnets Mary anticipated William's twenty-first birthday when he would set forth in adult life.[133] Her unusual dedication has created much debate. Capital letters were used throughout with full stops after each word. The thirty words on thirteen lines contained a lovers' secret understanding.

TO.THE.ONLIE.BEGETTER.OF.
THESE.INSVING.SONNETS.
M^{r}.W.H. ALL.HAPPINESSE.
AND.THAT.ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OVR.EVER-LIVING.POET.
WISHETH.
THE.WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTVRER.IN.
SETTING.
FORTH.
T. T. [134]

Master W. H. was clearly and unambiguously the writer, or the inspirer of the Sonnets and when one reads Sonnet 136's couplet we find that his name is equally unambiguous *.... my name is Will*.

[133] The Dedication may have been composed just prior to printing when William Herbert in 1609 became the second largest adventurer (shareholder) in the Virginia Company.

[134] Initials TT also appeared in a commendation to John Trussell's *First Rape of Fair Helen*.

The Dedication actually contains a cypher, the number 17, the result of subtracting 13 (lines) from 30 (words). Seventeen was his age when the courtship probably started and is the same number of the initial sonnets imploring the young man to marry. If one counts the number of characters in each line including the full-stops and assigns 17 with A, 18 with B et cetera, each line produces a letter. The letters are; i f f c s m e r a x p n which can be rearranged to form ***marx ff's prince*** or **princes marx(y) ff**. If the line ADVENTVRER.IN. had one more letter it would produce a y instead of an x. I believe either the typesetter dropped a letter or Mary made a mistake by one letter. The strong correlation, however, cannot be a coincidence.

Sonnets 1-17 were written to William Herbert by someone who loved him, urging and giving reasons why he should marry. Sonnets 18-126 are sent to him by the woman who was deeply in love with him and who chose to express her love and her emotions in a suite of poems. By the use of Italian Sonnets Mary Fitton could demonstrate she had as much poetic ability as any sonneteering Sidney. Mary Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Surrey, was the first to make the 14-line sonnet popular in England; her brother Philip Sidney was renowned for his sonnets, her other brother Robert, also composed them, as did the poets Samuel Daniell, Michael Drayton and Richard Barnfield, in their entourage.

Sonnet 50 makes it quite clear that the writer is a woman, one thing is certain; the man in Warwickshire never carried a *wight* inside him. Sonnets 127-154 are from William Herbert's own pen. On all three counts, the dedication is either truthful or not dishonest. However, Sonnets 138 & 144 *had* appeared in 1599 in very similar forms in the *Passionate Pilgrim by W Shakespeare*. I suspect these were written to Mary Fitton by a jealous Sir William Knollys, painfully monitoring the budding relationship between Mary and William.

The sonnets start in a wintery month of early 1601. At those times the year ended on 24th March just after the vernal equinox. The year 1600 (which extended to what now would be 24th March 1601) was a leap year during which woman could take the initiative and ask their men to marry them – as do all three women in *Twelfth Night;* Marie asks Sir Toby Belch, Viola asks Sebastian and Olivia asks Count Orsino. The last of the first seventeen sonnets was written before 25th March; Valentine's Day, 14th February, suggests itself as a notable date.

THE DARLING BUDS OF MAIE

Sonnet One

Mary Fitton, over six months' pregnant, is under house arrest at the home of Lady Margaret Vaughan, eighty-year-old widow of Admiral Sir John Hawkins. Her lover, now Earl Pembroke after the recent death of his father, has refused the Queen's command to marry her, so until he changes his mind the Queen has him locked in the Fleet Prison, a few minutes from the Baynard's Castle. Mary, dreading he will be in prison for a long time, composes the first of seventeen themed sonnets begging him to find a wife and produce progeny. In Sonnet-2 she points out the advantages of having a successor. This Sonnet runs on into the S3 where she tells him his child will be beautiful.

Location: A room in Lady Margaret Vaughan's Home in East London.

1: From fairest creatures we desire increase,
That thereby beauty's rose might never die,
But as the riper should by time decease,
His tender heir might bear his memory:
But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes, (bright=blue?)
Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,
Making a famine where abundance lies,
Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel:
Thou that art now the world's fresh ornament,
And only herald to the gaudy spring,
Within thine own bud buriest thy content,
And, tender churl, mak'st waste in niggarding:
Pity the world, or else this glutton be,
To eat the world's due, by the grave [135] and thee.

2: When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,[136]
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gazed on now,
Will be a tattered weed of small worth held.
Then being asked, where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days;
To say within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame, and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserved thy beauty's use,
If thou couldst answer *This fair child of mine*

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[135] Mourning his father.

[136] When he is twice his present age.

Shall sum my count,[137] and make my old excuse
Proving his beauty by succession thine.
This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold,
3: look in thy glass and tell the face thou viewest,
Now is the time that face should form an other,
Whose fresh repair if now thou not renewest,
Thou dost beguile the world, unbless some mother.
For where is she so fair whose un-eared womb
Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry?
Or who is he so fond will be the tomb,
Of his self-love to stop posterity?
Thou art thy mother's glass,[138] and she in thee
Calls back the lovely April of her prime, [139]
So thou through windows of thine age shalt see,
Despite of wrinkles this thy golden time.
But if thou live remembered not to be,
Die single and thine image dies with thee.

4: William is instructed not to waste his talents. Soon, 8th April, he will come of age and have dominion over his inheritance, his late father's immense wealth (*bounteous largess*). However he seems to choose to remain in prison *(having traffic with thyself alone)* rather than marry. The Fittons had been administrators in Ireland which can explain her familiarity with financial and legal terms.

4: Unthrifty loveliness why dost thou spend,
Upon thyself thy beauty's legacy?
Nature's bequest gives nothing but doth lend,
And being frank she lends to those are free:
Then beauteous niggard why dost thou abuse,
The bounteous largess given thee to give?
Profitless usurer why dost thou use
So great a sum of sums yet canst not live?
For having traffic with thy self alone,
Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive,
Then how when nature calls thee to be gone,

[137] Shall succeed me as my heir. A Count being the equivalent of Earl.

[138] You are the image of your mother, Mary Herbert nee Sidney.

[139] Calls = recalls; William was born 8th April 1580.

What acceptable audit canst thou leave?
Thy unused beauty must be tombed with thee,
Which used lives th'executor to be.

5 – 6 – 7: It is the cold of winter 1600-01. William is in prison. Mary, pregnant, reflects on the joy of their past summer and their now-confused situation. She projects to a new spring. Although lust is checked for the moment his seed, the legacy of the previous summer, is inside her waiting to break out; thus they will defy *Tyrant Time*. Still she fears he could die in prison and suggests it best to pay the price of being released. Life becomes meaningless without an heir.

Location: A room in Lady Margaret Vaughan's Home in East London.

5: Those hours that with gentle work did frame,
The lovely gaze where every eye doth dwell
Will play the tyrants to the very same,
And that unfair which fairly doth excel:
For never-resting Time leads Summer on,
To hideous winter and confounds him there,
Sap checked with frost, and lusty leaves quite gone.
Beauty o' and bareness everywhere,
Then, were not summer's distillation left
A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,
Beauty's effect with beauty were bereft,
Nor it nor no remembrance what it was.
But flowers distilled, though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show, their substance still lives sweet.

6: Then let not winter's ragged hand deface,
In thee thy summer ere thou be distilled:
Make sweet some vial; treasure thou some place,
With beauty's treasure ere it be self-killed:
That use is not forbidden usury,
Which happies those that pay the willing loan:
That's for thy self to breed another thee,
Or ten times happier be it ten for one,
Ten times thyself were happier than thou art,
If ten of thine ten times refigured thee,
Then what could Death do if thou shouldst depart
Leaving thee living in posterity?
Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair
To be Death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

7: Lo, in the orient when the gracious light,
Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,

Serving with looks his sacred majesty,
And having climbed the steep up heavenly hill,
Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
Attending on his golden pilgrimage:
But when from high-most pitch, with weary car,
Like feeble age he reeleth from the day,
The eyes, (‘fore dutious) now converted are
From his low tract and look another way:
So thou, thyself out-going in thy noon:
Unlooked on diest unless thou get a son.

128: From his rooms in the Fleet prison William Herbert writes a melancholy sonnet recalling Mary playing his music[140] on the harpsichord and wishing it were his fingers and not the keys (jacks) that were caressing her hand.

How oft when thou my music music play’st,
Upon that blessed wood whose motion sounds
With thy sweet fingers when thou gently sway’st,
The wiry concord that mine ear confounds,
Do I envy those jacks that nimble leap,
To kiss the tender inward of thy hand,
Whilst my poor lips, which should that harvest reap,
At the wood’s boldness by thee blushing stand.
To be so tickled they would change their state,
And situation with those dancing chips,
O’er whom thy fingers walk with gentle gait,
Making dead wood more blest than living lips.
Since saucy jacks so happy are in this,
Give them thy fingers, me thy lips to kiss.

8: Delighted by his sonnet, she attempts to reach him through his love of music, and lift his spirits.

8: Music to hear, why hear’st thou music sadly,
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy:
Why lov’st thou that which thou receiv’st not gladly,
Or else receiv’st with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear:

[140] No one has ever suggested the Bard composed music.

Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire, and child, and happy mother,
Who all in one, one pleasing note do sing:
Whose speechless song being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee 'Thou single wilt prove none.'

148: He starts to understand the reality of his situation and how his deep love for her clouds his judgment.

O me! What eyes hath love put in my head,
Which have no correspondence with true sight,
Or if they have, where is my judgment fled,
That censures falsely what they see aright?
If that be fair whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world to say it is not so?
If it be not, then love doth well denote
Love's eye is not so true as all men's. No,
How can it? O, how can love's eye be true,
That is so vexed with watching and with tears?
No marvel then though I mistake my view,
The sun itself sees not, till heaven clears.
O cunning love, with tears thou keep'st me blind,
Lest eyes well-seeing thy foul faults should find.

9: Does he love her so much that he fears making her a widow? She questions his fears and what he sees in his mind's eye. 10: She challenges – *Deny that you love me!* And questions – *Why do you hate yourself?*

9: Is it for fear to wet a widow's eye,
That thou consum'st thyself in single life?
Ah: if thou issueless shalt hap to die,
The world will wail thee like a makeless wife,
The world will be thy widow and still weep,
That thou no form of thee hast left behind,
When every private widow well may keep,
By children's eyes, her husband's shape in mind:
look what an unthrift in the world doth spend
Shifts but his place, for still the world enjoys it
But beauty's waste hath in the world an end,
And kept unused the user so destroys it:
No love toward others in that bosom sits
That on himself such murd'rous shame commits.

10: For shame deny that thou bear'st love to any
Who for thy self art so unprovident
Grant if thou wilt, thou are beloved of many,
But that thou none lov'st is most evident:
For thou art so possessed with murd'rous[141] hate,
That 'gainst thyself thou stick'st not to conspire,
Seeking that beauteous roof to ruinate
Which to repair should by thy chief desire:
O change thy thought, that I may change my mind,
Shall hate be fairer lodged than gentle love?
Be as thy presence is, gracious and kind,
Or to thyself at least kind-hearted prove,
Make thee an other self for love of me,
That beauty still may live in thine or thee.

145: William seems upset because he misheard something she said. This inferior and unusual poem has lines of only eight syllables perhaps reflecting his anger or haste to compose. Or has he borrowed this from a previous work?

Those lips that love's own hand did make,
Breathed forth the sound that said *'I hate'*
To me that languished for her sake:
But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue that ever sweet,
Was used in giving gentle dome:
And taught it thus a new to greet:
'I hate' she altered with an end
That followed it as gentle day
Doth follow night who like a fiend
From heaven to hell is flown away.
'I hate', from hate away she threw,
And saved my life saying '*not you.*'

11: She reminds him that his child is growing within her and that he can call it his own just when he comes of age (*from youth convertest*) on 8th April. This Sonnet is a key to placing its composition in the first three months of 1601.

11: As fast as thou shalt wane so fast thou grow'st,
In one of thine, from that which thou departest,
And that fresh blood which youngly thou bestow'st,

[141] Sonnets 9.14 & 10.5 use the word murderous. This harsh tone kills a theory that William Herbert's mother commissioned these seventeen sonnets for his seventeenth birthday.

Thou mayst call thine, when thou from youth convertest,
Herein lives wisdom, beauty, and increase,
Without this, folly, age, and cold decay,
If all were minded so, the times should cease,
And threescore year would make the world away:
Let those whom Nature hath not made for store,
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish,
Look whom she best endowed she gave thee more;
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish,
She carved thee for her seal, and meant thereby,
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

12: Why allow all to go to waste? Is she the violet (pansy) past her prime because of the pregnancy? She alludes to his dead father, not yet buried, and the fruits of the summer – the baby – *girded up in sheaves* – the Fitton bazon carried the three Cheshire sheaves. S13-14: Is he really prepared to let his lineage come to nothing? [142] **She wants him to snap out of his mood.**

12: When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
When I behold the violet past prime,
And sable curls all silvered o'er with white,
When lofty trees I see barren of leaves:
Which erst from heat did canopy the herd
And summer's green all girded up in **sheaves**
Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard:
Then of thy beauty do I question make
That thou among the wastes of time must go,
Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake,
And die as fast as they see others grow,
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed to brave him, when he takes thee hence.

13: O that you were yourself, but, love you are

[142] The language had evolved from Thou (Thee, Thine, Thy) representing the singular and You (Your, Yours) the plural as in the French tu (familiar) and vous (formal). By the seventeenth century there was a trade-off between respect, position, informality and subservience – see Crystal's: *Shakespeare's Words.* Sonnets 127-152 (Earl Pembroke's) use *Thou* throughout. Mary Fitton's Sonnets mainly also use Thou, but there are sequences where she changes to the *You* forms; here for the first time in Sonnets 13 to 17. She then reverts to *Thou* up to Sonnets 52 to 58 when she uses *you* again; and again *you* in Sonnets 71-72; 75-76; 80-81; 83-86; 102-106; 111-120.

No longer yours, then you yourself here live,
Against this coming end you should prepare,
And your sweet semblance to some other give.
So should that beauty which you hold in lease
Find no determination, then you were
Your self again after your self's decease,
When your sweet issue your sweet form should bear.
Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,
Which husbandry in honour might uphold,
Against the stormy gusts of winter's day
And barren rage of death's eternal cold?
O none but unthrifts, dear my love you know,
You had a Father, let your Son say so. [143]

14: Not from the stars do I my judgement pluck,
And yet methinks I have astronomy,
But not to tell of good, or evil luck,
Of plagues, of dearths, or seasons' quality,
Nor can I fortune to brief minutes tell;
Pointing to each his thunder, rain and wind,
Or say with princes if it shall go well
By oft predict that I in heaven find.
But from thine eyes my knowledge I derive,
And, constant stars, in them I read such art
As truth and beauty shall together thrive
If from thy self, to store thou wouldst convert:
Or else of thee this I prognosticate,
Thy end is Truth's and Beauty's doom and date.

15: She flatters his vanity in offering him a successor in his image.

15: When I consider everything that grows
Holds in perfection but a little moment.
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.
When I perceive that men as plants increase,
Cheered and checked even by the self-same sky:
Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
And wear their brave state out of memory.
Then the conceit of this inconstant stay,
Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,

[143] *Had*, not *have* a father – post 19 January 1601.

Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay
To change your day of youth to sullied night,
And all in war with Time for love of you
As he takes from you, I engraft you new.[144]

16: But wherefore do not you a mightier way
Make war upon this bloody tyrant Time?
And fortify yourself in your decay
With means more blessed than my barren rhyme?
Now stand you on the top of happy hours,
And many maiden gardens yet unset,
With virtuous wish would bear your living flowers,
Much liker than your painted counterfeit:
So should the lines of life that life repair
Which this (Time's pencil or my pupil pen)
Neither in inward worth nor outward fair
Can make you live your self in eyes of men,
To give away your self, keeps your self still,
And you must live drawn by your own sweet skill,

140: From prison Pembroke suggests she is playing with his emotions because she knows he is in the wrong. He obliquely reminds her that it is not long since his being at his father's death bed. Then there is all the scandal he has to contend with. There are so many pressures on him that madness may be an escape. The third quatrain has echoes of Hamlet and Ofelia.

Be wise as thou art cruel, do not press
My tongue-tied patience with too much disdain:
Lest sorrow lend me words and words express,
The manner of my pity wanting pain.
If I might teach thee wit, better it were,
Though not to love, yet love to tell me so,
As testy sick-men when their deaths be near,
No news but health from their physicians know.
For if I should despair I should grow mad,
And in my madness might speak ill of thee,
Now this ill-wresting world[145] is grown so bad,

[144] She is replacing what Time was taking from him, with a baby.

[145] The Essex / Southampton attempted coup of February 1601. Pembroke's incarceration kept him away from the political conflict.

Mad slanderers[146] by mad ears believed be.
That I may not be so, nor thou belied,[147]
Bear thine eyes straight, though thy proud heart go wide.

17: Her last attempt to persuade him.

17: Who will believe my verse in time to come
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet heaven knows it is but as a tomb[148]
Which hides your life and shows not half your parts:
If I could write the beauty of your eyes,
And in fresh numbers [149] number all your graces,
The age to come would say '*This poet lies;*
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.'
So should my papers (yellowed with their age)
Be scorned,[150] like old men of less truth than tongue,
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage,
And stretched metre of an Antique[151] song.
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice in it, and in my rhyme.

By 25th March 1601 it was whispered round Court that a son, the love-child of Mary Fitton and William Herbert, had died soon after birth. [I have good reason to believe the child was taken to be fostered.] It ended the Fittons' moral pressure on William to marry. The Queen remained unhappy. The lovers were not released from their prisons.

Sonnet 17 ended the *Dearest William, you need to marry and have children* sequence, but Mary Fitton, over the next five or six years, composed many more sonnets creating a diary of her emotions, recorded into her copybook.

For publication one-hundred-and-eight was considered the ideal number for a sonnet sequence.

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[146] Probably *slanders* to make the line scan; it has an extra syllable. [Paterson]

[147] *Be lyde*

[148] Onomatopoeic *womb?*

[149] A number is a verse or poem.

[150] Almost what happened, sense - *ignored*.

[151] *Antique* appears eighteen times in all the Works; five times in the Sonnets, thirteen elsewhere.

CHAPTER EIGHT – SHAKESPEARE PLAYS

The business accounts of the owner of the Rose Theatre, Philip Henslowe, record a single performance of *Hamlet*, on 11th June 1594 during a short season shared by the Lord Admiral's Men and the Lord Chamberlain's.[152] There is no surviving script for this early play which has been given the name *Ur-Hamlet*.[153]

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Outside it was pouring. My father had died a few weeks earlier and an acute shortage of shirts forced me to catch up on laundry. During the tedium of ironing I was revisiting a video of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*.

Just beginning to despise a thick, white, cotton shirt I was sharply alerted by two words spoken by Polonius to his daughter, Ophelia; *Affection, puh!* These were words I thought I recognised from a different context. Had I just witnessed a possible connection between Mary Fitton and Ophelia? I rewound the tape several times and later checked the various texts. It seemed that elements of the love affair between William Herbert and Mary Fitton were transposed into the drama between Prince Hamlet and the maid Ophelia. Does it not make perfect sense if the drama is best served by Ophelia intimating to the audience she is pregnant with Hamlet's child. It would explain such a lot.[154]

One must try to sense the mind of the precocious, vain, highly intelligent but volatile, young Earl Pembroke, William Herbert, at the start of 1601. He had been dismissed from Court, the centre of power, and had been incarcerated in the Fleet prison for having defied his angry godmother, his monarch, the Queen. Intense pressure was being put on him to marry. His girlfriend whom he loved but refused to marry[155] was heavily pregnant and her influential father was creating problems – wanting a wedding or financial compensation! Add to all this, William's own father had died on 19th January and he knew that if he remained in prison he would not be able to pay his final respects by the

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[152] The Lord Admiral was Charles Howard, Richard Leveson's father-in-law. His wife was the sister of the Lord Chamberlain, Henry Carey, the Queen's cousin. Both men eponymous sponsored acting groups.

[153] Ur; German for earliest. It was German scholars who realised there was a lost version.

[154] Which is as depicted in Semi Chellas's 2018 screen play, *Ophelia*.

[155] When writing the first edition I had no idea why William refused to marry his pregnant girlfriend. Sixteen years later I found out why. The sensational reason will be explained later.

graveside.[156] Worse, although now nominally the Third Earl of Pembroke, he was still three months from coming of age and obtaining his inheritance. There was a real threat that he would be made a Ward of Court and his estate heavily fined.[157] Would it not be surprising that his young, sensitive, poetic and melancholy mind was in turmoil with its cocktail of love, sex, marriage, birth, death, health, freedom, reputation, shame, honour, family, estate and wealth.[158] [159]

If indeed William Herbert was actually rewriting *Ur-Hamlet* I suspect it was his mother, Countess Pembroke, and/or perhaps with her brother, his uncle, Robert Sidney, who in the late 1580's had commissioned the play from Thomas Kyd.[160] William Herbert could have taken a part (Marcellus) as a student at New College, Oxford when the play was performed there.

Let us say that while in prison William Herbert made an attempt to exorcise the emotional turmoil within him by improving the original *Hamlet*, converting Kyd's unsuccessful play into a haunting psychological drama, therapeutically writing his way through his own torments, introducing to the play the tensions of the love affair, the emotions of having lost his own father, the feelings towards his young mother, and a state of hopelessness; whether *to be or not to be there's the point.* If so, he was not far wrong in his assessment that the sensitive woman whom he had jilted and shamed would contemplate suicide as Ophelia appears to in the modern play.[161] One does not have to be a psychologist to know that Mary Fitton could well have suffered both post-natal and post-traumatic stress; the lost baby; the lost lover, the lost reputation, a lost earldom.

So, in the love scenes for Hamlet read Earl Pembroke and for Ophelia read Mary Fitton. Yet *hell hath no fury like a woman scorned* and in the play Hamlet or the author had to manage the words put into the mouth of the jilted Ophelia with great care. There are

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[156] Six weeks elapsed between the death of the second Earl and his burial in Salisbury Cathedral. William was released from prison on 19th April.

[157] Hannay op. Cit. P163. His mother wrote to the Queen to try to prevent this happening.

[158] Hamlet makes great play on it not being two months since his father died, which could position the writing of the play to March 1601.

[159] Haynes, op. cit. p49 noted that William spent his time in prison writing verses.

[160] Like Countess Pembroke, Kyd was also a translator from French.

[161] In the original quarto of 1603 she accidently fell out of a willow tree; *"O my Lord, the yong Ofelia having made a garland of sundry sortes of flowers, sitting upon a willow by a brooke, the envius sprig broke, into the brook she fell ……".*

constant hints to Mary Fitton, in the guise of Ophelia, that despite his feigned madness he had loved her, and he still loved her.[162]

The development of the play *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* started with Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae* written between 1206 and 1218. Prince Amleth acted madly when he feared for his own life after his uncle killed his father to obtain the throne. To test if Amleth was shamming the uncle attempted to trick him into having sex with an attractive woman but the plot was discovered to them by a friend. In secret the two enjoyed a single act of sex and then lied to the King. There was no love affair, the woman did not appear elsewhere in the story and she certainly did not go mad. However, the immediate source for the Elizabethan play was in French by François de Belleforest first published in *Histoires Tragiques* in 1570. The first English translation from Belleforest's published anonymously in 1608 had a slight embellishment stating that the woman loved Hamlet more than she loved herself. Ophelia was an original new thread to the play.

Hamlet had parallels with Thomas Kyd's[163] *The Spanish Tragedy,* having a wailing ghost and a vengeance for the murder of a father. In 1589 the poet Thomas Nashe in his introduction to Robert Greene's *Menaphon* wrote, *he will afford you whole Hamlets, I should say handfuls of tragical* speeches.

It was not until 26th July 1602 that a play, *Hamlet,* was registered. The printer, James Roberts, placed an entry in the Stationers' Register for *A booke called the Revenge of Hamlett Prince Denmarke as yt was latelie Acted by the Lord Chamberleyne his servantes.*

The first known quarto edition, *The Tragicall Historie of HAMLET Prince of Denmarke By William Shake-speare (Q1 -the Bad Hamlet)*, was dated 1603 and printed by Nicholas Ling and John Trundell. It has 2,200 lines compared with the 3,800 lines of Q2 in 1604.

In Q2, Act 3.1 Laertes[164] explained to his sister, Ophelia (Mary Fitton), why Hamlet (William Herbert) would not marry her;

Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel [165] doth besmirch
The virtue of his will; but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,

[162] Actually I am holding back on part of the story. There was another reason William was angry with Mary.

[163] A translator from French.

[164] Their father is called Polonius (Corambis in Q1, crambe-bis would imply twice boiled cabbage, stale, repetitious or possibly two-faced). He is Lord Chamberlain to the King, then George Carey, Lord Hunsdon, the Queen's cousin whose sister Lady Margaret Hoby, was a friend of Mary Fitton's sister.

[165] Trickery; appears in exactly the same context in *A Lover's Complaint*, stanza 44.

For he himself is subject to his birth;
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The sanity and health of the whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed; which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.

However, the play had been around for at least ten years and there appear to be two references in Q1 to the late Sir Philip Sidney, the Countess Pembroke's brother, William Herbert's uncle, whose blazon was a porcupine;

Ghost *Nay pity me not, but to my unfolding*
Lend thy listning ear, but that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house
I would a tale unfold, whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quils vpon the fretfull Porpentine,
But this same blazon must not be, to eares of flesh and blood *(heirs)*
Hamlet, if euer thou didst thy deere father love.
[Q1 text, at 1.5 in Folio]

Ophelia Great God of heaven, what a quick change is this?
The Courtier, Scholler, Souldier, all in him,
All dasht and splinterd thence, O woe is me,
To a seen what I have seen, see what I see.
[Q1 text, at 3.1 in Folio]

The first quotation could refer to the Sidney family coat of arms with a porcupine as its crest. The second describes Sir Philip Sidney's death.[166] In the play Hamlet was a royal prince aged about seventeen and about to continue his studies; he could not be considered an established soldier or a courtier and barely a scholar. Sir Philip Sidney, William Herbert's late uncle, was just those things. In 1586, aged 31, Philip along with his younger brother, Robert, were caught in a skirmish against the Spanish at Zutphen in

[166] Henry VI part II Act 3.1; *"his thighs with darts were almost like a sharp quilled porpentine."*

Holland. A musket shot dashed and splintered his thighbone and he died three weeks later.[167] His flamboyant, seven-hundred-strong funeral progression was witnessed by a huge crowd of Londoners, having the highest regard for a man who was universally popular as a *Courtier, Scholler,* and *Souldier.*[168] In the contemporary illustration of the procession, two heralds of the College of Arms carried Philip Sidney's helmet crested by a porcupine (porpentine) and his shield with its single arrowhead (pheon).[169] The origination of the play gravitates, therefore, towards 1586-90 when such news would have been current. It would suggest that the homage or origination of *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* stemmed from the Countess of Pembroke and her younger brother, Robert Sidney, a consequence of that terrible year when they lost their parents and their much loved brother.

So, was it the Countess, who had already translated from French the stories of *Anthony and Cleopatra;* or was it Thomas Kyd having read Belleforest's story of *Amleth* who around 1590 created Ur-Hamlet?[170] In prison William have had to rely on memory. Once released he could have commissioned any one of a number of playwrights to improve his text.[171]

William Herbert had been six-years-old when his poet-uncle and England's hero died and it would have been a very impressionable event in his life. Perhaps writing was a catharsis giving him an opportunity to understand his own despair, the value of life and contemplate an exit by suicide. *To be or not to be ….* a soliloquy unparalleled in English

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[167] On the right as one enters Wilton House is a painting of the fatally wounded Sir Philip Sidney at the battle of Zutphen. He is offered water, but points to a soldier and is supposed to have said, "his need is greater than mine." But amazingly (for me) before one can see this painting, everyone who enters the Hall has first to look up to a life-size statue of none other than our Mr. William Shakespeare, a replica of that in Poets' Corner, Westminster.

[168] Alan Haynes in *Walsingham* suggests that the huge procession on 16th Feb 1587 was arranged by Francis Walsingham, Philip Sidney's father-in-law, to *bury the news* of Mary Queen of Scots' execution on 8th Feb.

[169] The wooden porcupine crest is on display at Penshurst Place.

[170] Thomas Kyd (1558-1594) may have written both the *Spanish Tragedy* and *Ur-Hamlet*. The play *Hamlet* omits *Amleth's* years and loves in England and Scotland. Alex Jack suggests that Ur-Hamlet was written by Marlowe. It is difficult to understand why, after years in England, Hamlet's return coincides with Ophelia's burial as Ophelia appears to drown herself just after Hamlet left for England. If the author wanted to be faithful to Amleth it would have worked better if Ophelia's descent into madness and suicide happened *after* she heard that Hamlet had returned to Denmark with his Scottish bride.

[171] Two of the three speeches from Q2, not printed in the 1623 Folio, impugn Hamlet's mother and could, therefore, have been considered criticism of the late Countess Pembroke.

literature – which does not derive either directly or indirectly from *Amleth*. I believe William, from his recent experience, wove Hamlet's love for Ophelia into the story, the futility of their marrying and imagined that his callous rejection of her would cause her to go insane and to commit suicide. Perhaps, at some point, Mary Fitton had threatened to end her own life or reminded him she might not survive childbirth.

Here are four extracts from Q1 (The *Bad Hamlet)*. The scene numbers relate to the modern play.

2.1 Ophelia's describing Hamlet's sorry state to her father;
3.1 Hamlet's famous soliloquy, "To be or not to be..."
3.1 Hamlet's dialogue with Ophelia "get thee to a nunnery..."
4.5 Ophelia, the lady of the flower's final mad scene.

2.1 Ophelia describes to her father a meeting with Hamlet. The extract is to show how William Herbert thought Mary Fitton saw him.[172]

O young Prince Hamlet, the only flower of Denmark,
He is bereft of all the wealth he had,
The jewel that ador'nd his feature most
Is filcht and stolen away, his wit's bereft him,
He found me walking in the gallery all alone,
There comes he to me, with a distracted look,
His garters lagging down, his shoes untide,[173]
And fixt his eyes so steadfast on my face,
As if they had vow'd, this is their latest object.
Small while he stood, but gripes me by the wrist,
And there he holds my pulse till with a sigh
He doth unclasp his hold, and parts away
Silent, as is the mid time of the night:
And as he went, his eye was still on me,
For thus his head over his shoulder looked,
He seemed to find the way without his eyes:
For out of doors he went without their help,
And so did leave me.

3.1 Disturbed, Hamlet (William Herbert) considers the value of living.

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,

[172] Perhaps she was able to visit him in the Fleet Prison.

[173] Drawn from Rosalind in *As You Like It* Act 3.2 describing the symptoms of a man in love: *Then, your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and everything about you demonstrating a careless desolation.*

To Die, to sleep, is that all? I all:
No, to sleep, to dream, I mary there it goes,
For in that dream of death, when we awake,
And borne before an everlasting judge,
From whence no passenger ever retur'nd,
The undiscovered country, at whose sight
The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd.
But for this, the joyful hope of this,
Who'd bear the scorns and flattery of the world,
Scorned by the right rich, the rich cursed of the poor?
The widow being oppressed, the orphan wrong'd,
The taste of hunger, or a tirants raigne,
And thousand more calamities besides,
To grunt and sweat under this weary life,
When that he may his full Quietus make,
With a bare bodkin, who would this indure,
But for a hope of something after death?
Which pusles the brain and doth confound the sense,
Which makes us rather beare those evilles we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of.
I that, O this conscience makes cowards of us all,
Lady in thy orizons,[174]*be all my sins remembred.*

Q2 has the famous, longer, much more refined speech. Here, we can compare the last lines, noting that in Q2 Hamlet calls Ophelia a *nymph*.[175]

Soft you now, The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

3.1 Following immediately is the scene with Ophelia which displays Hamlet's (William's) view about the value of marriage.

Ophelia *My Lord, I have sought opportunity, which now I have, to redeliver to your worthy hands, a small remembrance, such tokens which I have received of you.*
Hamlet *Are you faire?*
Ophelia *My Lord.*

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[174] prayers

[175] Is this an abbreviated reference to Mary Phitton, when she appears to have performed as an nymph in the 1600 wedding masque?

Hamlet *Are you honest?*
Ophelia *What means my Lord?*
Hamlet *That if you be faire and honest* [176]
Your beauty should admit no discourse to your honesty.
Ophelia *My Lord, can beauty have better privilege than with honesty?*
Hamlet Yea may it; for Beauty may transform
Honesty, from what she was into a bawd:
Then Honesty can transform Beauty:
This was sometimes a Paradox,
But now the time gives it scope.
I never gave you nothing.
Ophelia *My Lord, you know right will you did,*
And with them such earnest vows of love,
As would have moov'd the stoniest breast alive,
But now too true I find,
Rich gifts wax poor, when givers grow unkind.
Hamlet *I never loved you.*
Ophelia *You made me believe you did.*
Hamlet *O thou shouldst not a believed me!*
Go to a Nunnery go, why shouldst thou
Be a breeder of sinners? I am my self indifferent honest,
But I could accuse my self of such crimes
It had been better my mother had ne're borne me,
O I am very prowde, ambitious, disdainful,
With more sins at my beck, then I have thoughts
To put them in, what should such fellows as I
Do, crawling between heaven and earth?
To a Nunnery go, we are arrant knaves all,
Believe none of us, to a Nunnery go.
Ophelia *O heavens secure him!*
Hamlet *Where's thy father?*
Ophelia *At home my lord.*
Hamlet *For God's sake let the doors be shut on him,*
He ay play the fool now where but in his
Own house: to a Nunnery go.
Ophelia *Help him, good God.*
Hamlet *If thou dost marry, I'll give thee*
This plague to thy dowry:
Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
Thou shalt not scape calumny, to a Nunnery go.

[176] See Sonnet 105 for fair, honest and true.

Ophelia *Alas, what change is this?*
Hamlet *But if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool,*
For wise men know well enough,
What monsters you make of them, to a Nunnery go.
Ophelia *Pray God restore him.*
Hamlet *Nay, I have heard of your paintings too,*
God hath given you one face,
And you make your selves another,
You sigh, and you amble, and you nickname Gods creatures, Making your wantonness, your ignorance,
A pox, t'is scurvy, I'll no more of it,
It hath made me mad: I'll no more marriages,
All that are married but one, shall live,
The rest shall keep as they are, to a Nunnery go,
To a Nunnery go.[177] *exit.*

Ophelia *Great God of heaven, what a quick change is this?*
To a scene what I have seen, see what I see.

4.5 From her *Flowers* scene; Ophelia has become distracted before we hear of her drowning herself. Was William explaining what he fears might happen to Mary Fitton? Had Mary threatened him? Ophelia enters Court and her brother, Laertes, greets her;

Laertes How now, Ofelia?
Ophelia Well God a mercy, I a bin gathering of flower:
Here, here is rew for you,
You may call it hearb a grace a Sundayes,
Heere's some for me too: you must wear your rew
With a difference, there's a dazie.
Here Love, there's rosemary for you
For remembrance: I pray Love remember,
And there's pansy for thoughts.[178]
Laertes A document in madness, thoughts, remembrance:
O God, O God!

[177] Isabella in *Measure for* Measure, one of the next Shakespeare plays, is a novice.

[178] The Pansy, genus *viola*, was the Fitton family emblem; a violet, also a *viola,* appears three times in the Sonnets. This is the unique occurrence of *pansy* in the Shakespeare's works. Pansy, from the French word pensée, means *thought* (also known as heartease & love-in-idleness). In a double portrait of Mary and Anne Fitton, aged 15 and 18, Mary has three different flowers in her hand one of which is a pansy. Allusions to flowers appear many times in sonnets 1-126; especially Sonnet 99: *The forward* ***violet*** *thus did I chide….:* compares the Pinks, Lily, Marjoram and Rose. More references to the violet are in Hamlet 1.3 4.5 & 5.1.

Ophelia There is fennel for you, I would a giu'n you
Some violets, but they all withered, when
My father died: alas, they say the owl was
A Bakers daughter, we see what we are,
But can not tell what we shall be.
For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.
Laertes Thoughts and afflictions, torments worse than hell.
Ophelia Nay Love, I pray you make no words of this now:
I pray now, you shall sing a down,
And you a down a, t'is a the Kings daughter
And the false steward, and if any body
Ask you of any thing, say you this.
To morrow is saint Valentines day,
All in the morning betime,
And a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine:
The young man rose, and dan'd his clothes,
And dupt the chamber door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more.
Nay I pray mark now,
By gisse and by saint Charitie,
Away, and fie for shame:
Young men will do't when they come to't
By cock they are to blame.
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.
So would I a done, by yonder Sun,
If thou hadst not come to my bed.
So God be with you all, God bwy Ladies.
God bwy you Love.

In *Q2* the words are slightly altered. Ophelia says, "There's rose**mary**, that's for remembrance – pray you, love, remember – and there is **pansies**, that's for thoughts." Her brother, Laertes, responds, "A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance **fitted**." Mary / Pansy / Fitted.

Laertes V.1 laments over Ofelia's grave ...

ay her i' th' earth;
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

A Lover's Complaint and *Sonnets 1-17* complement the Hamlet-Ophelia story. We have William (Hamlet) explaining to Mary (Ophelia) through her brother, Laertes, the nature of

his love for her and why matters of (e)state take precedence. We have her telling the world that they *tumbled* but only after he had promised to marry her, just as in *A Lover's Complaint,* stanza 40: *And credent soul to that strong-bonded oath that shall prefer and undertake my troth*. One can conclude that in *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* we have identified Mary Fitton's prince.

This Chapter started with an iron, a pesky shirt, pouring rain, a video and two words, "Affection! Puh!" In Q2: Act 1, iii Ophelia talks to her father of Hamlet;

> *Ophelia He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders*
> *Of his affection to me.*
>
> *Polonius Affection! Puh! you speak like a green girl*
> *Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.*

The use of *affection* closely echoes what the Queen said to Mary Fitton at the wedding celebrations in June 1600 [Chapter 5.19]:

> *Mrs Fitton went to the Queen & wooed her to dance; her Majesty asked what she was; "Affection," she said. "Affection!" said the Queen; "Affection is false." Yet her Majesty rose and danced.*

I do not think it a coincidence that the plays attributed to Shakespeare started to appear when Countess Pembroke came out of mourning.[179]

Could the *Shakespeare* plays have been created as follows? A member or friend of the Sidney/Herbert family with its history of patronage of the literary arts and its enjoyment of theatre would discover a story and create a rough-cut text of a play. Wordsmiths like Kyd, Chapman, Spenser, Daniell, Fletcher, Jonson, Middleton and Marlowe, would then cobble and hone the text to create the drama. [180]

Academics need examine the relationship between the love stories in plays written between 1600 and 1604. Namely, *As You Like It, Twelfth Night, Hamlet, Troilus & Cressida, Measure for Measure, All's Well that Ends Well, A Winter's Tale, and Pericles. Hamlet* and *Troilus* could well have been inspired or sponsored by William Herbert and

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[179] The First Folio did not include *Pericles,* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. The latter is thought to have been written by John Fletcher (1579-1625). Logic suggested that since this was a late play, and if William Herbert had a hand in it, there may be some autobiography written into it. This is discussed in Appendix 5.

[180] A lost letter (Hannay; op. cit. p122) records that (in December 1603) Countess Pembroke induced the King to come to Wilton, from Salisbury, about four miles away, to see a performance of *As You Like It,* saying, "we have the man Shakespeare with us." I doubt whether the King rushed over to meet a playwright. In Calvin Hoffman's *The Man who was Shakespeare,* Hoffman points out that although the play was Registered on 4th Aug 1600, a caveat, "A book to be stayed," was placed upon it. The play did not appear in print until the *First Folio* in 1623.

the others by Mary Fitton – with a view to "talking to each other through plays." There are a large number of fragments of evidence that would support this view. One from *Troilus & Cressida* (1602) defines Troilus's age in that *"he ne'er saw three-and-twenty"* a peculiar number except that William Herbert was born in 1580 and was twenty-two.

In 1599 another maid of honour, Margaret Radcliffe, pined away and refused food after the deaths within months of her twin brother and also three other brothers. I sense this event echoed elsewhere through the plays. The Queen requested an autopsy be carried out on Mistress Radcliffe to see what the signs were that she had died of grief. *In As You Like It* (1600) Rosalynde makes it quite clear that nobody had ever died for love. The autopsy may have been to validate that Margaret Radcliffe had not committed suicide which would have affected where her body was buried. In Hamlet (1602) some store is placed on the fact that Ophelia did not commit suicide so that she could have a Christian burial.

In *Twelfth Night* (1600-1) I believe these Radcliffe twins were theatrically reincarnated in the characters of Viola and Sebastian who proved themselves to each other as their father died on their birthday – which appears to be factual.

Sigmund Freud assessed that the play, *Hamlet*, is rooted in the same soil as Oedipus Rex but with the *wish-phantasy* repressed, especially following the death of his father. I sense, but do not know, that William Herbert suffered from having an exceptionally gifted mother and had difficulty reconciling the age-gap with his father. When his father died in 1601 aged 63, William Herbert was twenty years old and his mother thirty-nine. Freud also maintains that Hamlet's relationship with Ophelia displayed sex-aversion but my own interpretation was that Hamlet and Ophelia had enjoyed sex but the circumstances made Hamlet want to protect Ophelia from a disastrous marriage to him. That's what I thought; now I believe William was angry with Mary.

Whoever wrote *Hamlet*, the psychological tension between Hamlet and Ofelia or between Hamlet and his Mother did not derive from either Saxo Grammaticus's or Belleforest's versions. This was something intensely personal, something that was being experienced, or had been experienced and these experiences were recorded elsewhere by Mary Sidney Wroth in the allegorical characters in her *Urania* of 1621.

The final act of *All's Well That Ends Well* with its seemingly vapid conclusion has troubled commentators. Why in the end was the cad Bertram acquiescent or perhaps bemused by a future as Helen's husband? I think the answer plays at two levels, the first the author strikes out for women. Had a woman been given by her father to be married to a man of *his* choice there would have been little issue – other than the size of the dowry. In *All's Well* the roles are reversed; Bertram is given by the king to Helen with a dowry provided by the King. The second level is encapsulated in the phrase, *when a woman's gets hold of a man's balls his heart soon follows.* When Bertram made love unwittingly to Helen in the darkened chamber he was a man who was certainly absolutely bursting with lust (for Diana) and doubtfully in love with her. Helen was in love, probably in lust and certainly there with the desperate intention to conceive by her husband, Bertram, who must have enjoyed the most passionate sex he would ever enjoy in his lifetime! In the final scenes Bertram not only knew of his wife's consummate sexuality

but she was also pregnant with his child and heir; *his heart would soon follow*. In real life the pregnant Mary Fitton must have thought William's heart would follow and she would become a countess; there's many a slip ……

One can allocate real people to the leading characters in the play. The recently widowed Countess Rousillion is perfectly personified by Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, recently widowed. William Herbert is a dovetailed fit for her son, Bertram; both wards of court at the start of the stories. Helen – beautiful as in Troy, not Helena as in Constantine's mother – fostered by the Countess to be a future wife for her son, can be replaced by Mary Fitton. The Countess' doctor, Helen's father, might reflect the close relationship Mary Sidney had with her own doctor, Sir Matthew Lister. The theme, as in *Measure for Measure*, *Pericles* and to some extent *A Winter's Tale* is the re-emergence of a woman considered dead. Yet Bertram is depicted as a weak character; so was William Herbert weak? Perhaps this second verse of a poem in the handwriting of William Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, written about 1618, confirms. The Lord Chamberlain was William Herbert –.

As I went to Bedford House
To that puritan shrine,
Met twice beggar Hamleton
And a friend of mine.
Met I weak Lord Chamberlain,
Doncaster there was he,
Met I proud Lord Arundell
Foolish Montgomery.

Robin Williams (*Sweet Swan of Avon*) drew the same inferences – other than for the role of Mary Fitton. Modern thinking is that the play was co-written with Thomas Middleton. The Mary Fitton-William Herbert story resonates through a number of plays. Mary Fitton could have been the other co-author striking out for women. In Act 1.1 Helen speaks to Parolles as he and Bertram are about to leave Roussillon for the Court in Paris. She anticipates:

There shall your master have a thousand loves,
A mother and a mistress and a friend,
A phoenix, captain and an enemy,
A guide, a goddess, and a sovereign,
A counsellor, a traitress, and a dear;
His humble ambition, proud humility,
His jarring concord, and his discord dulcet,
His faith, his sweet disaster; with a world
Of pretty, fond, adoptious christendoms,
That blinking Cupid gossips. Now shall he—
I know not what he shall. God send him well!
The court's a learning place, and he is one—

Clearly the author had first-hand knowledge of the goings-on and politics of life at Court. Helen could not have had such an insight.

In Act 2, Scene 2 there is a flurry of the use of the word FIT, six times in sixteen lines, without any context for using the word, as if the author is drawing attention.

Did Mary Fitton write *All's Well That Ends Well*? I see no reason why not and many reasons why the play has her imprint. On the theme of *Pansy* and *Violet* being proxies for Mary Fitton it is evident Act 3.5 that Diana was originally called V*iolenta* who enters with a friend or sister, *Mariana*. (cf Marina in *Pericles*.)

CHAPTER NINE: SONNETS 18 to 126 – GRIEF

The *loss* of her infant son at the end of that March[181] (1600-01) meant the loss of the emotional threat Mary Fitton had held over William Herbert; but still there was some *fatal attraction* between them and Mary, for certain, felt they had a future together. Her father, much respected by the Queen, persisted in pressing for his daughter's marriage to Pembroke – or compensation – the Forest of Dean, with its coal mines. The Queen said no.

That leap year ended on 24th March and by the end of May the two lovers were far apart. William had come of age on 8th April and a few days later released from the Fleet for medical reasons, an ague. He returned to his family home, Wilton House, in Wiltshire although he first may have tarried at Baynard's. Mary remained in London at Lady Margaret Hawkins' where she was detained beyond her confinement. In the end her anxious father obtained her release on 18th May and he and his wife took their distraught, traumatised daughter back to Gawsworth. We shall hear of her *en route* to the north in Sonnet 27.

Mary doggedly continued to express herself through the medium of sonnets but the theme of Sonnets 1-17, that William should marry (her), came to an end. Over the next few years a stream of cleverly constructed sonnets "stalked" him, to impress on him in expressing her ever-fluctuating feelings.[182] They started with the most famous of all:

S18: *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?*
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of Maie,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

These sonnets were written by an impassioned, sometimes demented, grieving woman, longing for her lover, going through a whole spectrum of moods and pregnancies (Sonnet 50, *that waight in me*). One senses an ongoing dialogue between the lovers as she responds to any news of him. A brief meeting is clearly recorded in Sonnet 34. In Sonnet 112 we learn he ignored her for lengthy periods.

If 24th March 1601, the end of the leap year, was the latest Mary Fitton completed composing Sonnets 1-17, then the earliest date at she would have started to write

[181] In Mary Wroth's *Uranus* there is a hint the child (*Fair Design*) was taken away to be fostered, which is implied in Sonnet 33.

[182] Sequences of 108 sonnets was considered a norm. There may have been more Sonnets with only these being published.

Sonnets 18-126 would have been at the end of March when William was just a mile away in the Fleet.

Mary composed her sonnets over the next six years. In them one observes the five classic stages of grief; Denial; Anger; Bargaining; Depression and Acceptance. In Sonnets 18-25 Mary continues to woo William while still in London; S26-32 describe the shock of leaving London having lived for five years at the epicentre of Court intrigue and excitement. S33-34 relate the emotions of a fleeting meeting; S35-39 show how she reconciled herself to their being apart before S44-42, when she became jealous because of his infidelity, causing great sadness S43-45, then the feeling of isolation, S46-49.

In Sonnets 50-52 she crossed the country, probably to Tenby in South Wales, where I could imagine her writing *A Lover's Complaint*. Lonely, she consoled herself by reflecting on his external beauty, S53-55. When William Herbert showed jealousy, S56-61 find her trying to impress on him that he has a life of his own. He had cause to be jealous when at S59 she appears to miscarry. Again, S62-65, she became frightened of losing him and felt suicidal, writing in S66-68 that she did not like the (naval) man in her life. In 69-70 there was some issue about a slander.

Sonnets 71-81 show that she was again pregnant fearing that she might die. Before the confinement she talked to him about vanity, S78-79, and at S80-81 she spoke about the baby. But now, S82-87, they cool towards each other and fall out. In Sonnets 88-93 Mary tried to release him from their emotional bond – but continued to love him. Still zealous about his activity she warned him he is taking advantage of his elevated, social position, that *Time* will catch up with him. A year passes, another pregnancy, and by S97-99 they again became friends. Out of nostalgia, S100-103 tell us she tried to compose but lacked passion, although she continued to praise him, S104-106.

During her pregnancy she knew that *Time* (S107-108) was taking its toll, and in S109-112 admitted that there had been other men and that she herself was the cause of her own poor reputation. Despite this, he was everywhere in her mind's eye (S113-116) and her love for him just as intense. Sonnet 115 hints again at pregnancy. Now she begged for forgiveness saying, S117-121, she had paid heavily for her worldly experience. She finally accepts her situation, S122-126. Not only does she give her thoughts in the last five sonnets she embeds their names cryptically in Sonnets 122, 123 and 124. Sonnet 126 has its couplet replaced by two pairs of brackets when she finally released him – and the *Story Ends There.*

The next section deals with the various stages of grief which are tempered by her relationship with her father's cousin, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson.

It is Sonnet 123 that she declares, "I'm Mary Phytton".

THE DARLING BUDS OF MAIE

Grief I - Denial

Sonnets 18-126

18 It is April 1601. No longer carrying a child, Mary's attitude changes. She tries to make light of her baby, the losses of her lover, her place at court, her becoming a countess, and her reputation. She tries charm and humour but still he will not marry her. After giving birth her breasts would have been engorged; Buds was then slang for nipples and William's pet name for her was May. Have you got it? These lovers had humour.

Location: The garden of Lady Margaret Vaughan's home in East London.

18; Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of Maie,[183]
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:[184]

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed:

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee,

19 Mary prays *Time* will not allow William to age as he seems prepared remain in the Fleet Prison (line-5) indefinitely, rather than be forced to marry.

19: Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws, [185]
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood,

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[183] *King Lear* Act 3.4; *"through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind."* Lines two and three are comparisons – you are temperate– I am buffeted. Nashe writes in *A choice of Valentines; "Their breasts they embuske up on a hie and their round roseate buds unmodestly lay forth."*

[184] The lease of joy they had enjoyed that Summer of 1600 ended with her pregnancy.

[185] The Herbert blazon is three lions. In the contemporary *All's Well That Ends Well,* "the hind that would be mated by a lion should die for love." Mary was known at Court as the White Hind.

Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-lived phoenix in her blood,
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st
And do whate'er thou wilt swift-footed Time
To the wide world and all her fading sweets
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime,
O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen,
Him in thy course untainted do allow,
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
Yet do thy worst old Time despite thy wrong,
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

20 One senses Mary Fitton had a commanding stature, akin to Rosalind in *As You Like It*. Pembroke may have had a feminine side. There is little doubt King James had a relationship with his brother, Philip, Groom to the Bedchamber. She notes his femininity but he was born with a prick to do women's pleasure. This Sonnet resonates at two levels with words that could refer to genitalia. A lover receiving this would wonder if the author's real intention was to be salacious and humorous.

20: A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou the Master Mistress of my passion,[186]
A woman's gentle heart but not acquainted
With shifting change as is false women's fashion,
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling:
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A maiden in hue all Hues in his controlling,[187]
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till Nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.[188]
But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,

[186] *Thou has the master of my passion* is self-explanatory - he controls her passion. The corollary: *Thou has the mistress of my passion* - he is subjected to her passion.

[187] Humorous! When Pembroke came of age on 8th April 1601 he inherited most of Glamorgan, thus superintending the lives of many Welsh, a good number of whom were named Hughes.

[188] Nothing – vagina [Hamlet 3.2.107] juxtaposed with *pricked* on the next line – evidence this is a woman speaking. *Acquainted* in l.3 contains quaint then slang for cunt; eye in l.5 a euphemism for an orifice or teat.

Mine by thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

21 . . and praises him yet remarks on his stubbornness.

21: So is it not with me as with that Muse,
Stirred by a painted beauty to his verse,
Who heaven itself for ornament doth use,
And every fair with his fair doth rehearse,
Making a couplement of proud compare
With sun and moon, with earth and seas rich gems:
With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare,
That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems,
O let me true in love but truly write,
And then believe me, my love is as fair,
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fixed in heaven's air:
Let them say more that like of hearsay well,
I will not praise that purpose not to sell.[189]

132 Calmed by the sympathy she is giving him, he alludes to their leitmotiv of darkness a reflection of *Love's Labour's Lost.* This Sonnet, his begging for pity, is similar to Poem 15 in the *Passionate Pilgrim.*

FROM PRISON

Thine eyes I love, and they as pitying me,
Knowing thy heart torment me with disdain,
Have put on black, and loving mourners be,
Looking with pretty ruth upon my pain.
And truly not the morning Sun of Heaven
Better becomes the grey cheeks of the east,
Nor that full star that ushers in the even
Doth half that glory to the sober west
As those two mourning eyes become thy face:
O, let it then as well beseem thy heart
To mourn for me since mourning doth thee grace,
And suit thy pity like in every part.
Then will I swear beauty herself is black,
And all they foul that thy complexion lack.

[189] Not to sell himself for a large dowry.

22 She reminds him . .*You promised me your heart*, S23 The Fittons enjoyed theatre. Pembroke considered himself a thespian.[190] With theatrical metaphors she compares herself to an actor with stage-fright; asking him to understand – the more her tongue-tied quietness – the deeper in love she is with him.

22: My glass shall not persuade me I am old,
So long as youth and thou are of one date,
But when in thee Time's furrows I behold,
Then look I death my days should expiate.

For all that beauty that doth cover thee,
Is but the seemly rayment of my heart,
Which in thy breast doth live, as thine in me;
How can I then be elder than thou art?

O therefore love be of thyself so wary,
As I not for myself, but for thee will,[191]
Bearing thy heart which I will keep so chary
As tender nurse her babe from faring ill,

Presume not on thy heart when mine is slain,
Thou gav'st me thine not to give back again.

23: As an unperfect actor on the stage,
Who with his fear is put besides his part,
Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage,
Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;
So I for fear of trust, forget to say,
The perfect ceremony of love's rite, [Q=right]
And in mine own love's strength seem to decay,
O'er-charged with burden of mine own love's might:
O, let my books be then the eloquence,
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast,
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
More than that tongue that more hath more expressed.

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[190] Pembroke performed in masques at Court and I suggest played the cameo role of William in *As You Like It.* Closet plays would have been performed at Wilton and Penshurst and it is likely that William acted when a student at Oxford. An argument is that young William Herbert performed under an alias (cf. *Shakespeare in Love).* It may be an explanation for the capitalised words on the statue depicting Shakespeare at Wilton House. LIFE, SHADOW, PLAYER and STAGE [His life a shadow, a player upon a stage.] The quotation on the Wilton scroll is a different one to that in Westminster Abbey.

[191] With modern punctuation; *O, therefore, Love, be of thyself so wary as I, not for myself, but for thee, Will,*

O learn to read what silent love hath writ,
To heare wit eies belongs to love's fine wiht. [sic] [192]

24 . . living her life through him; but at a distance . .

Mine eye hath played the painter and hath steeld,
Thy beauty's form in table of my heart,
My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
And perspective it is best painter's art.
For through the painter must you see his skill,
To find where your true image pictured lies,
Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still,[193]
That hath his windows glazed with thine eyes:
Now see what good-turns eyes for eyes have done,
Mine eyes have drawn thy shape, and thine for me
Are windows to my breast, wherethrough the sun
Delights to peep, to gaze therein on thee
Yet eyes this cunning want to grace their art
They draw but what they see, know not the heart.[194]

25 At L-3 Mary bemoans that she had expected to become a countess which ironically would have happened had she married Knollys, the future Earl Banbury.

Let those who are in favour with their stars,
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I whom fortune of such triumph bars
Unlooked for joy in that I honour most:
Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread,
But as the marigold at the sun's eye
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for worth,[195]

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[192] The original line, generally emended to *To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit* – but it would be wrong to ignore a hidden meaning when one can see wi(liam h(erber)t in the last word

[193] Shop = store. The sonnet has both bosom and breast and his picture hangs there.

[194] Two lines of sexual puns.

[195] Q worth; possibly changed from *might*, rhyming with *quite*.

After a thousand victories once foiled,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toiled:
Then happy I that love and am beloved
Where I may not remove, nor be removed.[196]

26 About 18th May 1601 Sir Edward Fitton obtained the release of Mary and took his daughter back to his home at Gawsworth in Cheshire. That night their first stop was at Stanmore in Middlesex from where he wrote to the First Minister,

> *"I can say nothing of the Earl, but my daughter is confident of her chance before God and wisheth my Lord and she might meet before in different scenes. But for myself I expect no good from him that in all this time hath not shewed any kindness. I count my daughter as good a gentlewoman as my Lord is though the dignity of honour be greater only in him, which hath beguiled her I fear, except my Lord's honesty be the better vertuoes."*

Mary sends William a parting message as she heads North.

26: Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit;
To thee I send this written ambassage
To witness duty, not to show my wit.
Duty so great, which wit so poor as mine
May make seem bare, in wanting words to show it;
But that I hope some good conceit of thine
In thy soul's thought (all naked) will bestow it:
Till whatsoever star that guides my moving,
Points on me graciously with fair aspect,
And puts apparel on my tattered loving,
To show me worthy of thy sweet respect,
Then may I dare to boast how I do love thee,
Till then, not show my head where thou mayst prove me

27 - 32 These five sonnets express loneliness, emotional and physical tiredness, restlessness and anxiety. Mary writes during the first stop on a long journey. Unable to sleep, she starts to grieve for him.

LOCATION: Overnight at Stanmore, Middlesex.

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[196] Here indicating she is still under house-arrest at Lady Margaret Hawkins'.

27: Weary with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired,
But then begins a journey in my head
To work my mind, when body's work's expired.
For then my thoughts (from far where I abide)
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee, [197]
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see.
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which like a jewel (hung in ghastly night)
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face new.
Lo, thus by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee, and for my self, no quiet find.

28 How can I then return in happy plight
That am debarred the benefit of rest?
When day's oppression is not eased by night,
But day by night and night by day oppressed.
And each (though enemies to either's reign)
do in consent shake hands to torture me,
The one by toil, the other to complain
How far I toil, still farther off from thee.
I tell the Day to please him thou art bright,
And dost him grace when clouds do blot the heaven:
So flatter I the swart-complexioned night,
When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even.
But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer,
And night doth nightly make grief's length seem stronger

29 She arrives back home, rejected, desolate, disgraced, let down and very tearful.

LOCATION: Gawsworth, Cheshire.

29: When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my out-cast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon my self and curse my fate.
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,

[197] An echo of the *Passionate Pilgrim*?

Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts my self almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising) [198]
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate,
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings'.

30 Still she grieves for him and for friends that are now *dead* to her.

30: When to the sessions of sweet silent thought,
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye (unused to flow)
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan th'expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances fore-gone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay, as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee (dear friend)
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

31 Separated, all her love is vested in him. All the love she has to give and all the love she has received from others seems buried in his love which is dead to her.

31: Thy bosom is endeared with all hearts,
Which I by lacking have supposed dead,
And there reigns love and all love's loving parts,
And all those friends which I thought buried.
How many a holy and obsequious tear
Hath dear religious love stol'n from mine eye,
As interest of the dead, which now appear,
But things removed that hidden in thee lie.
Thou art the grave where buried love doth live,
Hung with the trophies of my lovers gone,
Who all their parts of me to thee did give,

[198] cf. *Lark mounting*, T.T.'s commendation to Barnfield's Cynthia. Chapter-5.

That due of many, now is thine alone.
Their images I loved, I view in thee,
And thou (all they) hast all the all of me.

32 Her mood changes; even after her death her lines will be an eternal testament of her love for him.

32: If thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey:
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover:
Compare them with the bett'ring of the time,
And though they be outstripped by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.
Oh then vouchsafe me but this loving thought,
'Had my friend's Muse grown with his growing age
A dearer birth than this his love had brought
To march in ranks of better equipage;
But since he died and Poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.'

Grief II – Denial morphs into Anger

33 - 34 Recalling the birth of the son she possessed for just one hour before his was taken away. In S34 she reacts bitterly of their meeting (probably when she was staying with her sister at Arbury, near Nuneaton) when rain overtook them. Still grieving for the wrong he has done her, her tears, like pearls, will buy off his failings.

33: Full many a glorious morning have I seen,
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green;
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy:
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride,
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sunne one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow,
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
Yet him for this, my love so whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.

34: Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
And make me travel forth without my cloak,
To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
Hiding thy brav'ry in their rotten smoke.
'Tis not enough that through the cloud thou break,
To dry the rain on my storm-beaten face,
For no man well of such a salve can speak
That heals the wound, and cures not the disgrace:
Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief,
Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss,
Th' offender's sorrow lends but weak relief
To him that bears the strong offence's loss.
Ah but those tears are pearl which thy love sheeds,[199]
And they are rich, and ransom all ill deeds.

147 Pembroke feels *she* has abandoned *him* while he, like a madman, is still addicted to her. Desolate, and in a fury, he sees her dark side. Her sexuality has a diabolical hold over him.

My love is as a fever longing still,
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please:
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now Reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with ever-more unrest,
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
At random from the truth vainly expressed.
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

141 Why does he send this sonnet so full of negatives about her? Probably because he knows she knows it simply is not true; the greater his lies the more he loves her. cf S130 *... My mistresses eyes are nothing like the sun.*

In faith, I do not love thee with mine eyes,
For they in thee a thousand errors note
But 'tis my heart that loves what they despise,
Who in despite of view is pleased to dote.

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[199] Sheds. Sheeds may have been archaic or dialect and left for humour. cf ALC *O, what a hell of witchcraft lies in the small orb of one particular tear*.

Nor are mine ears with thy tongue's tune delighted,
Nor tender feeling to base touches prone,
Nor taste, nor smell, desire to be invited
To any sensual feast with thee alone:
But my five wits, nor my five senses can
Dissuade one foolish heart from serving thee,
Who leaves unswayed the likeness of a man,
Thy proud heart's slave and vassal wretch to be:
only my plague thus far I count my gain,
That she that makes me sin, awards me pain.

35 She exonerates Pembroke; his lust has cost her dear but maybe she could take some of the blame. From *Complaint* we understand that Mary Fitton enjoyed sex. There were two solar eclipses in 1603 and eclipses of the moon on 3rd April and 27th September 1605, however, I doubt any chronological connection: line-2 can be read as relating to the vulva, and the moon to the menstrual cycle; she was pregnant.[200]

35; No more be grieved at that which thou hast done,
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud,
Clouds and eclipses stain both Moon and Sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorising thy trespass with compare,
My self corrupting salving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are,
For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
Thy adverse party is thy Advocate,
And 'gainst my self a lawful plea commence,
Such civil war is in my love and hate,
That I an accessory needs must be,
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me,

36 Acceptance; despite loving each other they must now be apart – even ignoring each other if they meet in public.

36: Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one:
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone.

[200] Why tell him she has missed her period if he was not the father? What happened at Sonnet 34?

In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite,
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight,
I may not ever-more acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame;
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name:
But do not so, I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Grief III - Bargaining

37-39 Now, from afar (the vicarage at Gawsworth, Cheshire, or Perton in Staffordshire), she settles to vicariously live her life through him. This sonnet hesitantly accepts she has got over all the trauma, yet with uncertainty of what to look forward to. Having set her mind at rest, Pembroke is to be her inspiration. Sonnet 39 echoes S36. She persuades herself there is merit in being apart.

37: As a decrepit father takes delight,
To see his active child do deeds of youth,
So I, made lame by Fortune's dearest spite,
Take all my comfort of thy worth [201] and truth.
For whether beauty, birth, or wealth, or wit,
Or any of these all, or all, or more
Entitled in thy parts, do crowned sit,
I make my love engrafted to this store:
So then I am not lame, poor, nor despised,
Whilst that this shadow doth such substance give,
That I in thy abundance am sufficed,
And by a part of all thy glory live:
Look what is best, that best I wish in thee,
This wish I have, then ten times happy me.

[201] A word-play on *worth* and *Wroth? Worth* appears three times in the first 36 Sonnets, thereafter the frequency is one in seven, three times in Sonnet 83. Mary Wroth, in *Urania*, calls Mary Fitton *Antissia* meaning *Opponent.* Jonson, a friend of Mary Wroth, parodied her husband, Robert, by frequently using the word *worth*. The Wroths appeared estranged soon after their wedding of 24th Sep 1604. Her father, Robert Sidney, bumped into his new son-in-law on 10th Oct and wrote to his wife, *I find by him somewhat that does discontent him; but the particulars I could not get out from him: only that he protests that he cannot take any exceptions to his wife, nor her carriage towards him. It were very soon for any unkindness to begin...*

38: How can my Muse want subject to invent
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse,
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse:
O, give thy self the thanks if aught in me,
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight,
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth Muse,[202] ten times more in worth
Than those old nine which rhymers invocate,
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date.
If my slight Muse do please these curious days,

39: The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.
Oh how thy worth with manners may I sing,[203]
When thou art all the better part of me?
What can mine own praise to mine own self bring;
And what is't but mine own when I praise thee,
Even for this, let us divided live,
And our dear love lose name of single one,
That by this separation I may give:
That due to thee which thou deserv'st alone:
Oh absence what a torment wouldst thou prove,
Were it not thy sour leisure gave sweet leave,
To entertain the time with thoughts of love,
Which time and thoughts so sweetly doth deceive.
And that thou teachest how to make one twain,
By praising him here who doth hence remain.

129 Pembroke is frustrated by the power of lust, its fascination for men and how it overtakes reason. Waste in the first line could allude to a pregnant waistline; the sonnet is so full of double-entendres, spirit = semen, that they are no longer double-entendres – the mean is quite clear, the torment of sex. The goal of achieving his heaven, satisfying his sexual desire, has now become this suffering. He hates himself for being addicted.

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame

[202] The nine muses were daughters of Zeus.

[203] Worth / Wroth; Roger Manners, their cousin?

Is lust in action, and till action, lust
Is perjured, murdrous, bloody full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,
Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight,
Past reason hunted, and no sooner had
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad.
Mad in pursuit and in possession so,
Had, having, and in quest, to have, extreme,
A bliss in proof and proved and very woe,
Before a joy proposed behind a dream,
All this the world well knows yet none knows well,
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

40 He has irritated her. Desperately she uses the word *love* ten times as if to try to convince herself; and him. In a whirl, her expressions burst forth on paper with a noted lack of clarity. Is she on the edge of losing her sanity as did Antissia in *Urania*?

40: Take all my loves, my love, yea take them all,
What hast thou then more than thou hadst before?
No love, my love, that thou mayst true love call,
All mine was thine, before thou hadst this more:
Then if for my love, thou my love receivest,
I cannot blame thee, for my love thou usest,
But yet be blamed, if thou thyself deceivest
By wilful taste of what thy self refusest.
I do forgive thy robb'ry gentle thief
Although thou steal thee all my poverty:
And yet love knows it is a greater grief
To bear love's wrong, than hate's known injury.
Lascivious grace,[204] in whom all ill well shows,
Kill me with spites[205] yet we must not be foes.

41 Hearing of his petty infidelities, she warns of a woman's power to seduce a man. (In S110 she apologises for her own infidelities.) One senses she has heard he is being pursued by his cousin, Mary Sidney Wroth and fears her rival will prevail.

41; Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits,

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[204] Grace = Earl

[205] Spelt *spight; spight x 6; deispight x 7.* Hubert Ord (*Chaucer & the Rival Poet* 1921) suggests the author borrowed from Speght's 1602 publication of Chaucer's *Romance of the Rose*; *spight* a pun on Speght.

When I am sometime absent from thy heart,
Thy beauty, and thy years full well befits,
For still temptation follows where thou art.
Gentle thou art, and therefore to be won,
Beauteous thou art, therefore to be assailed.
And when a woman woos, what woman's son, (Q=woes)
Will sourly leave her till he have prevailed.
Ay me, but yet thou mightst my seat forbear,
And chide thy beauty, and thy straying youth,
Who lead thee in their riot even there
Where thou art forced to break a twofold truth:
Hers by thy beauty tempting her to thee,
Thine by thy beauty being false to me.

42 Here, in convoluted logic, she accepts Pembroke is paying attention to a friend whom she herself loved; this a dalliance with his young cousin, Mary Sidney (Wroth), who also wrote poetry to William – only for him to tease her for its inferior quality.

42: That thou hast her it is not all my grief,
And yet it may be said I loved her dearly,
That she hath thee is of my wailing chief,
A loss in love that touches me more nearly.
Loving offenders thus I will excuse ye,
Thou dost love her, because thou knowst I love her,
And for my sake even so doth she abuse me,
Suffring my friend for my sake to approve her,
If I lose thee, my loss is my love's gain,
And losing her, my friend hath found that loss,
Both find each other, and I lose both twain,
And both for my sake lay on me this cross,
But here's the joy, my friend and I are one,
sweet flattery, then she loves but me alone.

139 Pembroke asks she too should find solace in loving elsewhere. It would ease his own pain but there are conditions – he should know nothing of it and she be able to look him straight in the eyes.

O call not me to justify the wrong,
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart,
Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tongue,
use power with power, and slay me not by Art;

Tell me thou lov'st else-where; but in my sight,
dear heart forbear to glance thine eye aside,
What needst thou wound with cunning when thy might

Is more than my o'er-pressed defence can bide?

Let me excuse thee, ah my love well knows,
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries:
Yet do not so, but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks, and rid my pain.

43 Nights become days when she sees Pembroke in her dreams. The next three sonnets run together. S44 Mary muses about the distance between them, wishing for a time-machine to be able to cross the divide in an instant. S45 – Messages between them are terse and brief. News arrives. Has he been ill? She quickly turns the messenger and sends him back.

43: When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected,
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
Then thou whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form, form happy show,
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so?
How would (I say) mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day?
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade,
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay?
All days are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me,
44: If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,
Injurious distance should not stop my way,
For then despite of space I would be brought,
From limits far remote, where thou dost stay,
No matter then although my foot did stand
upon the farthest earth removed from thee,
For nimble thought can jump both sea and land,
As soon as think the place where he would be.
But ah, thought kills me that I am not thought
To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,
But that so much of earth and water wrought,
I must attend, time's leisure with my moan.
Receiving noughts by elements so slow
But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.
45: The other two, slight air, and purging fire,
Are both with thee, wherever I abide,
The first my thought, the other my desire,

These present-absent with swift motion slide.
For when these quicker elements are gone
In tender embassy of love to thee,
My life, being made of four, with two alone,
Sinks down to death, oppressed with melancholy.
Until life's composition be recured
By those swift messengers returned from thee,
Who even but now come back again assured,
Of thy fair health, recounting it to me.
This told, I joy, but then no longer glad,
I send them back again and straight grow sad.

46-47 In an imaginary courtroom a conflict between emotions and reality plays out. In her mind's eye she has a portrait of him, the beauty of which plucks the strings of her heart. S47 – Treasuring a portrait of him on which she feasts.

46: Mine eye and heart are at a mortal war,
How to divide the conquest of thy sight,
Mine eye, my heart thy picture's sight would bar,
My heart, mine eye the freedom of that right,
My heart doth plead that thou in him dost lie,
(A closet never pierced with crystal eyes)
But the defendant doth that plea deny,
And says in him thy fair appearance lies.
To side this title is impanelled
A quest of thoughts, all tenants to the heart,
And by their verdict is determined
The clear eyes moiety, and the dear hearts part.
As thus, mine eye's due is thy outward part,
And my heart's right, thy inward love of heart.

47: Betwixt mine eye and heart a league is took,
And each doth good turns now unto the other,
When that mine eye is famished for a look,
Or heart in love with sighs himself doth smother;
With my love's picture then my eye doth feast,
And to the painted banquet bids my heart:
Another time mine eye is my heart's guest,
And in his thoughts of love doth share a part.
So either by thy picture or my love,
Thyself away, are present still with me,
For thou not farther than my thoughts canst move, (Q=nor)
And I am still with them, and they with thee.
Or if they sleep, thy picture in my sight

Awakes my heart, to heart's and eye's delight.

48-49 Mary feels he has imprisoned her while he remains free. He is more valuable than all the jewels she carefully locked away when she left London. She senses that the great prize, of becoming a countess, is about to be stolen from her.

48: How careful was I when I took my way,
Each trifle under truest bars to thrust,
That to my use it might unused stay
From hands of falsehood, in sure wards of trust?
But thou, to whom my jewels trifles are,
Most worthy comfort, now my greatest grief,
Thou best of dearest, and mine only care,
Art left the prey of every vulgar thief.
Thee have I not locked up in any chest,
save where thou art not, though I feel thou art,
Within the gentle closure of my breast,
From whence at pleasure thou mayst come and part,
And even thence thou wilt be stol'n I fear,
For truth proves thievish for a prize so dear.

49 Bracing herself *against that time* (the phrase starts each quatrain) that she might lose him and they become strangers. This sonnet signals the end of a phase in their affair. She has taken roots at Perton (line-9: *I do I ensconce me here*).

49: Against that time (if ever that time come)
When I shall see thee frown on my defects,
When as thy love hath cast his utmost sum,
Called to that audit by advised respects,
Against that time when thou shalt strangely pass,
And scarcely greet me with that sun thine eye,
When love converted from the thing it was
Shall reasons find of settled gravity.
Against that time do I ensconce me here
Within the knowledge of mine own desert,
And this my hand, against myself uprear,
To guard the lawful reasons on thy part,
To leave poor me, thou hast the strength of laws,
Since why to love, I can allege no cause.

Grief IV - Depression

50-51 A long journey; Mary Fitton was a competent rider; *Grey F*itton was her horse in the Queen's stables. Line-6 refers to her having a wight, a living being, inside her. I

doubt our Brad was ever pregnant! Note *heavy* in Line-1. During 1603 Mary had a child, Anne, whose putative father was Admiral Sir Richard Leveson. In S50 I believe Mary was making her way to coastal Tenby in South Wales where there was not as much stigma in being an unmarried mother.[206] Most importantly bastard children born in Wales could inherit. Sonnets allude to her being by the sea. In S51, the antidote to her sadness, she foresees an exhilarating ride when she returns; but then one wonders, who actually was the father; Leveson or Pembroke?

50: How heavy do I journey on the way,
When what I seek (my weary travel's end)
Doth teach that ease and that repose to say
Thus far the miles are measured from thy friend.
The beast that bears me, tired with my woe,
Plods duly on, to bear that waight in me,
As if by some instinct the wretch did know
His rider loved not speed being made from thee:
The bloody spur cannot provoke him on,
That some-times anger thrusts into his hide,
Which heavily he answers with a groan,
More sharp to me than spurring to his side,
For that same groan doth put this in my mind,
My grief lies onward, and my joy behind.

51: Thus can my love excuse the slow offence,
Of my dull bearer, when from thee I speed,
From where thou art, why should I haste me thence,
Till I return of posting is no need.
O what excuse will my poor beast then find,
When swift extremity can seem but slow,
Then should I spur though mounted on the wind,
In winged speed no motion shall I know.
Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made,
Shall neigh, no dull flesh in his fiery race,
But love, for love, thus shall excuse my jade,
Since from thee going, he went wilful slow,
Towards thee I'll run, and give him leave to go.

[206] There are three Tenby connections; her brother's wife was from Tenby, her second husband John Lougher, born in Tenby was MP there in 1601; and in her will she left the lease of a property in Tenby.

52-53; Introverted, she is waiting to unlock the rare pleasure of being together. She develops different rationales to deal with their prolonged periods of separation. [207]
Sonnet 53; how he is made of a million shadows; Venus and Adonis cannot compare to him.

52: So am I as the rich whose blessed key,
Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
The which he will not ev'ry hour survey,
For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.
Therefore are feasts so solemn and so rare,
Since seldom coming in the long year set,
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
Or captain jewels in the carcanet.[208]
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
To make some special instant special blest,
By new unfolding his imprisoned pride.
Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,
Being had to triumph, being lacked to hope.

53: What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one, hath every one, one shade,
And you but one, can every shadow lend:
Describe Adonis and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you,
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new.[209]
Speak of the spring, and foison of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear,
And you in every blessed shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you for constant heart.

130 This playful sonnet is a tease, not to be taken literally. William, to amuse and praise her, corrupts and inverts a beautiful, romantic sonnet from Bartholomew Griffin's

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[207] From Sonnet 18 onwards she has used the second person *Thou*. For Sonnets 52 to 58 she switches to *You* reflecting the equal status has changed and she feels subservient. At S59 she reverts to *Thou* but only as far as S71.
[208] Ornamental collar.
[209] Referring to a masque at Court, usually in the Christmas season, or perhaps a new portrait?

***Fidessa* (1596) which tells of Venus and Adonis. [210] Another sonnet from *Fidessa* was printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim* indicating the work's being shared by the lovers.**

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun,
Coral is far more red, than her lips red,
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun,
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head:
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks,
And in some perfumes is there more delight,
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know,
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:
I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress when she walks treads on the ground.
And yet by heaven I think my love as rare,
As any she belied with false compare.

54 He is a rose that can live on through its perfume. If the rose can be read as representing female genitalia there are a number of sexual puns.[211]

54: Oh how much more doth beauty beauteous seem,
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give,
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour, which doth in it live:
The Canker blooms[212] have full as deep a dye,
As the perfumed tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their masked buds discloses:
But for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwooed, and unrespected fade,

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[210] My Lady's hair is threads of beaten gold. / Her front, the purest, crystal eye hath seen. / Her eyes, the brightest stars the heavens hold. / Her cheeks, red roses, such as seld have been. /Her pretty lips, of red vermillion die. / Her hand, of ivory the purest white. / Her blush, AURORA or the morning sky. / Her breast displays two silver fountains bright. / The spheres, her voice; her grace, the Graces three. / Her body is the saint that I adore. / Her smiles and favours, sweet as honey be. / Her feet, fair THETIS praiseth evermore. / But ah, the worst and last is yet behind: / For of a griffon she doth bear the mind!

[211] AWEW 4.2 Diana: But when you have our roses / You barely leave our thorns to prick ourselves / And mock us with our bareness.

[212] Duncan-Jones suggests the canker bloom is the colloquial name for the wild, red poppy.

Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so,
Of their sweet deaths, are sweetest odours made.
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall vade, by verse distills your truth.

55 She refrains Sonnet 18, *as long as men can breath and eyes can see,* that through her verse their love will be indestructible; reinforcing her intention that their sonnets would be published.

55: Not marble, nor the gilded monuments,
Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn:
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room,
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So till the judgment that your self arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

56 The pleasure of sex; she expects him not to dodge what comes naturally, hoping when they meet their passion for each other will be even stronger. Her own sexual drive may be diminished with her pregnancy. The allusion to sea separating banks may reflect their being on opposite sides of the English Channel.

56: Sweet love renew thy force, be it not said
Thy edge should blunter be than appetite,
Which but today by feeding is allayed,
Tomorrow sharpened in his former might.
So love be thou, although today thou fill
Thy hungry eyes, even till they wink with fullness,
Tomorrow see again, and do not kill
The spirit of love, with a perpetual dullness:
Let this sad int'rim like the Ocean be
Which parts the shore, where two contracted new,
Come daily to the banks, that when they see:
Return of love, more blest may be the view.
As call it winter, which, being full of care,
Makes summer's welcome, thrice more wished, more rare:

57–58 Feeling low, treading water and passionless, Mary waits without questioning where he is, or what he is doing; flatly jealous of others whom she imagines are

enjoying his company (S58) tentatively telling him that she is still his slave and prisoner, but repeating he should have a life of his own while she awaits his bidding.

56: 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 anything) he thinks no ill.
58: That God forbid, that made me first your slave,
I should in thought control your times of pleasure,
Or at your hand th'account of hours to crave,
Being your vassal bound to stay your leisure.
O let me suffer (being at your beck)
Th'imprisoned absence of your liberty,
And patience tame, to sufferance, bide each check,
Without accusing you of injury.
Be where you list, your charter is so strong,
That you your self may privilege your time
To what you will, to you it doth belong,
Your self to pardon of self-doing crime.
I am to wait, though waiting so be hell,
Not blame your pleasure be it ill or well.

59-60 Would *Time* change them? She is in the classical situation of a mistress. From S57 to S77 *Time* is a recurring issue as Mary has to manage her impatience between letters and rare meetings with her lover. Here impatience spills over.

59: If there be nothing new, but that which is,
Hath been before, how are our brains beguiled,
Which labouring for invention bear amiss

The second burthen[213] of a former child?
Oh that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done.
That I might see what the old world could say,
To this composed wonder of your frame,
Whether we are mended, or whe'er better they,
Or whether revolution be the same.
Oh sure I am the wits of former days [214]
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

60 Clock-watching the minute hand. The hour dies to be re-born but eventually one's time runs out and beauty aged.

60: Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end,
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave, doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow.
And yet to times in hope, my verse shall stand
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

61 Mary is watchful. She feels he is jealous or is this spin? Accusing him of being jealous she hides what she herself is up to, putting him on the defensive whereas she is the one who is being less than faithful: *I am watching you; you have no reason to watch me.*

61: 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?

---

[213] Burden; birth, berth having the same root. An oblique but powerful reference to a former child – and maybe another hint that she is pregnant.

[214] *In former times I helped you with my ideas, and even worse ideas have been greatly praised.*

Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home into my deeds[215] to pry,
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
The scope and tenure 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.

62 She likes herself but admits being weather-beaten. Can she be so vain, a face so beautiful, a body so shapely? The use of worth twice. Has she heard of his being with his cousin Mary Wroth? Was she was having a difficult pregnancy, affecting both looks and her once slim figure? What was William to believe?

62: Sin of self-love possesseth all mine eye,
And all my soul, and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account,
And for myself mine own worth do define,
As I all other in all worths surmount.
But when my glass shows me my self indeed
Beated and chopped with tanned antiquity,[216]
Mine own self-love quite contrary I read
Self, so self-loving were iniquity,
'Tis thee (my self) that for my self I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days,

63 Another reminder of the ravages of time; yes, William, you too are growing older. She seems to be writing just for the sake of regurgitating themes already explored several times over hoping to find some new invention but finding none.

63: 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

[215] *Deeds* followed by *tenure* two lines later.
[216] Reads as if she has a good old fashioned but unfashionable seaside holiday tan!

With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn
Hath travailed 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.

64-65 Having seen evidence of *Time's* ability to destroy, she weeps as she fears losing him. Can he be protected from his inevitable fate? This fear of *his* death could be a diversionary expression of her own morbid fears.

64: When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age,
When sometime lofty towers[217] I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage.
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watry main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store.
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded, to decay,
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate
That Time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have, that which it fears to lose. [218]

65: Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O how shall summer's honey breath hold out,
Against the wrackful[219] siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong but time decays?
O fearful meditation, where alack,

[217] A ruined castle or abbey nearby?
[218] In *Urania, Antissia* (Mary Fitton) hears rumour of *Amphilanthus* (Pembroke) having died. (Cavanagh p72)
[219] wrack = wreck

Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Or who his spoil or beauty can forbid?
O none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

66 Reminiscent of Hamlet's soliloquy, *To be or not to be;* she feels suicidal. Here is Mary Fitton's sad history; a bright, young maid of honour to the Queen, let down by her lover, a virgin who was strumpeted, having to limp away from the promise of becoming a Countess, now gagged lest she embarrassed her lover, suddenly finding herself under the control of and serving a naval man whom she does not like. Will Shaxper could never consider himself *a maiden virtue rudely strumpeted* (L-6).

66: Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,
As to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly (doctor-like) controlling skill,
And simple-truth miscalled Simplicity,
And captive-good attending Captain ill.[220]
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that to die, I leave my love alone.

Sonnets 133-134 read as if William Herbert has risen out of himself and that this second-self is in thrall to Mary Fitton. A pragmatic explanation is that she has taken in a friend of his, Richard Leveson, who was supposed to speak to her on his behalf and keep her abreast of events. But now the friend himself is ensnared and *pays the whole* – yet Pembroke still is not free. Leveson, being married, was no threat to him; they must have known each other as both were in the King's inner circle. From letters between Leveson & Mary's sister, Ann Newdigate, one would not suspect a physical relationship between Mary and Leveson, but there was one. He gave his

[220] Captain Ill is overlooked by commentators. Mary's husband, William Polewhele, was Captain of the *Lyon's Whelp* that had sailed under Admiral Richard Leveson but Captain is here a trope for the Admiral who considered himself the father of her (yet unborn?) child. Leveson had died in August 1605 and she married Polewhele in 1607. It would place this sonnet around 1603-1604.

surname to one of Mary's children and following his death in 1605 there was a law suit over the child's custody.

133 Beshrew that heart that makes my heart to groan
For that deep wound it gives my friend and me:
Is't not enough to torture me alone,
But slave to slavery my sweet'st friend must be.
Me from my self thy cruel eye hath taken,
And my next self thou harder hast engrossed.
Of him, my self, and thee I am forsaken,
A torment thrice threefold thus to be crossed:
Prison my heart in thy steel bosom's ward
But then my friend's heart let my poor heart bail;
Who ere keeps me, let my heart be his guard,
Thou canst not then use rigour in my jail.
And yet thou wilt, for I, being pent in thee,
Perforce am thine and all that is in me.

134 So, now I have confessed that he is thine,
And I myself am mortgaged to thy will,
My self I'll forfeit, so that other mine,
Thou wilt restore to be my comfort still.
But thou wilt not, nor he will not be free,
For thou art covetous, and he is kind,
He learned but surety-like to write for me
Under that bond that him as fast doth bind.
The statute of thy beauty thou wilt take,
Thou usurer that putt'st forth all to use,
And sue a friend, came debtor for my sake,
So him I lose through my unkind abuse.
Him have I lost, thou hast both him and me,
He pays the whole,[221] and yet I am not free.

67 - 68 On the defensive: she starts to demean Captain-Ill, the man whom William is jealous of, describing him as ageing, and complains of her dependency on what he has gained. She talks of herself in the third person, having no income except for that which this naval man provides. In S68 she continues her description of her companion bemoaning the use of aids to try to recover former glory. She describes his face as worn-out, flattered only by cosmetics, a wig over a bald head.

67: Ah wherefore with infection should he live,
And with his presence grace impiety,

[221] Hole/*whole*. *Mortgaged to her will* could mean genitalia.

That sin by him advantage should achieve,
And lace it self with his society?
Why should false painting imitate his cheek,
And steal dead seeing of his living hue?
Why should poor beauty indirectly seek,
Roses of shadow, since his Rose is true?
Why should he live, now nature bankrout is,
Beggared of blood to blush through lively veins,
For she hath no exchequer now but his,
And proud of many, lives upon his gains?
O him she stores, to show what wealth she had,
In days long since, before these last so bad.

68: Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn,
When beauty lived and died as flowers do now,
Before these bastard signs of fair were borne,
Or durst inhabit on a living brow:
Before the golden tresses of the dead,
The right of sepulchres, were shorn away,
To live a second life on second head,
Ere beauty's dead fleece made another gay:
In him those holy antique hours are seen,
Without all ornament, it self and true,
Making no summer of an other's green,
Robbing no old to dress his beauty new,
And him as for a map doth Nature store,
To show false Art what beauty was of yore.

137 Pembroke is angered by Mary's having another man around her; in his jealousy he cites her as a vulgar *bay where all men ride*.

Thou blind fool love, what dost thou to mine eyes,
That they behold and see not what they see:
They know what beauty is, see where it lies,
Yet what the best is, take the worst to be.
If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks,
Be anchored in the bay where all men ride,
Why of eyes' falsehood hast thou forged hooks,
Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied?
Why should my heart think that a several plot,
Which my heart knows the wide world's common place?

Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not
To put fair truth upon so foul a face,
In things right true my heart and eyes have erred,
And to this false plague [222] are they now transferred.

69-70 Mary spitefully tells William how his foes praise him to his face but slander him behind his back. He may have given them cause; perhaps his reputation is soiled by stories of his treatment of Mary Fitton – or has he just been living lasciviously whilst they are so far apart? Do whispers in London suggest he is the father of a child Mary Fitton is carrying not Leveson's. S70 reflects a troubled mind, just random phrases committed to paper.

69: Those parts of thee that the world's eye doth view,
Want nothing that the thought of hearts can mend:
All tongues (the voice of souls) give thee that end,
Utt'ring bare truth, even so as foes commend.
Thy outward thus with outward praise is crowned,
But those same tongues that give thee so thine own,
In other accents do this praise confound
By seeing farther than the eye hath shown.
They look into the beauty of thy mind,
And that in guess they measure by thy deeds,
Then churls their thoughts (although their eyes were kind)
To thy fair flower add the rank smell of weeds,
But why thy odour matcheth not thy show,
The soil is this, that thou dost common grow.[223]

70: That thou art blamed shall not be thy defect, [224]
For slander's mark was ever yet the fair,
The ornament of beauty is suspect,
A crow that flies in heaven's sweetest air.
So thou be good, slander doth but approve,
Their worth the greater being wooed of time,
For canker-vice the sweetest buds doth love,
And thou present'st a pure unstained prime.
Thou hast passed by the ambush of young days,
Either not assailed, or victor being charged,
Yet this thy praise cannot be so thy praise,
To tie up envy, evermore enlarged,

[222] Plague = mistress
[223] She is saying that he was becoming common knowledge. Soyle (Solye) could mean *shit*.
[224] Blamed for what? If William Herbert was the father she would never betray the secret.

If some suspect of ill masked not thy show,
Then thou alone kingdoms of hearts shouldst owe.

71-76 A difficult pregnancy and perhaps close to confinement, Mary emphasises she might soon die.[225] One could set the tone by starting with, *Sod you, I'm pissed off with life; you cannot acknowledge me in public. I'm pregnant, here in Tenby, hiding away from everyone, I could die; if I do don't bother to think about me. This has been our secret; if it does end here, nobody will ever know.*

71: No longer mourn for me when I am dead,
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vildest[226] worms to dwell:
Nay if you read this line, remember not,
The hand that writ it, for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O if (I say) you look upon this verse,
When I (perhaps) compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
But let your love even with my life decay.
Least the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

72: O least the world should task you to recite,
What merit lived in me that you should love
After my death (dear love) forget me quite,
For you in me can nothing worthy prove.
Unless you would devise some virtuous lie,
To do more for me than mine own desert,
And hang more praise upon deceased I,
Than niggard truth would willingly impart:
O, lest your true love may seem false in this,
That you for love speak well of me untrue,
My name be buried where my body is,
And live no more to shame nor me, nor you.
For I am shamed by that which I bring forth,
And so should you, to love things nothing worth.

146 He responds:

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[225] Not distressed enough to prevent her creating a delightful sonnet. Not clear about their relationship. At S71 and up to S86 she starts alternating between *you* and *thou* forms.
[226] Most reviled; vilest. See the 1607 letter from Mary's mother.

Poor soul the centre of my sinful earth,
[ ] [227] these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms inheritors of this excess
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then soul live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross:
Within be fed, without be rich no more,
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there's no more dying then.

73-76 It is Autumn; as the year fades so she feels she is fading away. She knows her poetry is weak and uninspiring, simply repetitive in her praise for him; but still the sun rises anew every morning.

73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold,
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined quiers,[228] where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day,
As after sun-set fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.

74: But be contented when that fell arrest,
Without all bail shall carry me away,
My life hath in this line some interest,
Which for memorial still with thee shall stay.
When thou reviewest this, thou dost review,

[227] Missing a single syllable word or two-syllable if *powers* is elided.
[228] Both Wilton House and Arbury Hall are on the sites of former monasteries. But is quiers *choirs* or quires, quires of paper reflecting leaves in line-2?

The very part was consecrate to thee,
The earth can have but earth, which is his due,
My spirit is thine the better part of me,
So then thou hast but lost the dregs of life,
The prey of worms, my body being dead,
The coward conquest of a wretch's knife,
Too base of thee to be remembered.
The worth of that, is that which it contains,
And that is this, and this with thee remains.

75: So are you to my thoughts as food to life,
Or as sweet-seasoned showers are to the ground;
And for the peace of you I hold such strife,
As 'twixt a miser and his wealth is found.
Now proud as an enjoyer, and anon
Doubting the filching age will steal his treasure,
Now counting best to be with you alone,
Then bettered that the world may see my pleasure,
Some-time all full with feasting on your sight,
And by and by clean starved for a look,
Possessing or pursuing no delight
Save what is had, or must from you be took.
Thus do I pine and surfeit day by day,
Or gluttoning on all, or all away.

76: Why is my verse so barren of new pride?
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods, and to compounds strange
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,[229]
That every word[230] doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth, and where they did proceed?
O know sweet love I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument:

[229] A noticeable literary style

[230] Showing the wish to retain anonymity. But occasionally Mary could not resist slipping in cryptic clues that give names although this is not one. Writing with a quill Mary must have noticed that her *every* looks like *mary*. Researchers reading this line start to look for an anagram and De Vere too easily suggests itself. Mary was simply looking down at the word she had just written.

So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent:
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

Grief V - Acceptance

77 Three sonnets to remind him how things once were. It's as if she knows he is about to distance himself from her – a new love having come into his life, but she does not say so. What she says is *Age* and *Time* will steal from you and wither you and your verses.

77: Thy glass will show thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste,
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
And of this book,[231] this learning mayst thou taste.
The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show,
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory,
Thou by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know,
Time's thievish progress to eternity.
Look what thy memory cannot contain,
Commit to these waste blanks [232], and thou shalt find
Those children nursed, delivered from thy brain, [233]
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
Shall profit thee, and much inrich thy book.

78 Mary acknowledges he is her inspiration, aware that whereas he once helped her, he now helps others with their poetry; line-5 *helping the dumb to sing* – a pointed jibe at Mary Wroth, her rival poet.

78: So oft I invoked thee for my Muse,
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use,
And under thee their poesy disperse.
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing,
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,

---

[231] ... and she does appear to be writing into a copy book, not on to loose leaves.

[232] Q *blacks*

[233] The children were the verses or plays

Have added feathers to the learned's wing,
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine, and born of thee,
In others' works thou dost but mend the style,[234]
And arts with thy sweet graces graced be.
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning, my rude ignorance.

79 Mary warns him of the vanity of patronage.

79: Whilst I alone did call upon thy aid,
My verse alone had all thy gentle grace,
But now my gracious numbers are decayed,
And my sick Muse doth give an other place.[235]
I grant (sweet love) thy lovely argument
Deserves the travail of a worthier pen,
Yet what of thee thy Poet doth invent,
He robs thee of, and pays it thee again,
He lends thee virtue, and he stole that word,
From thy behaviour; beauty doth he give
And found it in thy cheek: he can afford
No praise to thee but what in thee doth live.
Then thank him not for that which he doth say,
Since what he owes thee, thou thyself dost pay.[236]

80 Some months pass. Pembroke is paying attention to his cousin Mary Wroth. Mary Fitton's baby is born; Captain Polewhele's or Pembroke's? [237] This sonnet with its taunting naval metaphors introduces a new theme. Having successfully survived the threat of death in childbirth she now has someone to succeed her. Yet another dig at Mary Wroth in line-5?

80: O how I faint when I of you do write,

---

[234] He clearly puts the finishing touches to other writers' works.

[235] Mary Wroth (worthier - line 6) was also sending him sonnets (Urania). Worth appears once in every five of the first 69 sonnets but appear twice in every three sonnets from S70 to S88 reappearing only in S100.

[236] Pembroke provided a large part of his cousin Mary Sidney's dowry when she married Robert Wroth; dating this Sonnet to around September 1604

[237] The maritime phrases appear to make fun of her husband, a ship's captain. Richard Leveson accepted he is the father of Mary's bastards, Anne and William.

Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,[238]
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame.
But since your worth (wide as the ocean is)
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark (inferior far to his)
On your broad main[239] doth wilfully appear.
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride,
Or (being wrecked) I am a worthless boat,
He of tall building,[240] and of goodly pride.
Then if he thrive and I be cast away,
The worst was this, my love was my decay.[241]

81 Mary feels better. Insignificant compared to a great lord yet her poetry leaves a legacy. The couplet rewords S18's couplet.

81: Or I shall live your epitaph to make,
Or you survive when I in earth am rotten,
From hence your memory death cannot take,
Although in me each part will be forgotten.
Your name from hence immortal life shall have,
Though I (once gone) to all the world must die,
The earth can yield me but a common grave,
When you entombed in men's eye shall lie,
Your monument shall be my gentle verse,
Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,
And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,
When all the breathers of this world are dead,
You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.

---

[238] Christened William for her husband, or Pembroke or Knollys! Mary's sister, Anne, records in her household accounts for 1607 the costs of her being at Perton, Mary's home, including two shillings for *"my sister's nurse."*

[239] *He looks mostly like you.*

[240] He is tall and strong. Mary was tall.

[241] Cf. Sonnet 73.14 *Consumed with that which it was nourished by.* If she died would she have lost her life because of her love for Pembroke – suggesting he was the father?

82 She begins to distance herself from William; *ok, we were never really joined at the hip, but while others will falsely flatter I alone will tell you the truth.*

82: I grant thou wert not married to my Muse,
And therefore mayst without attaint o'erlook
The dedicated words which writers use
Of their fair subject, blessing every book.
Thou art as fair in knowledge as in hue,
Finding thy worth a limit past my praise, [242]
And therefore art enforced to seek anew,
Some fresher stamp of the time-bettering days.
And do so love, yet when they have devised,
What strained touches Rhetoric can lend,
Thou truly fair, wert truly sympathised,
In true plain words, by thy true-telling friend.
And their gross painting might be better used,
Where cheeks need blood, in thee it is abused.

127 William picks up on *gross painting* – beauty being in the eye of the beholder.

In the old age black was not counted fair,
Or if it were it bore not beauty's name:
But now is black beauty's successive heir,
And beauty slandered with a bastard shame,
For since each hand hath put on Nature's power,
Fairing the foul with Art's false borrowed face,
Sweet beauty hath no name no holy bower,
But is profaned, if not lives in disgrace.
Therefore my mistress' eyes are raven black,
Her eyes so suited, and they mourners seem,
At such who not born fair no beauty lack,
Sland'ring creation with a false esteem,
Yet so they mourn becoming of their woe,
That every tongue says beauty should look so.

83 The sense here is he admires and solicits praise but whereas this other poet will exaggerate Mary Fitton sees him as he is. Line-7 is certainly a dig at Mary Wroth; *Speaking of worth* – which she wasn't – but S84 shows a touch of jealousy of the other person whom Pembroke patronises and then accuses him of being vain.

[242] She finds no reason to praise Mary Wroth.

83: I never saw that you did painting need,
And therefore to your fair no painting set,
I found (or thought I found) you did exceed,
The barren tender of a Poet's debt:
And therefore have I slept in your report,
That you your self being extant well might show,
How far a modern quill doth come too short,
Speaking of worth, what worth in you doth grow,
This silence for my sin you did impute,
Which shall be most my glory being dumb,
For I impair not beauty being mute,
When others would give life, and bring a tomb.
There lives more life, in one of your fair eyes
Than both your Poets can in praise devise.

84: Who is it that says most, which can say more,
Than this rich praise, that you alone, are you,
In whose confine immured is the store,
Which should example where your equal grew,
Lean penury within that pen doth dwell,
That to his subject lends not some small glory,
But he that writes of you, if he can tell,
That you are you, so dignifies his story.
Let him but copy what in you is writ,
Not making worse what nature made so clear,
And such a counter-part shall fame his wit,
Making his style admired every where.
You to your beauteous blessings add a curse,
Being fond on praise, which makes your praises worse.

85 That's enough! Mary steps back from massaging Pembroke's ego. Let others play the sycophant; her silence reflects her constancy.

85: My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,
While comments of your praise richly compiled,
Reserve their character with golden quill,
And precious phrase by all the Muses filed.
I think good thoughts, whilst other write good words,
And like unlettered clerk still cry *Amen*
To every hymn that able spirit affords
In polished form of well-refined pen.
Hearing you praised, I say *'tis so, 'tis true*
And to the most of praise add something more,
But that is in my thought, whose love to you
(Though words come hindmost) holds his rank before,

Then others, for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

86 It has been a waste of time. Having done her best she feels rejected. *Affable familiar ghost* is a useful epithet for Mary Wroth, a likeable family member, having to appear a ghost in the night in Baynard's if she was cheating on her husband.

86: Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of (all-too-precious) you,[243]
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?

Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write,
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he nor his compeers (colleagues) by night
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.

He nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.

But when your countenance filled up his line,
Then lacked I matter, that enfeebled mine.

151 On young love and sex; how even the mere mention of her name could cause lust to rise within him – his conscience dies as a penis comes to life and there is an element of *sauce for the goose.* I have formed this into a letter.

My Darling May,

Love is too young to know what conscience is / yet who knows not conscience is born of love / then gentle cheater urge not my amiss, / lest guilty of my faults thy sweet self prove. / For thou betraying me, I do betray / my nobler part to my gross body's treason. / My soul doth tell my body that he may / triumph in love: flesh stays no farther reason / but rising at thy name doth point out thee / as his triumphant prize, proud of this pride, / he is contented thy poor drudge to be / to stand in thy affairs, fall by thy side. / No want of

[243] Nautical terms and analogy; hunting *prizes* was what Richard Leveson did.

conscience hold it that I call / her love for whose dear love I rise and fall. W.

87 Her response is to tell him they must part – it has all been a terrible mistake, a misunderstanding on her part that they could ever have had a future together, his rank would not allow him to marry her, it is costing her just too much and everything appears as if it has been but a dream. In November 1604 William Herbert married Mary Talbot co-heiress to Earl Shrewsbury. Attempting to cling on to him now made Mary's life too complicated.

87: Farewell thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou know'st thy estimate,
The Charter of thy worth gives thee releasing:
My bonds in thee are all determinate.[244]
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thy self thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me to whom thou gav'st it, else mistaking,
So thy great guift upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.
Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter:
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

88-90 Showing her distressed mental state. Mary gives him his freedom but loves him so much she will absorb any of his faults to make his life easier. She admits her fault was her weakness for sex. When it is known to the world that she has madness within her it will prove that Pembroke was justified in jilting her.

88: When thou shalt be disposed to set me light,
And place my merit in the eye of scorn,
Upon thy side, against myself I'll fight,
And prove thee virtuous, though thou art forsworn:
With mine own weakness being best acquainted,
Upon thy part [245] I can set down a story
Of faults concealed, wherein I am attainted:
That thou in losing me shalt win much glory:
And I by this will be a gainer too,
For, bending all my loving thoughts on thee,

[244] Terminated or written in legal documents.
[245] *With mine own weakness being best acquainted upon thy part*; quaint=cunt; part=penis.

The injuries that to myself I do,
Doing thee vantage, double vantage me.
Such is my love, to thee I so belong,
That for thy right, my self will bear all wrong.

149 Seeking reassurance from Mary Fitton he gives reasons and excuses for his behaviour. He implies she only has to look at him to control him, a scowl to destroy. Does any woman want such a man? Is he stupid? But is this emotional blackmail to make her feel guilty for his wounded state?

Canst thou O cruel, say I love thee not,
When I against my self with thee partake:
Do I not think on thee when I forgot
Am of my self, all tyrant for thy sake?
Who hateth thee that I do call my friend,
On whom frown'st thou that I do fawn upon,
Nay, if thou lour'st on me do I not spend (scowls at)
Revenge upon my self with present moan?
What merit do I in myself respect,
That is so proud thy service to despise,
When all my best doth worship thy defect,
Commanded by the motion of thine eyes.
But love hate on for now I know thy mind,
Those that can see thou lov'st, and I am blind.

89 In turn she gives him excuses to forsake her; promising that in his presence she will conduct herself as if he does not exist.

89: Say that thou didst forsake me for some fault,
And I will comment upon that offence,
Speak of my lameness, and I straight will halt:
Against thy reasons making no defence.
Thou canst not (love) disgrace me half so ill,
To set a form upon desired change,
As I'll myself disgrace, knowing thy will,
I will acquaintance strangle and look strange:
Be absent from thy walks, and in my tongue,
Thy sweet beloved name no more shall dwell,
Lest I (too much profane) should do it wrong:
And haply of our old acquaintance tell.
For thee, against my self I'll vow debate,
For I must ne're love him whom thou dost hate.

90 This really is an opportune time for him to leave her; to delay would cause him future problems but the pain will outweigh all the hurts she is suffering from her

own problems. The sense of these sonnets suggests that they were written in the second half of 1604. Her life has turned upside down with the birth of the bastard child and he is involved with Mary Sidney who is about to marry or has married Robert Wroth. Although Mary Fitton probably had an inkling about the ongoing negotiations for Pembroke's marriage to Mary Talbot, wealthy co-heiress to the Earl of Shrewsbury, she may not have known that these started in September 1603.[246]

90: Then hate me when thou wilt, if ever, now,
Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss:
Ah do not, when my heart hath scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquered woe,
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purposed over-throw.
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come, so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might.
And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
Compared with loss of thee, will not seem so.

91 Still reluctant to let go, she writes coldly but there is a hint of emotional blackmail in the couplet. His love, worth so much more than his high birth, is the greatest of her assets; she fears losing it.

91: Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
Some in their garments though new-fangled ill:[247]
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse.
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest,
But these particulars are not my measure,

---

[246] 3rd Oct. 1604 William Herbert ended a letter from Hampton Court to Gilbert, 7th Earl Shrewsbury, soon to be his father-in-law, with a PS – *You must pardon my short writing. I am half drunk tonight.* Four weeks later on Sunday, 4th Nov in Sheffield, Pembroke married the *dwarfish and unattractive* Mary Talbot, Shrewsbury's co-heiress. In the settlement Pembroke was insistent that should his wife die he would during his lifetime have the benefit of the property she bought into the marriage. He pre-deceased her and without progeny her wealth reverted first to a sister, who also died heirless, and finally to a younger sister, Althea, who had married into the Norfolk family.

[247] Outlandish fashion.

All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
Of more delight than hawks and horses be:
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast.
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take,
All this away, and me most wretched make.

92 She would die happy knowing he still loves her. The sonnet hints he is moving to pastures-new and her continuous blast of poetry suggests she is trying her best to prevent him – it is not too late for him to change his mind and return to her. One hears a frantic woman not wanting to appear frantic.

92: But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assured mine,
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine.

Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end,
I see, a better state to me belongs
Than that, which on thy humour doth depend.

Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie,
Oh what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!
But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot,
Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.

93 So she will assume that he does love her even though she accepts he may be deceiving her.

93: So shall I live, supposing thou art true,
Like a deceived husband, so love's face,
May still seem love to me, though altered 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,
What e'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.

94 Amplifying the last Sonnet; the beauty of a flower is one thing, but she warns him not to upset her, an infected lily can smell worse than a weed. Things could go wrong for him and she might be the survivor.

94: They that have power to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing, they most do show,
Who moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow:
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense,
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others, but stewards of their excellence:
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself, it only live and die,
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed out-braves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds,
Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds.[248]

95 Her words turn bittersweet. If his lasciviousness continues things will go wrong for him. One reads in the sonnet; budding, mansion (vagina), hardest knife (erect penis).

95: How sweet and lovely dost thou make the shame,
Which like a canker in the fragrant rose,
Doth spot the beauty of thy budding name? [249]
Oh in what sweets dost thou thy sins enclose!
That tongue that tells the story of thy days,
(Making lascivious comments on thy sport)
Cannot dispraise, but in a kind of praise,
Naming thy name, blesses an ill report.
Oh what a mansion have those vices got,
Which for their habitation chose out thee,
Where beauty's veil doth cover every blot,
And all things turns to fair, that eyes can see!
Take heed (dear heart) of this large privilege,
The hardest knife ill-used doth lose his edge.

[248] This same line appears in *The reign of King Edward the Third* printed in 1596.

[249] The name William has *will* in it and she may be saying "chuffing".

96 The ties between them are not quite severed and she writes as if accepting they are becoming estranged. His grace is taking advantage of his good looks and his position – which cheapens him in the eyes of the public; therefore he ought to stop.

96: Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness,
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport,
Both grace and faults[250] are loved of more and less:
Thou mak'st faults graces, that to thee resort:
As on the finger of a throned queen,
The basest jewel will be well esteemed:
So are those errors that in thee are seen,
To truths translated, and for true things deemed.
How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,
If like a lamb he could his looks translate.
How many gazers mightst thou lead away,
If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state?
But do not so, I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.[251]

97-99 A run of three sonnets. A year appears to have passed; *if absence makes the heart grow fonder* expressed in verse. They start to make up. Had she again been pregnant? If so was she burdened with his bastard child which he cannot acknowledge – *Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease*? There are many allusions to birth; *big with rich increase; bearing; the wanton burden; widowed wombs; abundant issue; orphans; unfathered.* In S98 are *heavy Saturn; proud lap pluck them where they grew; drawn after you; I with these did play.* Sonnet 98 is an isolated *You*-sonnet amongst *Thou*-sonnets, interpreted as being written by a woman who has gone through a pregnancy and craves to re-establish contact with the man she loves. Sonnet 99 has an extra line. [252]

97: How like a winter hath my absence been
From thee, the pleasure of the fleeting year?
What freezings have I felt, what dark days seen?
What old December's bareness everywhere?
And yet this time removed was summer's time,

---

[250] *Grace*=Penis and *Faults*=vagina.

[251] The same couplet from S36.

[252] Don Paterson (*Reading Shakespeare's Sonnets*) identifies this sonnet was stolen from Henry Constable's *Diana.* Mary Fitton being the *forward violet* (pansy)?

The teeming autumn big with rich increase,
Bearing the wanton burden of the prime,
Like widowed wombs after their lords' decease: [253]
Yet this abundant issue seemed to me,
But hope of orphans, and unfathered fruit,
For Summer and his pleasures wait on thee,
And thou away, the very birds are mute;
Or if they sing, 'tis with so dull a cheer,
That leaves look pale, dreading the Winter's near.
98: From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April (dressed in all his trim)
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything:
That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell:
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew:
Nor did I wonder at the Lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose,
They were but sweet, but figures of delight:
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seemed it Winter still, and you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.
99 The forward violet thus did I chide,
Sweet thief whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells
If not from my love's breath, the purple pride,
Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells?
In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed,
The lily I condemned for thy hand,
And buds of marjoram had stol'n thy hair, [254]
The roses fearfully on thorns did stand,
Our blushing shame, another white despair:
A third nor red, nor white, had stol'n of both,
And to his robb'ry had annexed thy breath,
But for his theft in pride of all his growth
A vengeful canker eat him up to death.

---

[253] A reference to Richard Leveson who was the putative father of two of her children? Leycester says there were two bastard daughters, and a boy, William, (died in 1609). Around 1607 she was pregnant by her first husband, William Polewhele, and again when he made his will on 19th Sep 1609 (proved 23rd June 1610).

[254] Marjoram gave a reddish brown dye the colour of William Herbert's hair.

More flowers I noted, yet I none could see,
But sweet, or colour it had stol'n from thee.

100-102 Her angst has dissipated. She feels they are buddies. The verse is neutral, non-threatening. One can sense her picking him up emotionally as one would physically pick up one's own child.

100: Where art thou Muse that thou forget'st so long,
To speak of that which gives thee all thy might?
Spend'st thou thy fury on some worthless song,
Dark'ning thy power to lend base subjects light.
Return, forgetful Muse, and straight redeem,
In gentle numbers time so idly spent,
Sing to the ear that doth thy lays esteem,
And gives thy pen both skill and argument.
Rise resty Muse, my love's sweet face survey
If time have any wrinkle graven there,
If any, be a *Satire* to decay,
And make time's spoils despised everywhere.
Give my love fame faster than Time wastes life,
So thou prevent'st his scythe, and crooked knife.
101: O truant Muse what shallbe thy amends,
For thy neglect of truth in beauty died?
Both truth and beauty on my love depends:
So dost thou too, and therein dignified:
Make answer Muse, wilt thou not haply say,
Truth needs no colour with his colour fixed,
Beauty no pencil, beauty' s truth to lay:
But best is best, if never intermixed.
Because he needs no praise, wilt thou be dumb?
Excuse not silence so, for't lies in thee,
To make him much outlive a gilded tomb:
And to be praised of ages yet to be.
Then do thy office Muse, I teach thee how,
To make him seem long hence, as he shows now.[255]

102 - 103 Not quite restored to her former strength, she reminds him of when their love was new and she used to sing to him like a nightingale. But now her song would be lost

[255] In Benson he & him become she & her as she invokes her muse.

amongst the many others that sing his praise. Not wishing to appear ingratiating one knows she is. This testmony says she composed lays, poems designed to be sung.[256]

102: My love is strengthened though more weak in seeming
I love not less, though less the show appear;
That love is merchandised, whose rich esteeming,
The owner's tongue doth publish every where.[257]
Our love was new, and then but in the spring,
When I was wont to greet it with my lays,
As *Philomel*[258] in summer's front doth sing,
And stops her pipe in growth of riper days:
Not that the summer is less pleasant now
Than when her mournful hymns did hush the night,
But that wild music burdens every bough,
And sweets grown common lose their dear delight.
Therefore like her, I sometime hold my tongue:
Because I would not dull you with my song.

103: Alack what poverty my Muse brings forth,
That having such a scope to show her pride,
The argument all bare is of more worth
Than when it hath my added praise beside.
Oh blame me not if I no more can write!
Look in your glass and there appears a face,
That over-goes my blunt invention quite,
Dulling my lines, and doing me disgrace.
Were it not sinful then striving to mend,
To mar the subject that before was well,
For to no other pass my verses tend, [pass=passage]
Than of your graces and your gifts to tell.
And more, much more than in my verse can sit,
Your own glass shows you, when you look in it.

---

[256] Here one can draw out the charm of their relationship. Sonnets 102, 128 and 8 describe their making music together. She singing at the harpsicord, playing songs he has composed.

[257] Shake-Speare plays before 1598 were published anonymously.

[258] How delightful for a woman to sing to the man she loves. In 1595 Richard Barnfield published an Ode in which *Philomel* appears. Another *Philomel* Ode appears in 1598 in his *Pecunia* which was printed in *The Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Philomela, the Greek Nightingale, was raped by Tereus, her brother-in-law, who cut out her tongue to ensure her silence. Tereus told his wife that Philomela was dead but Philomela made her story known by weaving it into a robe. Mary Fitton made her story known in *A Lover's Complaint*.

104 Ccounting of the years and ageing; her writer's block has passed and confidence regained. Whether *three years* is literal or poetic depends on when the clock started. Naval terms have stopped, perhaps indicating it is post-Leveson who died in Aug 1605. Had she written *four* or *five* instead of *three* it would have been too specific. *Three* serves to mislead, placing this before Pembroke's wedding in 1604. She continues to write love poems to a married man.

104: To me fair friend you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still: Three Winters cold,
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned,
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,
Since first I saw you fresh which yet are green.
Ah yet doth beauty, like a dial hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived,
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived.
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred,
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

105-106 She drifts through S105 praising his virtues with the repetitive *fair, kind, and true* then changes to a more spiritual and distant level for S106 – as if nobody else could summons up poetry to fully describe his attributes. Temporising, restating what is safe, anticipating change but not wanting to trespass onto unknown ground.

105: Let not my love be called Idolatry,[259]
Nor my beloved as an Idol show,
Since all alike my songs and praises be
To one, of one, still such, and ever so.
Kind is my love today, tomorrow kind,
Still constant in a wondrous excellence,
Therefore my verse to constancy confined,
One thing expressing, leaves out difference.
Fair, kind, and true, is all my argument,
Fair, kind, and true, varying to other words,
And in this change is my invention spent,
Three themes in one, which wondrous scope affords.
Fair, kind, and true, have often lived alone,

[259] *You are no saint!*

Which three till now, never kept seat in one.

106: When, in the chronicle of wasted time,
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,[260]
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
In praise of Ladies dead, and lovely Knights,
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have expressed,
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring,
And for they looked but with divining eyes,
They had not still enough your worth to sing:
For we which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

107 Now the jolt; the change she has been expecting, a marked transformation in their relationship. From now to S110 *you* becomes *thou.* It reads of another pregnancy and the fear of death and months of uncertainty ahead. *The mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured* is an interesting way of saying her period has not arrived. This would be the child conceived around March 1606 (Polewhele's or Pembrokes?) coinciding with the time her father was buried when correspondence showed she was not married. She could not have married Admiral Leveson who died in Aug 1605 (he had a wife), but Captain Polewhele was a bachelor and marriage was an expedient to avoid a scandal that would destroy her reputation forever. The game is up! She must sue for peace with Pembroke. If she had felt his equal (*you* form), no longer, Earl Pembroke has the higher ground. She must look up to him (*thou*) for his understanding.

107: Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul,
Of the wide world, dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
The mortal Moon hath her eclipse endured**,**
And the sad Augurs mock their own presage
Incertainties now crown them-selves assured,
And peace proclaims Olives of endless age,
Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and death to me subscribes,
Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes.

[260] people

And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

108 Enough of her parrot-like repetition; it has all been said, many times. What novel words can be found to describe their rock-solid love for each other? She argues that whatever is happening in their ever-divergent lives, true love lasts forever. Pembroke, known for his quick and violent temper, discovering another man or men in her life, lets loose his feelings in S142.

108: What's in the brain that Ink may character,
Which hath not figured to thee my true spirit,
What's new to speak, what now to register,
That may express my love, or thy dear merit?
Nothing, sweet boy,[261] but yet like prayers divine,
I must each day say o'er the very same,
Counting no old thing old, thou mine, I thine,
Even as when first I hallowed thy fair name.
So that eternal love in love's fresh case,
Weighs not the dust and injury of age,
Nor gives to necessary wrinkles place,
But makes antiquity for aye his page,
Finding the first conceit of love there bred,
Where time and outward form would shew it dead.

142 Angry and spiteful he convolutedly accuses her of being promiscuous; probably he had found out the real extent of her friendship with the late Admiral Sir Richard Leveson or that the new man was Captain William Polewhele. Why the anger? I believe he expected Mary Fitton to keep herself available for him – even though he himself married in 1604. In *Urania,* Amphilanthus (Pembroke) did not consummate his marriage as, immediately after the ceremony, his wife (Mary Talbot) returned to her father in the North (Sheffield). The way Fitton is carrying on is causing her reputational damage – cooking the goose that lays the golden eggs.

Love is my sin, and thy dear virtue hate,
Hate of my sin, grounded on sinful loving,
O but with mine, compare thou thine own state,
And thou shalt find it merits not reproving;
Or if it do, not from those lips of thine,
That have profaned their scarlet ornaments,
And sealed false bonds of love as oft as mine,

[261] Benson, 1640, *sweet love.*

Robbed others' beds' revenues of their rents.
Be it lawful I love thee as thou lov'st those,
Whom thine eyes woo as mine importune thee,
Root pity in thy heart, that, when it grows,
Thy pity may deserve to pitied be.
If thou dost seek to have what thou dost hide,
By self-example mayst thou be denied.

109 Digging deep to defend her infidelities, Mary proposes their love could carry on as if they had parted yesterday. OK, she may have strayed but she is a woman with frailties, desires, needs and, anyway, she never stopped loving him. We witness an argument in verse between two highly intelligent and emotional lovers.

109: O never say that I was false of heart,
Though absence seemed my flame to qualify,
As easy might I from my self depart,
As from my soul, which in thy breast doth lie:
That is my home of love, if I have ranged,
Like him that travels I return again,
Just to the time, not with the time exchanged,
So that my self bring water for my stain,
Never believe though in my nature reigned,
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it could so preposterously be stained,
To leave for nothing all thy sum of good;
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou my rose, in it thou art my all.

131 Mary's Sonnet has touched a bundle of nerves sharply reminding him of their lust, passion and love. Hence the accusation of her being a sexual tyrant but then admits he lusts for her despite her black character. Is he actually saying that men are only interested in her body? I would suggest that black was their *colour* and leitmotif drawn from *Love's Labour's Lost,* a play they would have seen together at Court when they first started courting. In context, Pembroke, now a Member of the Order of the Garter and a close friend of the King, needs to cool Mary Fitton down, keep her onside, and at all costs avoid a second scandal with a woman doubly-scorned. It leaves the question what are her black deeds, was it her promiscuity, deceit, or a suspicion that she may have poisoned Richard Leveson?

Thou art as tyrannous, so as thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel;
For well thou know'st to my dear doting heart
Thou art the fairest and most precious jewel.
Yet in good faith, some say that thee behold
Thy face hath not the power to make love groan;
To say they err, I dare not be so bold,
Although I swear it to my self alone.

And to be sure that is not false I swear,
A thousand groans but thinking on thy face,
One on another's neck do witness bear
Thy black is fairest in my judgment's place.
In nothing art thou black save in thy deeds,
And thence this slander as I think proceeds.

THE SPOILER

Pembroke's poem XVIII is here inserted telling us, as in *A Lover's Complaint,* that Mary Fitton lost her virginity to him. It dovetails into the theme of these connected sonnets and elicits the response of S110. His poem ends saying that he came before all the other of her lovers; before him there was no-one. It tells us so much about Pembroke's perspective; in essence his conceit that she would forever be true to him having vowed to keep herself for him. It is as if until now Pembroke had no idea of Mary Fitton's relationship with Leveson or Polewhele. However, in the four lines which I've highlighted is the spoiler, the reason William Herbert would not marry the pregnant Mary Fitton.

Why with unkindest swiftness dost you turn
From me, whose absence thou didst truly mourn;
Of which thou mad'st me such a seeming view,
As Unbelievers would have thought it true.
We have been private, and thou knowest of mine,
(Which is ev'n all) as much as I of thine:
Dost thou remember? Let me call t'account
The pleasant Garden, and that leavy Mount,
Whose top is with an open Arbour crowned.
Dost thou remember (O securest beauty)
Where of thy own free motion (more that duty)
And unrequired, thou solemnly didst swear,
(Of which avenging heav'n can witness bear)
That from the time thou gav'st thy spoils to me,
Thou wouldst maintain a spotless chastity,
And unprofaned by any second hand,
From sport and Love's delight removed stand,
Till I (whose absence seemingly was mourned)
Should from a foreign Kingdom be returned:
Of this thou mad'st Religion, and an oath.
But see the frailty of a woman's troth;
Scarce had the sun (to many rooms assigned)
Been thrice within the changeful waves confined,
And I scarce three days' journey from thine eyes,

When thou new love in thy heart didst devise,
And gav'st the Reliques of thy Virgin-head,
Upon the easiest prayer that could be said.
Tis true, I left thee to a dangerous age,
Where vice of Angel's shape does title wage
With ancient virtue, both disguising so,
That hardly weaker eyes can either know:
Besides, I left thee in the hour of fears,
And in the covetous spring of all thy years,
What time a beauty that hath well begun,
Asks other than the solace of a Nun.
But since thy wanton soul so dear did prize
The game, that thou for it didst underprize
The faith, and all that to good fame belongs;
Couldst thou not cover it with common tongues;
But cheapest eyes must see thee do amiss?
My Rhymes that won thee, never taught thee this:
Thou might'st have wandered in the pathos of love,
And neither leafless hill, nor shady grove
Have been unpressed by thy wanton weight,
Yet though thought honest, hadst thou used slight.
Much care and business hath the chastest Dame
To guard herself from undeserved blame;
What artifice and cunning then must serve
To colour them that just reproof deserve?'
Tis not a work for every woman's wit,
And the less marvel thou neglected it.
That which amazes me the most, is this,
That having never trodden but amiss,
And done me wrongs, that do so much deny
To suffer measure, as infinity:
When I approach, thou turn'st thy head awry,
As if sore eyes and scorn could satisfy,
Can second wrongs the former expiate,
And work them out of memory and date;
Or teach me ill in humane Precepts durst,
That second wrongs can expiate the first?
Thou art malicious, as incontinent,
And mightst have met with such a Patient,
Whose wronged virtue to just rage invited,
Would have revenged, and in thy duty delighted.
But I that have no gall, when once I love,
And whom no great thing under heav'n can move,
Am well secured from Fortune's weak alarms,
And free from apprehension, as from harms.

Thus do I leave thee to the multitude,
That on my leaving hastily intrude.
Enjoy thou many, or rejoice in one,
I was before them, and before me none.

So! the child Mary Fitton was carrying might not have been Pembroke's. He could not marry her and legitimise an heir that was not his blood. He could also not lose face by admitting his girlfriend had cuckolded him. So who was the second man? I would like to suggest, without evidence, that it was William Knollys abusing his position and coercing or blackmailing her, technically rape. We know that Knollys lusted after Mary and one can imagine his anger and frustration on discovering the two had enjoyed sex. Not only was he in a position of authority, but he was probably also the Queen's (half) nephew which might explain the Queen's insistence that Pembroke should marry Mary, and her anger when he refused. Giving in to Knollys may have enhanced Mary's desire to become pregnant, and what better than to carry the genes of Henry VIII?

At which point we revisit *All's Well that Ends Well*. In the denouement Helena is able to convince Bertram that the child she is carrying is his. Likewise Mary Fitton would have liked to convince Pembroke that he was the putative father. The play is not distant from the truth.

110 Tartly and perversely, Mary admits to there having been others, swears she will stray no more but admits to her relationship with Richard Leveson, the older (long-standing) friend and protector. This sonnet is one where gender manifests itself and here the author is a promiscuous woman writing to the one man she loves above all others. She now reverts to the *you* (familiar as equals) form for ten Sonnets.

110: Alas 'tis true, I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gored mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new.
Most true it is, that I have looked on truth
Askance and strangely: but by all above,
These blenches[262] gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays proved thee my best of love.
Now all is done, have what shall have no end;
Mine appetite I never more will grind [263]
On newer proof, to try an older friend,

[262] Turnings aside; straying
[263] Whet; physically love. She now lives at Perton on a lease from her late cousin Richard Leveson (died in 1605) and by now committed to Captain William Polewhele.

A god in love, to whom I am confined.
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most most loving breast.

135-136 Showing love, lust and his contempt for her sexual proclivity – the various Williams in her life – Knollys, Pembroke, Polewhele and two sons apart from any other adventures or wills (euphemism for genitalia, male or female, lines 5-6) whom she may have enjoyed. Think the worst or best, depending on your inclination, these are the most salacious of sonnets, in effect calling her a slag but ending asking her to think of him, Will, when she is enjoying all other wills.

135 Whoever hath her wish, thou hast thy *Will*,
And *Will* to boot, and *Will* in overplus;
More than enough am I that vex thee still,
To thy sweet will making addition thus.
Wilt thou whose will is large and spacious,
Not once vouchsafe to hide my will in thine,
Shall will in others seem right gracious,
And in my will no fair acceptance shine.
The sea all water, yet receives rain still,
And in abundance addeth to his store,
So thou being rich in *Will* add to thy *Will*,
One will of mine to make thy large Will more.
Let no unkind, no fair beseechers kill,
Think all but one, and me in that one *Will*.

136 If thy soul check thee that I come so near,
Swear to thy blind soul that I was thy *Will*,
And will thy soul knows is admitted there,
Thus far for love, my love-suit sweet fulfil.
Will, will fulfil the treasure of thy love,
I fill it full with wills, and my will one,
In things of great receipt with ease we prove,
Among a number one is reckoned none.[264]
Then in the number let me pass untold,
Though in thy store's account I one must be,
For nothing hold me, so it please thee hold,
That nothing me, a some-thing sweet to thee.
Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me for my name is *Will*.

[264] "I don't count if I am just one of a stream of men with whom you have coupled."

111-112 Pembroke is aware of what Mary Fitton has been hiding. On the defensive, she tries to gain his sympathy by emphasising how much she has been damaged by public opinion. S112; she's struggling to convince him, protesting she has been true to him because nobody knows that their relationship endured. In *Urania* his cousin, Mary Wroth, says the affair lasted seven years; she would know.

111: O for my sake do you wish fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide,
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the Dyer's hand,
Pity me then, and wish I were renewed,
Whilst like a willing patient I will drink,
Potions of Eisel 'gainst my strong infection, [265]
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
Nor double penance to correct correction.
Pity me then dear friend, and I assure ye,
Even that your pity is enough to cure me.

112: Your love and pity doth th' impression fill,
Which vulgar scandal stamped upon my brow;
For what care I who calls me well or ill,
So you o'er-green my bad, my good allow? [266]
You are my All the world, and I must strive,
To know my shames and praises from your tongue,
None else to me, nor I to none alive,
That my steeled sense or changes right or wrong,
In so profound *Abisme* I throw all care
Of others' voices, that my Adder's sense [267]
To critic and to flatterer stopped are:
Mark how with my neglect I do dispense.
You are so strongly in my purpose bred,
That all the world besides methinks y'are dead.

113-114 He is forever in her mind's eye; all else is a blur. Is she losing touch with reality? These two sonnets present vulnerability and her needing care. What is

[265] Vinegar from the juice of the crab-apple. Eisel appears in Hamlet 5.1 but nowhere else.
[266] Let grass grow over my bad but please permit my good to show.
[267] deaf ears - *as deaf as an adder*.

happening is the lovers abandoning the vessel of their relationship without rocking the boat. There is an interesting introduction of *poison* at 114.14; the (my) nagging feeling that Mary Fitton may have poisoned Richard Leveson; empathised in Sonnet 118.

113: Since I left you, mine eye is in my mind,
And that which governs me to go about,
Doth part his function, and is partly blind,
Seems seeing, but effectually is out:
For it no form delivers to the heart
Of bird, of flower, or shape which it doth lack;[268]
Of his quick objects hath the mind no part,
Nor his own vision holds what it doth catch:
For if it see the rud'st or gentlest sight,
The most sweet-favour or deformed'st creature,
The mountain, or the sea, the day, or night:
The crow, or dove, it shapes them to your feature.
Incapable of more replete, with you,
My most true mind thus maketh mine untrue.

114: Or whether doth my mind being crown'd with you
Drink up the monarch's plague, this flattery?
Or whether shall I say mine eye saith true,
And that your love taught it this Alchemy*?*
To make of monsters, and things indigest,
Such cherubins as your sweet self resemble,
Creating every bad a perfect best
As fast as objects to his beams assemble:
Oh 'tis the first, 'tis flattery in my seeing,
And my great mind most kingly drinks it up.
Mine eye well knows what with his gust is 'greeing
And to his palate doth prepare the cup.
If it be poisoned, 'tis the lesser sin,
That mine eye loves it and doth first begin.

115 Her lines still fail to express how much she loves him. The world around can change but still her love grows ever stronger. What is he to think or do when confronted with this barrage of affection from a woman who one can sense is losing touch with reality?

115: Those lines that I before have writ do lie,
Even those that said I could not love you dearer,
Yet then my judgment knew no reason why,
My most full flame should afterwards burn clearer.

[268] Probably lach / latch rhyming with *catch*.

But reckoning time, whose millioned accidents
Creep in twixt vows, and change decrees of Kings,
Tan sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong minds to th' course of altring things:
Alas why fearing of time's tyranny,
Might I not then say now I love you best,
When I was certain o'er in-certainty,
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest:
Love is a babe, then might I not say so,
To give full growth to that which still doth grow.

150 He is touched by what she has just written. Even now his love for her has strengthened. It almost becomes a contest of who loved the ore, implying she loves him still.

Oh from what power hast thou this powerful might,
With insufficiency my heart to sway,
To make me give the lie to my true sight,
And swear that brightness doth not grace the day?
Whence hast thou this becoming of things ill,
That in the very refuse of thy deeds,
There is such strength and warrantise of skill,
That in my mind thy worst all best exceeds?
Who taught thee how to make me love thee more,
The more I hear and see just cause of hate,
Oh though I love what others do abhor,
With others thou shouldst not abhor my state.
If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
More worthy I to be beloved of thee.

116 In one of her most beautiful sonnets Mary philosophises on true love being unalterable or fooled by Sex or Time. But first the start of the second of Pembroke's poems[269] which with S116 both contain "*love is not love*". He wrote;

If her disdain least change in you can move – you do not love,
For while your hopes give fuel to your fire – you sell desire
Love is not love, but given free;
And so is mine, so should yours be.

Her heart that melts to hear of other's moan – To mine is stone;
And eyes that weep a stranger's hurt to see – Joy to wound me:
Yet I so much affect each part

[269] Published thirty years after his death in 1660 by his friend, Christina Cavendish, Countess Devonshire.

As caused by them, I love my smart.

Think her unkindness justly must be graced – with Name of chaste;
And that the frowns least longing should exceed – and raging preed.

So can her rigour ne're offend
Except self-love seek private end.

Mary's reply;

116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments, love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O no it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come, [270]
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom:
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

152 William knows matters are ending and blames himself for his own stupidity. He had married in 1604 and by 1607 May is betrothed or married to Polewhele. But long since she had sworn herself to William Herbert and the various oaths have become confused. Did Pembroke visit Perton in February 1608, in the middle of winter, en route to Sheffield where his father-in-law was surprised by the visit, yet could not prevail on him to stay even one day more? This event coincided exactly when Mary gave birth to Frances who survived just one week; William's child, I wonder? He has to tread carefully not to anger Mary Fitton – an age-old problem – a married man leaving a mistress.

In loving thee thou know'st I am forsworn,
But thou art twice forsworn, to me love swearing,
In act thy bed-vow broke and new faith torn,
In vowing new hate after new love bearing:
But why of two oaths' breach do I accuse thee,
When I break twenty: I am perjured most,
For all my vows are oaths but to misuse thee:
And all my honest faith in thee is lost.
For I have sworn deep oaths of thy deep kindness:

[270] Lines 9-10; Love is not fooled by sexual acts. Compass = penis.

Oaths of thy love, thy truth, thy constancy,
And to enlighten thee gave eyes to blindness,
Or made them swear against the thing they see.
For I have sworn thee fair: more perjured eie,
To swear against the truth so foul a lie.

117-118 The vein of S116 continues. In a corner, as if she has been exposed for comprehensively straying, a highly emotional Mary Fitton admits all, and begs forgiveness, attempting to rationalise these having been infidelities of the mind and not the body. Worthy of some cynicism as she undoubtedly enjoyed sex and the attention of men. In her lifetime Mary Fitton had at least nine children by at least four men; Pembroke (1); Leveson (2); husband-Polewhele (3); husband-Lougher (3). Pembroke is becoming distant. S117 beats about the bush, a prequel to S118 which is vividly illuminating in its junkie's analysis of the sickness of love. So much in love, so much in lust, why should she not have a little taste of what she was being deprived to try to cure the sickness?

S118? Accuse me thus, that I have scanted all,
Wherein I should your great deserts repay,
Forgot upon your dearest love to call,
Whereto all bonds do tie me day by day,
That I have frequent been with unknown minds,
And given to time your own dear purchased right,
That I have hoisted sail to all the winds
Which should transport me farthest from your sight.
Book both my wilfulness and errors down,
And on just proof surmise, accumulate,
Bring me within the level of your frown,
But shoot not at me in your wakened hate:
Since my appeal says I did strive to prove
The constancy and virtue of your love

118: Like as to make our appetites more keen
With eager compounds we our palate urge,
As to prevent our maladies unseen,
We sicken to shun sickness when we purge.
Even so being full of your ne'er cloying sweetness,
To bitter sauces did I frame my feeding;
And, sick of welfare, found a kind of meetness,
To be diseased ere that there was true needing.
Thus policy in love t'anticipate
The ills that were, not grew to faults assured,
And brought to medicine a healthful state
Which rank of goodness would by ill be cured.

But thence I learn, and find the lesson true,
Drugs poison him that so fell sick of you.

119 Having tried vigorous explanations, one can imagine Mary resorting to a woman's tears, hinting at insanity, confessing she has paid too heavily for her experience.

119: What potions have I drunk of *Siren* tears
Distilled from Lymbecks foul as hell within,
Applying fears to hopes, and hopes to fears,
Still losing when I saw myself to win?
What wretched errors hath my heart committed,
Whilst it hath thought itself so blessed never?
How have mine eyes out of their Spheres been fitted
In the distraction of this madding fever?
O benefit of ill, now I find true
That better is, by evil still made better.
And ruined love when it is built anew
Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.
So I return rebuked to my content,
And gain by ills thrice more than I have spent.

120 The twisted process of emotional disengagement continues, showing she can cope with all she/they have suffered since that night of woe, the night she conceived their long lost child. They have hurt each other – it is time to forgive.

120: That you were once unkind befriends me now,
And for that sorrow, which I then did feel,
Needs must I under my transgression bow,
Unless my nerves were brass or hammered steel.
For if you were by my unkindness shaken
As I by yours, you've passed a hell of Time,
And I a tyrant have no leisure taken
To weigh how once I suffered in your crime.
O that our night of woe might have remembered
My deepest sense, how hard true sorrow hits,
And soon to you, as you to me, then tendered
The humble salve, which wounded bosoms fits!
But that your trespass now becomes a fee,
Mine ransoms yours, and yours must ransom me.

121 In pitying a world of falsehood, wantonness and evil, this sonnet nicely describes her feisty character and the hypocrisy of living in a man's world. She admits she enjoys sex, but whereas she is straightforward and honest, others are oblique in their approaches. Line-4 suggests her attitude has been *out of sight out of mind* but now her double-life is plain to view.

121: 'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,[271]
When not to be, receives reproach of being,
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deemed,
Not by our feeling, but by others' seeing.
For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive[272] blood?
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies;
Which in their wills [273] count bad what I think good?
No, I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses, reckon up their own,
I may be straight though they themselves be bevel
By their rank thoughts, my deeds must not be shown
Unless this general evil they maintain,
All men are bad and in their badness reign.

122 The affair is over. She must have had in mind publishing a classical sequence of 108 sonnets so, after the first seventeen, the sonnet sequence finishes at 125. But can she resist risking their anonymity by signing these last sonnets? The answer is No! For posterity she cryptically embeds their names starting S122 with her monogram, TT, then after the unusual spelling of guift, gui for Guillome, with a *ft-on* she alerts with a unique double comma. In these last five sonnets she again assumes *thou.* More cryptic clues follow in the next two sonnets.

122: TThy guift,, thy tables,[274] are within my brain
Full charactered with lasting memory,
Which shall above that idle rank remain
Beyond all date, even to eternity.
Or at the least, so long as brain and heart
Have faculty by nature to subsist,
Till each to razed oblivion yield his part
Of thee, thy record never can be missed:
That poor retention could not so much hold,

[271] Echoes S71, and also her mother's letter that Mary Fitton was considered a vile woman.

[272] Sportive = Wanton.

[273] Sexuality

[274] Portraits were painted on tables / tablets of wood.. Taking the F from the first word of the second line with TThy from the first we can construct a phonetic Fyth-T-on. The double commas are an instruction to take the initial TWO letters of the following words (T H T A A R W I M Y B R) and rearranging them gives WI HARBR-TT-MAY, from the left William Harbrt and from the right May TT (Fitton).

Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score,
Therefore to give them from me was I bold,
To trust those tables that receive thee more,
To keep an adjunct to remember thee,
Were to import forgetfulness in me.

123 A cryptic clue which gives her name. In an attempt to date the poem commentators lamely try to reconcile pyramids with obelisks erected for the Coronation of 1604. But *pyramyds* contains the name Mary spelt backwards, and continuing in this reverse direction, and on to the top line, one obtains pyhton, with slight tweaks, ime Mary Phytton – how she signed her name. William Herbert once addressed her as a *python*.[275] She is signing off, she will always love him, this was their time but it is over.

123: No! Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change,
Thy pyramyds built up with newer might
To me are nothing novel, nothing strange,
They are but dressings of a former sight:
Our dates are brief, and therefore we admire,
What thou dost foist upon us that is old,
And rather make them born to our desire,
Than think that we before have heard them told:
Thy registers and thee I both defy,
Not wondring at the present, nor the past,
For thy records, and what we see doth lie,
Made more or less by thy continual haste:
This I do vow, and this shall ever be,
I will be true despite thy scythe and thee.

124 So she carves a heart (*dear love*) with an arrow through it, at one end "*Yf my"* and at the other end, "*w 'erbut*." This poem distances herself even further, one by one breaking connections. Any contracts between them are ended. She is no longer his slave waiting on his call. She will simply fade into the background, just one inconspicuous flower amongst many.

124: YF my dear love were but the child of state,[276]
It might for fortune's bastard be unfathered,

[275] The initial letters of the subsequent lines T T O W A T T N F M T I make up MA FITTON / TT / W & T. TT being Mary Fitton's monogram and W & T being the first and last letters of William HarberT.

[276] Meaning *if my love <u>had</u> been a ward of court then the Queen would have forced you to marry me.* William Herbert escaped being made a ward after the death of his father.

As subject to time's love, or to time's hate,
Weeds among weeds, or flowers with flowers gathered.
No it was builded far from accident,
It suffers not in smiling pomp, nor falls
Under the blow of thralled discontent,
Whereto th'inviting time our fashion calls:
It fears not policy, that Heretic,
Which works on leases of short-numbered hours,
But all alone stands hugely politic,
That it nor grows with heat, nor drowns with showers.
To this I witness call the fools of time,
Which die for goodness, who have lived for crime.

143 Pembroke analyses a mother-child relationship implying he is dependent on her just like a child. I suspect he may have seen a similar poem elsewhere and forged his own version. Its tone is unexpected, out of context and not replicated.

Lo as a careful housewife runs to catch,
One of her feathered creatures broke away,
Set down her babe, and makes all swift dispatch
In pursuit of the thing she would have stay:
Whilst her neglected child holds her in chase,
Cries to catch her whose busy care is bent,
To follow that which flies before her face,
Not prizing her poor infant's discontent:
So runn'st thou after that which flies from thee,
Whilst I thy babe chase thee a far behind;
But if thou catch thy hope, turn back to me:
And play the mother' part kiss me, be kind.
So will I pray that thou may'st have thy *Will*,
If thou turn back and my loud crying still.

125 Nice try, Pembroke! Here is the last of the 108-sonnet sequence which follows S17. At last rises above the vicissitudes she has endured throughout their relationship. He should not forget that when they first met she had been a maid of honour, close to the Queen, and would have watched the rise and fall in favour of many courtiers; especially Essex who had been executed – and ironically the imprisoned Southampton whom she had once adored until he married her colleague Elizabeth Vernon. *One day you will find that a true soul, when most threatened will no longer be in your control. Mary is finally out of his emotional clutches, free to go her own way.*

125: Were't aught to me I bore the canopy,[277]
With my extern the outward honouring,
Or laid great bases for eternity,
Which proves more short than waste or ruining?
Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
Lose all, and more by paying too much rent
For compound sweet: Forgoing simple savour,
Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent.
No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
Which is not mixed with seconds, knows no art,
But mutual render only me for thee.
Hence, thou suborned *Informer*, a true soul
When most impeached, stands least in thy control.[278]

126 The final poem is of six couplets. The rhyme is aa-bb-cc-dd-ee-ff compared with ab-ab-cd-cd-ef-ef-gg of the sonnets. Having no seventh couplet, represented by two sets of brackets, is as if to say *the rest is silence*. This *was* the end. The last four words are a double message with an anagram; *storie end(s) there* - as it did. This *Dear John* poem has a sisterly or motherly tone. He has outgrown her and Time will have the final say. She sets him free.

126: O Thou, my lovely Boy who in thy power,
Dost hold time's fickle glass, his sickle, hour:
Who hast by waning grown, and therein show'st,
Thy lovers withering, as thy sweet self grow'st.
If Nature (sovereign mistress over wrack)
As thou goest onwards still will pluck thee back,
She keeps thee to this purpose, that her skill.
May time disgrace, and wretched minutes kill.
Yet fear her O thou minion of her pleasure,
She may detain, but not still keep, her treasure!
Her *Audit* (though delay'd) answer'd must be,
And her *Quietus* is to render thee. [279]
( )
( )

[277] There is an irony here: Pembroke being one of the Knights of the Garter who carried the canopy that covered the King during the Procession in the summer of 1604 but Richard Leveson was one of six Knights of the Canopy at the funeral of Elizabeth I. Both men her lovers.

[278] You will find that a true soul, when most threatened, will no longer be in your control.
[279] *Quietus* only appears again once, in Hamlet.

When the sonnets were finally collated they were rounded off with an envoi of two similar sonnets, probably composed by William Herbert. I fail to understand the context of these poems.

153-154 A reminiscence.

153 Cupid laid by his brand[280] and fell asleep,
A maid of *Dian's* [281] this advantage found,
And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep
In a cold valley-fountain of that ground:
Which borrowed from this holy fire of love,
A dateless lively heat still to endure,
And grew a seething bath, which yet men prove,,
Against strange maladies a sovereign cure:
But at my mistress eye loves brand new fired,
The boy for trial needs would touch my breast,
I sick withal the help of bath desired,
And thither hied, a sad distempered guest.
But found no cure, the bath for my help lies,
Where *Cupid* got new fire: my mistress eye.

154: The little Love-God lying once asleep,
Laid by his side his heart inflaming brand,
Whilst many nymphs that vowed chaste life to keep,
Came tripping by, but in her maiden hand,
The fairest votary [282] took up that fire,
Which many legions of true hearts had warmed,
And so the General of hot desire, (General = penis)
Was sleeping by a virgin hand disarmed.
This brand she quenched in a cool well by,
Which from love's fire took heat perpetual,
Growing a bath and healthful remedy,
For men diseased, but I my mistress' thrall,
Came there for cure and this by that I prove,
Love's fire heats water, water cools not love.

[280] Puts down his torch (penis). Cupid's work is done and the goddess of chastity puts out the fire. *Brand* appears twelve times Shakespeare, four times in these two sonnets.
[281] A Maid of Honour of the Queen who in Sonnet 154 is described as *the fairest*.
[282] votary - a devoted follower.

The dedication to the Sonnets had started, *to the only begetter of the ensuing Sonnets Master W. H.*. I have omitted the sonnets 138 & 144 which had appeared in the *Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599. My interpretation is that these two Sonnets had been written to Mary Fitton by someone who was jealous of the relationship she was striking up with William Herbert. One can well imagine Sir William Knollys addressing these sonnets to Mary Fitton, the context feels right, and her writing them into a copy-book which was printed in 1599 as the *Passionate Pilgrim*. Whether by accident or design, the inclusion of these sonnets confused the chronology of the Shake-Speare Sonnets for 400 years.

138 The author admitting he deludes himself in his infatuation also aims to delude the reader. He wants to appear both an untutored youth and a man whose years are past his best, never mind the age difference of about forty years. Middle-aged men can fantasize! From correspondence between Knollys and Anne Newdigate one senses that Mary Fitton gave him the run-around.

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days [283] are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue,
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed:
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love, loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her, and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

144 The author is caught emotionally but rationally between an evil female and *a man right fair*. Say the writer was William Knollys, the angel was William Herbert, the female was Mary Fitton and the time was around 1599 when Knollys was in love with Mary Fitton, but was jealously watching develop the courtship of these two young lovers.

Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
Which like two spirits do suggest me still,
The better angel is a man right fair:
The worser spirit a woman coloured ill.

[283] As well as other changes, *days* has replaced *years* in the original *Passionate Pilgrim* of 1599.

To win me soon to hell my female evil,
Tempteth my better angel from my side, [284]
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil:
Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
And whether that my angel be turned fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell,
But being both from me both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
Yet this shall I ne'er know but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

So what has been happening?

After the baby was lost the lovers went in different directions but somehow kept in contact, occasionally meeting. Mary Fitton eventually came under the protection of a distant cousin, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, and by him had two children. Leveson died suddenly in 1605 and six months later her father died, by which time Mary Fitton had taken up with Captain William Polewhele and was pregnant. Any ideas Mary Fitton and William Pembroke had of one day getting together and marrying evaporated and Pembroke discovered she had not been faithful to him. The affair was over, but now the two lovers had to disengage without scandal or rancour and we read it in the protracted last sonnets how they slowly desensitise the high emotions that had been running through them for years.

Not only were the two men who had looked after her dead, Sir William Knollys who had repeatedly vowed that he wanted to marry her, turned his back on her and in 1605 married a girl of eighteen whose lover begot Knollys' two children.

By 1609, the year the Sonnets were printed, Mary Fitton's life had changed, she was a married woman with children, pregnant and with an ailing husband. One can only surmise why the Sonnets were printed in 1609 but it would make wonderful drama if Mary Fitton was found to have poisoned Leveson and Polewhele and that the biological father of their putative children was William Herbert.

[284] Q *sight*.

CHAPTER TEN – AS TIME GOES BY

In August 1605 Mary Fitton's cousin, lover and protector, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson, died suddenly. The following February her loving father, Sir Edward Fitton, was buried at Gawsworth. The deaths marked a sea-change. Was a new *father-figure* needed? Nine months after her father's funeral Mary gave birth to a son christened William.[285] During a pregnancy she married William Polewhele a naval captain who as master of the *Lion's Whelp* had served under Leveson. Widowed (suddenly) in 1609, she remarried in 1611. Her second husband, John Lougher, would die in 1635.

In 1621, Lady Mary Sidney Wroth, William Herbert's cousin and father to her two children, acknowledging her aunt, Mary Sidney, Countess Pembroke, who had died a few months earlier, in her massive allegorical tome, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania,* (*Urania*) to. In it the character *Antissia* (her *opponent,* Mary Fitton) had a seven-year relationship with *Amphilanthus* (her cousin, William Herbert). *Urania* helps confirm the Herbert-Fitton affair ending around 1607, the time Mary married Polewhele.

From the dedication of the *Shake-Speare Sonnets* one draws the conclusion it was Mary Fitton, rather than William Herbert, who had the poetry printed to immortalize their love. Why was it registered on 20th May 1609?[286] Was Polewhele known to be terminally ill? He was buried only four month later on 26th September; Mary was carrying a daughter. Did Mary have the Sonnets printed to pre-empt their suppression should Pembroke consider them a threat? Were they printed to forestall a conflict of ownership should she die in child-bed leaving everything to Polewhele? A public revelation of an ongoing affair thought to have ended in 1601 would have been a huge embarrassment to Pembroke, whose 1604 yet childless marriage to the estate and wealth of Mary Talbot could have been jeopardised. Threatened with loss of face Pembroke was known to be ferocious.

Mary Fitton and John Lougher appear to have had a good marriage. In his will asked he be buried at Gawsworth. In 1640, five years after his passing, Mary suffered the anguish of the deaths, possibly during child-bed, of two married daughters. That same year she made her will also asking to be buried at her childhood home, Gawsworth.[287] I suspect she had suffered a stroke; the names of her two Welsh properties are slurred. 1640 was also the tenth anniversary of William Herbert's death and coincided with, although I doubt a coincidence, John Benson publishing *Poems Written by Wil. Shake-Speare Gent*, an anthology of poetry in all probability collected by Mary Fitton. It included the poems in

[285] Of course!

[286] If one accepts that the Registration to Thomas Thorpe was not a forgery.

[287] Her will named her as Mary Polewhele, but Polewhele was struck out and Lougher inserted.

the *Passionate Pilgrim*, all but eight of the Sonnets, *A Lover's Complaint*, verses from plays L*ove's Labour's Lost* and *As you Like It*. Other authors' poems were included; a short one initialled WB [288] notes the death of Shakespeare in April 1616 in its title.

In Benson's edition the order of the Sonnets is rearranged thematically – a task for an author intimate with the content rather than a publisher whose objective was to get to market and profit. From the Sonnets we learn that Mary Fitton remained in love with Pembroke even when she released him. Receiving his stream of poetry she had every reason to believe he was in love with her. Could she ever forget those first glorious, intimate months, her first experience of sex and perhaps working and rehearsing alongside William, playwrights and actors such as William Kempe, for the Yuletide plays at Court?

Mary Fitton Polewhele Lougher died at Perton on the outskirts of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, in 1641 aged 63. It is not known if her body returned to Gawsworth.

The whole concourse of the Sonnets deliberately hid the lovers' identities. *My name will be buried where my body is*, yet self-appointed *Shakespeareans* spuriously dismiss the Dedication's *Master W. H.* being William Herbert saying that before he succeeded to the Pembroke title he was formally referred to as Lord Cardiff.[289] But suppose the Dedication *had* said *Lord or Earl W. H.* his identity would have become apparent to all, to William's great embarrassment.

William Herbert, as a young man, swerved marriage for nearly a decade. He had no legitimate child to succeed him but was not impotent. His supposedly misshapen wife, Mary Talbot, gave birth to a son late on, but the child soon died. Apart from the wealth that his wife's dowry brought, a Talbot was genetically a rotten choice; the Herberts (Pembroke) and the Talbots (Shrewsbury) had been intermarrying for centuries. Mary Fitton, however, would have provided a fecund partner – one can count at least nine pregnancies by four different men. Here, Sonnet 33, I believe sunne means son.

Even so my sunne one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow,
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
Yet him for this, my love so whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun staineth.

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[288] The initials suggest William Basse. In March 1616 William Herbert became Lord Chamberlain and Mary Fitton may not have received the news until April hence the poem. But April 1616 coincided with the date written into the Stratford register which might not have been lost upon playwright Michael Drayton who was a frequent visitor to the town.

[289] Reminds me of Captain Mainwaring in *Dad's Army*, "Don't tell him, Pike!"

A son *was* born in March 1601 and one hour later was taken away to be fostered. Mary Wroth validates this in *Urania* where this *fictional* child grows up to become a social annoyance. A live birth with an indeterminate father had caused Pembroke a problem. Had the child died, as the Court was led to believe, my view is that he still would not have married Mary Fitton. Her father was skint; certainly no dowry to compare with the wealth Mary Talbot brought into the marriage and I doubt William Herbert would have welcomed Mary Fitton as an intellectual equal, tolerated her independence, wildness of spirit or wanted to be seen alongside a woman taller than him.

If a fable proves true that William Herbert was not the genetic son of the ageing, second Earl Pembroke but his biological father was Christopher Marlowe then posterity and the Pembroke gene-pool were better served when his younger brother succeeded him. It could (remotely) explain some of the strange twists of Marlowe's life – why he went to university almost as an afterthought at the age of eighteen,[290] his strange relationship with the Privy Council to obtain his Cambridge degree, the evidence that Marlowe escaped from Deptford, and the rumour he was hidden by Mary Sidney at Wilton where he could contribute to *Shake-speare* plays. [291] But that is supposition.

It is quite evident that the authors of the Sonnets, poems and plays either wanted, or needed to hide their identity; and they did so, most successfully, for over 400 years. *Will Shake-Speare had* to be a pen-name, a fact which in itself eliminates William Shaxper of Stratford-upon-Avon.

My view is that the 1623 collection of *Shakespeare* Plays was specifically brought together by William Herbert to mark his mother's, Mary Sidney's, sixtieth birthday. Here is the poem Ben Jonson composed for the page facing the title page of the *First Folio* and its iconic portrait, advising the reader

This figure, that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut:
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature, to outdo the life:
O, could he but have drawn his wit
As well in brass, as he hath hit
His face, the Print would then surpass

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[290] Most students had *left* University by the time they were seventeen.

[291] In *As You Like It* a fleeting character, Sir Oliver Mar-text, is introduced although there is another character named Oliver. This could relate to the *Marprelate Pamphlets* to which Christopher Marlowe is thought to have contributed, published by his university colleague, John Penry. Was Penry from a remote farm in Wales known at University as the *Shepherd*? It seems the author of *AYLI* knew that Penry's body had been switched to allow Marlowe to escape and that these lines relate to John Penry:

"Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:
Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?"

All, that ever was writ in brass.
But, since he cannot, Reader look
Not on his Picture, but his Book.

Now count how often the letter M appears. It doesn't.

The title page has the strange image by Martin Dro es hout; Martin being slang for a monkey or fool; and was this the door that opens to reveal the plays inside but – until then – the Droeshout (door is shut).

Robin P Williams in her *Sweet Swan of Avon* gives much evidence and a good argument to suggest that the main conduit through which the plays emerged was the Sidney-Herberts, either through patronage, their having written plays themselves or having others modify existing or embryo plays. Countess Pembroke was involved with a considerable number of literary personages with the ability to write plays but even closer to home was a brother, Robert Sidney, Mary Wroth's father. Drama was an art that the Sidneys and the Herberts enjoyed and supported and the plays may have been Christmas gifts to the Monarch. Mary Sidney signed herself as MP. M was missing from Jonson's poem, statistically impossible in that number of words!

All roads seem to lead back to the Sidney family and in particular Countess Pembroke. However, there is a health-warning about play-writing; the introduction to the Ardern Shakespeare *King Richard II* nicely explains the subtleties of dabbling in political theatre. On 7th February 1601, four weeks after the gala performance of *Twelfth Night,* supporters of Robert Devereux, Lord Essex, paid for Shakespeare's Company at the Globe to perform *Richard II* with *its deposing and killing of the king*. They assumed the play's propaganda would help serve their attempt, the following day, to seize control of the government in London and hence the Crown. The play was *good*, but not that good; and they did not carry public support; the Queen's spies were well ahead of the game. Essex, William Knollys's nephew, was executed. To perform an English historical drama held an inbuilt risk as the plot inevitably involved a change of sovereign; the associated propaganda might work for or against the existing monarch. Pembroke was appointed Lord Chamberlain in 1616. The subtlety of his role was to ensure that the public would not become restless. It was a wise author and a wise patron who did not attach their name to a historical play.

Big conflagrations have caused considerable frustration to historians. The first in 1647 destroyed part of the Pembroke House at Wilton. The second, the 1666 Great Fire of London, completely destroyed Baynard's Castle, the Pembrokes' London home. As a result the Pembrokes' Tudor portraits and their libraries of countless books and documents, including, possibly, hand-written scripts of the Court plays, went up in flame. Was this the destiny of a copybook containing Mary Fitton's Sonnets? Or dare we hope that her impassioned scribbles are collecting dust, like her portrait, in some forgotten archive?

I end with the epilogues from *As You Like It* spoken by *Rosalind*, having stepped out of her male garments as *Ganymede*. Could Mary Fitton have played this part as Gwenyth Paltrow played *Juliet* in *Shakespeare in Love?* A woman playing a man playing a woman played by a man playing a woman playing a man.

> *It is not the fashion to see the lady the epilogue; but it is no more unhandsome than to see the lord the prologue. If it be true that good wine needs no bush, 'tis true that a good play needs no epilogue; yet to good wine they do use good bushes, and good plays prove the better by the help of good epilogues. What a case am I in then, that am neither a good epilogue nor cannot insinuate with you in the behalf of a good play! I am not furnished like a beggar, therefore to beg will not become me. My way is to conjure you; and I'll begin with the women. I charge you, O women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as please you; and I charge you, O men, for the love you bear to women – as I perceive by your simpering none of you hates them – that between you and the women the play may please. If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not; and, I am sure, as many as have good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths, will, for my kind offer, when I make curtsy, bid me farewell.*

EPILOGUE

By 1621 William Herbert had been married to Mary Talbot for seventeen years but this did not prevent his having a relationship with his first cousin, the widowed Mary Wroth, with whom he sired two children.[292] The first part of *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania (Urania)* written by Mary Wroth, first published in 1621, is an extensive allegory of a privileged, court society and of the many family members around her. It is a cross between Bocaccio's *Decameron* and a debutant's diary with names barely disguised by anagrams and written in the style of her Uncle, Sir Philip Sidney. The book, obliquely dedicated to William's mother, her recently deceased aunt and namesake, Mary Sidney Herbert , contained an element of thinly veiled libel. As a result the publisher was forced to destroy any copies, however, twenty copies survived. The manuscript of the second part was discovered last century and printed by Arizona State University in 1999.

The eponymous *Countess* was Susan de Vere, the wife of Philip, William Herbert's brother.[293] *Urania's* many characters with their contrived names were clearly based on very real people. Mary Wroth became *Pamphilia* and Pembroke *Amphilanthus, the Emperor*. Mary Fitton was *Antissia* – meaning *opponent* – and Mary Fitton *had* been Mary Wroth's rival for William's love. In fact, in *Urania* a mock marriage took place between *Pamphilia* and *Amphilanthus* with *Antissia* one of several witnesses. The quotation in Chapter 6 now might makes more sense.

> *"One Mrs Martin who dwelt at the Chopping Knife near Ludgate told me that she hath seen priests marry gentlewomen at the Court, in that time when that Mrs Fitton was in great favour ....."*

From Sheila T Cavanagh's *Cherished Torment the emotional geography of Lady Mary Wroth's Urania* there are many instances where *Antissia* is described but, on page 72, when *Antissia* hears false reports of Amphilanthus' death she: *put on mourning . . . and betaking herself to a Castle, not far from the sea, where she beheld nothing but Rocks, hills of Sand, as bare as her content: Waves raging like her Sorrow.* Mary Wroth's words are an echo of Sonnets 64 and 65, published twelve years apart, and nearly twenty years after the event.

One can imagine Mary Fitton in South Wales. She walks along a deserted beach near Tenby Castle, distraught and close to madness, in tattered clothes, grieving. She fears the loss of the man she adores.

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[292] Their first child, William, born in the spring 1620 became a colonel in Ireland during the 1642-51 Civil War. The second, Katherine, married a Mr Lovel of Oxfordshire.

[293] There were three de Vere sisters, granddaughters of the playwright Earl of Oxford. Elizabeth married Lord Derby. William Herbert rejected Brigit in 1597; his broth, Philip, married Susan in 1604.

64: When I have seen by time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss, and loss with store;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state it self confounded to decay,
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate:
That Time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have, that which it fears to lose.

65: Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but time decays?
O fearful meditation, where, alack,
Shall time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

It is a judgment-call whether the lovers deliberately set out to fool posterity. On face value they made it appear that the author of the Sonnets addressed two different people. The chronology of their love affair was also obfuscated by the inclusion of Sonnets 138 and 144 which had appeared in the *Passionate Pilgrim* in 1599, *before* the scandal of Mary Fitton's pregnancy.

William Herbert was described by his tutor as a man who could not *bear injury, or cross in reputation*. This is borne out in his emotional cocktail of sadness, frustration, love, frenzy and anger in his *Dark Lady* sonnets. But what if this was his response to *Mary Fitton's* love, and to her perceived betrayal, such as around 1604, in suspecting that she was carrying Leveson's child, or in 1606-7 when she slamming the door in his face by marrying Polewhele? By the inclusion of just two sonnets from the *Passionate Pilgrim*, published *before* 1600*,* whoever arranged to have these poems printed would have (inadvertently) put up a smokescreen, shifting the time-window, and hiding the fact that the relationship between Mary Fitton and William Herbert continued well beyond his marriage; thus fooling society, historians and posterity.

I had thought, throughout, that Mary was reacting simply to gossip about her ex-lover, brought to her by people such as her new lover, Sir Richard Leveson, and the occasional meeting with Pembroke. Then, having done extensive research, I reread Sonnets 127-152, (excluding 138 and 144), and found the appropriateness with which William Herbert's sonnets could be addressed to, or respond to, Mary Fitton and her sonnets. For instance, the three *Williams* of Sonnet 135 can be explained by William Polewhele, William Herbert, Leveson's bastard child, named William, or Polewhele's legitimate son, named William.

One astrological prediction held that William Herbert would not survive to enjoy a fiftieth birthday. He did, but only just. On 9th April 1630 his friend the Countess Devonshire held a dinner party in London to celebrate his birthday. He left the party and returned to Baynard's. The following morning he was found dead. He had suffered a heart attack. Was Mary Fitton there?

Richard Leveson also died unexpectedly.

William Polewhele died in the third year of his marriage to Mary Fitton.

How dark a lady was the Dark Lady?

Returning to the opening quotations…

Since distance bares me from so great happiness as I can seldom hear from you,

I know not how I shall offend in dedicating my unpolished lines to your lordship

which when I do is so welcome as I esteem nothing more worthy,

nor how the world will censure me for choosing so strong a prop to support so weak a burthen only,

and for your love which I doubt not of shall be equalled in full measure

if your Honour seem but pleased, I account myself highly praised, and vow to take advantage of all idle hours, till I have honoured you with some graver labour.

but lest my lines to tedious were, and time that limits all things bares me of words, which else could never cease to tell how dear you are, and with what zeal I desire your return,

But if the first heir of my invention prove deformed, I shall be sorry it had so noble a god-father, and never after ear so barren a land, for fear it yield me still so bad a harvest.

then can wish nothing more than your *heart's desire,* and will ever continue;

I leave it to your honourable survey, and your honour to your *heart's content;* which I wish may always answer your own wish and the world's hopeful expectation.

Your affectionate sister. . .

Your honour's in all duty …

SPOILER

Around 1595 Mary Fitton, born 1578, went to live at Court to be a maid of honour to Queen Elizabeth. There she developed a crush on the teenage Earl of Southampton. Unfortunately his eyes were on another maid of honour, Elizabeth Vernon, whom he made pregnant and married. Mary turned her attention to the teenage William Herbert who would become Earl of Pembroke when his ailing father passed way.

Mary's mentor at Court was William Knollys, in his mid-fifties and a friend of her father. Knollys, whose mother was the Queen's first cousin, fell in love with Mary and made a fool of himself over her. He was nicknamed *The Clown* and is lampooned in the play *Twelfth Night* as *Malvolio.*

When William Herbert swore he would marry her, Mary gave up her virginity and in June 1600 became pregnant. William admitted the child was his but steadfastly refused to marry. The Queen placed Mary under house-arrest and William was sent to the Fleet Prison to reconsider.

The baby was born at the end of March 1601 and word went round the Court that it had been stillborn; there is a strong possibility that it was only a rumour and the baby was taken away to be fostered. On 8th April William Herbert, now Earl Pembroke came of age and inherited the Pembroke wealth. The Queen released him from prison and a month later Mary was allowed to return to her family home at Gawsworth in Cheshire.

Although William Herbert married in 1604, the lust and love these two young people felt for each other endured over the years until Mary married in 1607. During those years Mary would later admit to having been promiscuous, specifically a relationship with a second-cousin, Admiral Sir Richard Leveson; he died suddenly in 1605. Mary married firstly a naval captain, William Polewhele, and when he died suddenly in 1609, two years later a deputy-lieutenant, John Lougher. Lougher died in 1635 and Mary lived on until 1641.

Appendix 1 - The Passionate Pilgrim (1599)

I believe that William Herbert had *The Passionate Pilgrim* printed, with its twenty-one poems on the subjects of love and women, as a gift to Mary Fitton to celebrate her 21st Birthday. Here is a summary of the poems.

PP1	Shake-Speare Sonnet 138 precursor
PP2	Shake-Speare Sonnet 144 precursor
PP3	Shakespeare – *Love's Labour's Lost*
PP4	"Venus *and Adonis"*
PP5	Shakespeare – *Love's Labour's Lost*
PP6	"Venus *and Adonis"*
PP7	not yet attributed
PP8	Richard Barnfield
PP9	"Venus *and Adonis"*
PP10	not yet attributed
PP11	Bartholomew Griffin, from his sequence *Fidessa*, 1596.
PP12	Thomas Deloney (1543- 600)
PP13	not yet attributed
PP14	not yet attributed
PP15	not yet attributed
PP16	not yet attributed
PP17	Shakespeare – *Love's Labour's Lost*
PP18	not yet attributed
PP19	Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)
PP20	Christopher Marlowe / Walter Raleigh
PP21	Richard Barnfield – Philomel (Nightingale)

Could the hitherto unpublished poems, PP7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 18 have been composed by William Herbert? [294] With some certainty, the first Christmas holiday play that William Herbert and Mary Fitton attended together at Court was *Love's Labour's Lost* (PP3 & PP5).

[294] During PP's subsequent printings poems were taken out and others put in. In 1600 there was an edition called *A book of amours by John Davies with certain sonnets by William Shakespeare.* In 1612 Thomas Heywood wrote: *Here likewise, I must necessarily insert a manifest injury done me in that work, by taking the two Epistles of Paris to Helen, and Helen to Paris, and printing them in a lesse(r) volume, under the name of another, which may put the world in opinion I might steal them from him; and he to doe himself right, hath since published them in his own name: but as I must acknowledge my lines not worthy his patronage, under whom he hath publisht them, so the Author I know much offended with M. Jaggard that (altogether unknown to him) presumed to make so bold with his name.* An Apology for Actors, Epistle.

There are only two copies of the 1599 *The Passionate Pilgrim*, each document differing slightly. My theory is that William Herbert decided to have Mary Fitton's hand-written book of favourite poems printed as a coming-of-age present. He slips out of Baynard's and walks the few yards to Valentine Simmes' print works. He is in a hurry and asks for the poems to be printed, one per page without using the verso. When he receives it he is unhappy with the quality. He instructs some pages to be reprinted and the booklet rebound. Mary Fitton treasures the book and keeps it with four other works. When she leaves Court in 1601 the five books are found by Mistress Onslowe, another maid of honour, who holds on to them and eventually they are bound into a vellum bound volume with her initials G O on the front cover. The five works are:

The Passionate Pilgrim, William Herbert's Gift to Mary Fitton.

The latest (unique) 1599 printing of Venus and Adonis which Mary Fitton was involved in editing and which she dedicated to Southampton.

The latest (unique) 1600 printing of Lucrece also dedicated to Southampton by one assumes Mary Fitton.

An exceptionally rare poem Emaricdulfe by E. C. 1595, dedicated to Mary Fitton's brother, Edward Fitton. The object of the poem was probably a maid called Mary Flude and the initials E & C of the author envelope her name.

Thomas Middleton's The Ghost of Lucrece, 1600, unique.

Four of five works are connected with Mary Fitton and a terminal date of 1600 when Mary Fitton left Court. The circumstantial evidence is strong.

PP1 Modified by 1609 to become Shake-speare Sonnet 138

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unskilful in the world's false forgeries.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although I know my years be past the best,
I smiling credit her false-speaking tongue,
Outfacing faults in love with love's ill rest.
But wherefore says my love that she is young?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
O, love's best habit's in a soothing tongue,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I'll lie with love, and love with me,
Since that our faults in love thus smothered be.

PP2 Modified slightly in 1609 to become Shake-Speare Sonnet 144

Two loves I have, of comfort and despair,

That like two spirits do suggest me still;
My better angel is a man right fair,
My worser spirit a woman coloured ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side,
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
Wooing his purity with her fair pride.
And whether that my angle be turned fiend,
Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
For being both to me, both to each friend,
I guess one angel in another's hell.
The truth I shall not know, but live in doubt,
Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

PP3 Love's Labour's Lost – Shakespeare

Did not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,
'Gainst whom the world could not hold argument,
Persuade my heart to this false perjury?
Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.
A woman I forswore;[295] but I will prove,
Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee:
My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love;
Thy grace being gained cures all disgrace in me.
My vow was breath, and breath a vapour is;
Then, thou fair sun, that on this earth doth shine,
Exhal'st this vapour vow; in thee it is:
If broken, then it is no fault of mine.
If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
To break an oath, to win a paradise?

PP4 Venus and Adonis

Sweet Cytherea[296], sitting by a brook
With young Adonis, lovely, fresh and green,
Did court the lad with many a lovely look,
Such looks as none could look but beauty's queen.
She told him stories to delight his car;
She showed him favours to allure his eye;
To win his heart, she touched him here and there;

[295] Has he now met the woman to whom he was in 1595 engaged to be married?
[296] Venus

Touches so soft still conquer chastity.
But whether unripe years did want conceit,
Or he refused to take her figured proffer,
The tender nibbler would not touch the bait,
But smile and jest at every gentle offer:
Then fell she on her back, fair queen, and toward:
He rose and ran away; ah, fool too froward.

PP5 Love's Labour's Lost – Shakespeare

If love make me forsworn, how shall I swear to love?
O never faith could hold, if not to beauty vowed:
Though to myself forsworn, to thee I'll constant prove;
Those thoughts, to me like oaks, to thee like osiers bowed.
Study his bias leaves, and makes his book thine eyes,
Where all those pleasures live that art can comprehend.
If knowledge be the mark, to know thee shall suffice;
Well learned is that tongue that well can thee commend:
All ignorant that soul that sees thee without wonder;
Which is to me some praise, that I thy parts admire.
Thine eye Jove's lightning seems, thy voice his dreadful thunder,
Which, not to anger bent, is music and sweet fire.
Celestial as thou art, O do not love that wrong,
To sing heaven's praise with such an earthly tongue.

PP6 Venus and Adonis

Scarce had the sun dried up the dewy morn
And scarce the herd gone to the hedge for shade,
When Cytherea, all in love forlorn,
A longing tarriance for Adonis made
Under an osier growing by a brook,
A brook where Adon used to cool his spleen.
Hot was the day; she hotter that did look
For his approach, that often there had been.
Anon he comes, and throws his mantle by,
And stood stark naked on the brook's green brim:
The sun looked on the world with glorious eye,
Yet not so wistly as this queen on him.
He, spying her, bounced in whereas he stood;
'O Jove,' quoth she, 'why was not I a flood!'

PP7

Fair is my love, but not so fair as fickle;
Mild as a dove, but neither true nor trusty;
Brighter than glass, and yet, as glass is, brittle;
Softer than wax, and yet as iron rusty;
A lily pale, with damask dye to grace her;
None fairer, nor none falser to deface her.

Her lips to mine how often hath she joined,
Between each kiss her oaths of true love swearing!
How many tales to please me hath she coined,
Dreading my love, the loss thereof still fearing!
Yet in the midst of all her pure protestings
Her faith, her oaths, her tears, and all were jestings.

She burned with love, as straw with fire flameth;
She burned out love, as soon as straw out-burneth;
She framed the love, and yet she foiled the framing;
She bade love last, and yet she fell a-turning.
Was this a lover, or a lecher whether?
Bad in the best, though excellent in neither.

PP8 Richard Barnfield (see Chapter Four)

PP9 Venus and Adonis

Fair was the morn, when the fair queen of love,
[ ]
Paler for sorrow than her milk-white dove,
For Adon's sake, a youngster proud and wild,
Her stand she takes upon a steep-up hill,
Anon Adonis comes with horn and hounds;
She, silly queen, with more than love's good will,
Forbade the boy he should not pass those grounds.
'Once', quoth she, 'did I see a fair sweet youth
Here in these brakes deep-wounded with a boar,
Deep in the thigh, a spectacle of ruth!
See, in my thigh,' quoth she, 'here was the sore.'
She showed hers; he saw more wounds than one,[297]
And blushing fled, and left her all alone.

[297] Her period, he is embarrassed and flees.

PP10

Sweet rose, fair flower, untimely plucked, soon vaded,
Plucked in the bud and vaded in the spring!
Bright orient pearl, alack, too timely shaded!
Fair creature, killed too soon by death's sharp sting!
Like a green plum that hangs upon a tree,
And falls through wind before the fall should be.

I weep for thee and yet no cause I have;
For why thou left'st me nothing in thy will.
And yet thou left'st me more than I did crave,
For why I craved nothing of thee still:
O yes, dear friend, I pardon crave of thee,
Thy discontent thou didst bequeath to me.[298]

PP11 Bartholomew Griffin from his sequence *Fidessa*.

Venus with young Adonis sitting by her
Under a myrtle shade began to woo him;
She told the youngling how god Mars did try her,
And as he fell to her, so fell she to him.
'Even thus', quoth she, the warlike god embraced me',
And then she clipped Adonis in her arms;
'Even thus', quoth she, 'the warlike god unlaced me',
As if the boy should use like loving charms;
'Even thus', quoth she, 'he seized on my lips',
And with her lips on his did act the seizure;
And as she fetched breath, away he skips,
And would not take her meaning nor her pleasure.
Ah, that I had my lady at this bay,
To kiss and clip me till I run away!

PP12 Thomas Deloney

Crabbed age and youth cannot live together:
Youth is full of pleasance, age is full of care;
Youth like summer morn, age like winter weather;
Youth like summer brave, age like winter bare.

[298] He has caught something (syphilis?) off this young woman. Has the woman died?

Youth is full of sport, age's breath is short;
Youth is nimble, age is lame;
Youth is hot and bold, age is weak and cold;
Youth is wild and age is tame.
Age, I do abhor thee; youth, I do adore thee;
O, my love, my love is young!
Age, I do defy thee. O, sweet shepherd, hie thee,
For methinks thou stay too long.

PP13

Beauty is but a vain and doubtful good,
A shining gloss that vadeth suddenly,
A flower that dies when first it 'gins to bud,
A brittle glass that's broken presently;
A doubtful good, a gloss, a glass, a flower,
Lost, vaded, broken, dead within an hour.

And as goods lost are seld[299] or never found,
As vaded gloss no rubbing will refresh,
As flowers dead lie witherid on the ground,
As broken glass no cement can redress:
So beauty blemished once, for ever lost,
In spite of physic, painting, pain and cost.

PP14

Good night, good rest: ah, neither be my share;
She bade good night that kept my rest away;
And daffed me to a cabin hanged with care,
To descant on the doubts of my decay.
'Farewell,' quoth she, 'and come again to-morrow.'
Fare well I could not, for I supped with sorrow.

Yet at my parting sweetly did she smile,
In scorn or friendship nill I conster whether;
'T may be, she joyed to jest at my exile,
'T may be, again to make me wander thither:
'Wander', a word for shadows like myself,
As take the pain, but cannot pluck the pelf.[300]

PP15

[299] seldom
[300] reward

Lord, how mine eyes throw gazes to the east!
My heart doth charge the watch; the morning rise
Doth cite each moving sense from idle rest,
Not daring trust the office of mine eyes.
While Philomela[301] sings, I sit and mark,
And wish her lays were tuned like the lark.

For she doth welcome daylight with her ditty,
And drives away dark dreaming night:
The night so packed, I post unto my pretty;
Heart hath his hope and eyes their wished sight;
Sorrow changed to solace and solace mixed with sorrow;
For why, she sighed, and bade me come tomorrow.

Were I with her, the night would post too soon,
But now are minutes added to the hours;
To spite me now, each minute seems a moon;
Yet not for me, shine sun to succour flowers!
Pack night, peep day; good day, of night now borrow;
Short night, tonight, and length thyself tomorrow.

PP16[302]

It was a lording's daughter, the fairest one of three,
That liked of her master as well as well might be,
Till looking on an Englishman, the fairest that eye could see,
Her fancy fell a-turning.
Long was the combat doubtful that love with love did fight,
To leave the master loveless, or kill the gallant knight;
To put in practice either, alas, it was a spite
Unto the silly damsel!
But one must be refused; more mickle was the pain
That nothing could be used to turn them both to gain,

[301] See Sonnet 102

[302] I have a suspicion that this is a reference to Elizabeth de Vere whose sister, Susan would marry Philip Herbert in 1604, and their sibling, Brigit, would be rejected by William Herbert in 1597. If correct it might imply the author was William Herbert. Elizabeth was married to Lord Derby but (Before this poem was published) was reputed to have had affairs with Robert Devereux (Essex) and Walter Raleigh.

For of the two the trusty knight was wounded with disdain:
Alas, she could not help it!
Thus art with arms contending was victor of the day,
Which by a gift of learning did bear the maid away:
Then, lullaby, the learned man hath got the lady gay;
For now my song is ended.

PP17 Love's Labour's Lost – Shakespeare

On a day, alack the day!
Love, whose month was ever May,
Spied a blossom passing fair,
Playing in the wanton air.
Through the velvet leaves the wind
All unseen 'gan passage find,
That the lover, sick to death,
Wished himself the heaven's breath,
'Air', quoth he, 'thy cheeks may blow;
Air, would I might triumph so!
But, alas! my hand hath sworn
Ne'er to pluck thee from thy thorn;
Vow, alack! for youth unmeet,
Youth, so apt to pluck a sweet.
Thou for whom Jove would swear
Juno but an Ethiope were;
And deny himself for Jove,
Turning mortal for thy love.'

PP18 (Barnfield?)

My flocks feed not, my ewes breed not,
My rams speed not, all is amiss;
Love is dying, faith's defying,
Heart's denying, causer of this.
All my merry jigs are quite forgot,
All my lady's love is lost, God wot;
Where her faith was firmly fixed in love,
There a nay is placed without remove.
One silly cross wrought all my loss;
O frowning Fortune, cursed fickle dame!
For now I see inconstancy
More in women than in men remain.
In black mourn I, all fears scorn I,
Love hath forlorn me, living in thrall:
Heart is bleeding, all help needing,

O cruel speeding, fraughted with gall.
My shepherd's pipe can sound no deal;
My wether's bell rings doleful knell;
My curtal dog that wont to have played,
Plays not at all, but seems afraid;
My sighs so deep procures to weep,
In howling wise, to see my doleful plight.
How sighs resound through heartless ground,
Like a thousand vanquished men in bloody fight!
Clear wells spring not, sweet birds sing not,
Green plants bring not forth their dye;
Herds stand weeping, flocks all sleeping,
Nymphs back peeping fearfully.
All our pleasure known to us poor swains,
All our merry meetings on the plains,
All our evening sport from us is fled,
All our love is lost, for Love is dead.
Farewell, sweet lass, thy like ne'er was
For a sweet content, the cause of all my moan:
Poor Corydon[303] must live alone;
Other help for him I see that there is none.

PP19 Thomas Weelkes (1576-1623)

The content of this poem has a parallel in *A Lover's Complaint*; both describe the wiles of men in their quest for sex and how females respond.

When as thine eye hath chose the dame,
And stalled the deer that thou shouldst strike,
Let reason rule things worthy blame,
As well as fancy, partial might;
Take counsel of some wiser head,
Neither too young nor yet unwed.
And when thou com'st thy tale to tell,
Smooth not thy tongue with filed talk,
Lest she some subtle practice smell
A cripple soon can find a halt
But plainly say thou lov'st her well,
And set thy person forth to sell.

[303] A rustic Shepherd

And to her will frame all thy ways;
Spare not to spend, and chiefly there
Where thy desert may merit praise,
By ringing in thy lady's ear:
The strongest castle, tower and town,
The golden bullet beats it down.
Serve always with assured trust,
And in thy suit be humble true;
Unless thy lady prove unjust,
Press never thou to choose anew:
When time shall serve, be thou not slack
To proffer, though she put thee back.
What though her frowning brows be bent,
Her cloudy looks will calm ere night,
And then too late she will repent
That thus dissembled her delight;
And twice desire, ere it be day,
That which with scorn she put away.

What though she strive to try her strength,
And ban and brawl, and say thee nay,
Her feeble force will yield at length,
When craft hath taught her thus to say:
'Had women been so strong as men,
In faith, you had not had it then,'

The wiles and guiles that women work,
Dissembled with an outward show,
The tricks and toys that in them lurk,
The cock that treads them shall not know.
Have you not heard it said full oft,
A woman's nay doth stand for nought?

Think women still to strive with men,
To sin and never for to saint:
There is no heaven, by holy then,
When time with age shall them attaint.
Were kisses all the joys in bed,
One woman would another wed.

But, soft, enough, too much I fear,
Lest that my mistress hear my song;
She will not stick to round me on th' ear,
To teach my tongue to be so long,
Yet will she blush, here be it said,

To hear her secrets so bewrayed.

PP20 Christopher Marlowe / Walter Raleigh

Live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
And all the craggy mountains yield.

There will we sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.
There will I make thee a bed of roses,
With a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroider'd all with leaves of myrtle.
A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Then live with me and be my love.

LOVE'S ANSWER

If that the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

PP21 Richard Barnfield (see Chapter Five)

An Ode (Philomel)

As it fell upon a Day,
In the merrie Month of May,
Sitting in a pleasant shade,
Which a grove of Myrtles made,
Beastes did leap, and Birds did sing,
Trees did grow, and Plants did spring:
Every thing did banish mone,
Save the Nightingale alone.
She (poor Bird) as all forlorn,
Leand her Breast up-till a Thorn;

And there sung the dolefulst Ditty,
That to hear it was great Pity.
Fie, fie, fie; now would the cry
Teru Teru, by and by:
That to hear her so complain,
Scarce I could from Tears refrain:
For her griefes so lively shown,
Made me think upon mine own.
Ah (thought I) thou mournst in vain;
None takes Pity on thy pain:
Senseless Trees, they cannot hear thee;
Ruthless Beares, they wil not cheer thee.
King Pandion, he is dead:
All thy friends are lapt in Lead.
All thy fellow Birds do sing,
Careless of thy sorrowing.
Whilst as fickle Fortune smiled,
Thou and I, were both beguiled.
Every one that flatters thee,
Is no friend in miserie:
Words are easy, like the wind;
Faithful friends are hard to find:
Every man will be thy friend,
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend:
But if store of Crowns be scant,
No man will supply thy want.
If that one be prodigal,
Bountiful, they will him call:
And with such-like flattering,
Pity but he were a King.
If he be adict to vice,
Quickly him, they will intice.
If to Women he be bent,
They have at Commaundement.
But if Fortune once do frown,
Then farewell his great renown:
They that fawnd on him before,
Use his company no more.
He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need:
If thou sorrow, he will weep;
If thou wake, he cannot sleep:
Thus of every grief, in hart
He, with thee, doeth bear a Part.

These are certain Signs, to know
Faithful friend, from flatt'ring foe.

Appendix 2 An Ode

Nights were short, and daies were long;
Blossoms on the Hauthorn's hung:
Philomæle (Night-Musiques King)
Told the comming of the spring.
Whose sweet silver-sounding voice
Made the little birds rejoice:
Skipping light from spray to spray,
Till Aurora shew'd the day.
Scarce might one see, when I might see
(For such chaunces sudden be)
By a well of Marble-stone,
A Shepheard lying all alone.
Weep he did; and his weeping
Made the fading flowers spring.
Daphnis was his name (I ween)
Youngest Swaine of Summers Queen.
When Aurora saw t'was he.
Weep she did for companie:
Weep she did for her sweet son,
That (when antique Troy was wonne)
Suffer'd death by luckless fate,
Whom she now laments too late:
And each morning (by Cocks crew)
Showers down her silver dew.
Whose tears (falling from their spring)
Give moysture to each living thing,
That on earth increase and grow,
Through power of their friendlie foe.
Whose effect when Flora felt,
Tears, that did her bosom melt,
(For who can resist tears often,
But She whom no tears can soften?)
Peering strait above the banks,
Shew'd herself to give her thanks.
Wondring thus at Natures work,
(Wherein many maruailes lurke)

Me thought I heard a doleful noise,
Consorted with a mournful voice,
Drawing nie to hear more plain,
Hear I did, unto my pain,
(For who is not pain'd to hear

Him in grief whom heart holds dear?)
Silly swain (with grief ore-gone)
Thus to make his piteous moan.
Love I did, (alas the while)
Love I did, but did beguile
My dear love with loving so,
(Whom as then I did not know.)
Love I did the fairest boy,
That these fields did ere enjoy.
Love I did faire Ganymed;
(Venus darling, beauties bed:)
Him I thought the fairest creature;
Him the quintessence of Nature:

But yet (alas) I was deceiu'd,
(Love of reason is bereau'd)
For since then I saw a Lass,
(Lass) that did in beauty pass,
(Pass) faire Ganymede as far
As Phoebus doth the smallest star.
Love commanded me to love;
Fancy bade me not remove
My affection from the swain
Whom I never could obtain:
(For who can obtain that favour,
Which he cannot graunt the crauer?)
Love at last (though loath) prevailde;
(Love) that so my heart assailde;
Wounding me with her faire eies,
(Ah how Love can subtelize,
And devize a thousand shifts,
How to work men to his drifts)

Her it is, for whom I mourn;
Her, for whom my life I scorn;
Her, for whom I weep all day;
Her, for whom I sigh, and say,
Either She, or else no creature,
Shall enjoy my love: whose feature
Though I never can obtain,
Yet shall my true love remain:
Till (my body turn'd to clay)
My poor soul must pass away,
To the heavens; where (I hope)
Hit shall find a resting scope:

Then since I loved thee (alone)
Remember me when I am gone.
Scarce had he these last words spoken,
But me thought his heart was broken;
With great grief that did abound,
(Cares and grief the heart confound)

In whose heart (thus riv'd in three)
Eliza written I might see:
In Caracters of crimson blood,
(Whose meaning well I understood.)
Which, for my heart might not behold,
I hyed me home my sheep to fold.

Appendix 3 -The Two Noble Kinsmen

The First Folio did not include two plays, *Pericles* and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*. There is an ongoing debate as to the authors' contributions, the two names attached are John Fletcher (1579-1625) and William Shakspeare (sic). Since *Kinsmen* was a late play, and if William Herbert had a hand in it, logic suggested that there may be some autobiography written into it.

The prologue acknowledges Chaucer's *Knight Tale* as the source but Chaucer's story of the two Theban princes, Alcide and Palamon imprisoned by Theseus the King of Athens, does not include the subplot of the Gaoler's Daughter who is kissed once on the lips by Palamon and releases him from her father's custody expecting they will flee together. Here in full and retaining continuity, are the four main speeches of the Jailor's Daughter (scenes 2.4, 2.6, 3.2 and 3.4) as she descends, like Ofelia in *Hamlet* from the joy of love to the madness of despair.

2.4 Why should I love this gentleman? 'Tis odds
He never will affect me. I am base,
My father the mean keeper of his prison,
And he a prince. To marry him is hopeless,
To be his whore is witless. Out upon't,
What pushes are we wenches driven to
When fifteen once has found us? First, I saw him;
I, seeing, thought he was a goodly man;
He was as much to please a woman in him -
If he please to bestow it so – as ever
These eyes yet looked on. Next, I pitied him,
And so would any wench, o'my conscience,
That ever dreamed or vowed her maidenhead
To a young handsome man. Then, I loved him,
Extremely loved him, infinitely loved him -
And yet he had a cousin fair as he, too.
But in my heart was Palamon, and there,
Lord, what a coil he keeps! To hear him
Sing in the evening, what a heaven it is!
And yet his songs are sad ones. Fairer spoken
Was never gentleman. When I come in
To bring him water in a morning, first
He bows his noble body, then salutes me, thus:
"Fair, gentle maid, good morrow. May thy goodness
Get thee a happy husband." Once he kissed me –
I loved my lips the better ten days after.
Would he would do so every day! He grieves much,

And me as much to see his misery.
What should I do to make him know I love him?
For I would fain enjoy him. Say I ventured
To set him free? What says the law then? Thus much
For law or kindred! I will do it,
And this night; ere tomorrow he shall love me.

2.6 Let all the dukes and all the devils roar
He is at liberty! I have ventured for him,
And out I have brought him. To a little wood
A mile hence I have sent him, where a cedar
Higher than all the rest spreads like a plane,
Fast by a brook – and there he shall keep close
Till I provide him files and food, for yet
His iron bracelets are not off. O Love,
What a stout-hearted child thou art! My father
Durst better have endured cold iron than done it.
I love him beyond love and beyond reason
Or wit or safety. I have made him know it -
I care not, I am desperate. If the law
Find me and then condemn me for't, some wenches,
Some honest-hearted maids, will sing my dirge
And tell the memory my death was noble,
Dying almost a martyr. That way he takes,
I purpose, is my way too. Sure, he cannot
Be so unmanly as to leave me here
If he do, maids will not so easily
Trust men again. And yet, he has not thanked me
For what I have done – no, not so much as kissed me -
And that, methinks, is not so well. Nor scarcely
Could I persuade him to become a free man,
He made such scruples of the wrong he did
To me and to my father. Yet, I hope
When he considers more, this love of mine
Will take more root within him. Let him do
What he will with me – so he use me kindly.
For use me, so he shall, or I'll proclaim him
And to his face, no man. I'll presently
Provide him necessaries and pack my clothes up,
And where there is a patch of ground I'll venture
So he be with me. By him, like a shadow;
I'll ever dwell. Within, this hour the hubbub
Will be all o'er the prison – I am then
Kissing the man they look for. Farewell, father:
Get many more such prisoners and such daughters

And shortly you may keep yourself. Now to him.

3.2 He has mistook the brake I meant is gone
After his fancy. Tis now wellnigh morning,
No matter – would it were perpetual night,
And darkness lord o'th' world. Hark, 'tis a wolf!
In me hath grief slain fear, and, but for one thing,
I care for nothing – and that's Palamon.
I reck not if the wolves would jaw me, so
He had this file. What if I hollered for him?
I cannot holler. If I whooped, what then?
If he not answered, I should call a wolf
And do him but that serviced I have heard
Strange howls this livelong night – why may't not be
They have made prey of him? He has no weapons;
He cannot run; the jangling of his gyves
Might call fell things to listen; who have in them
A sense to know a man unarmed, and can
Smell where resistance is. I'll set it down.
He's torn to pieces: they howled many together
And then they fed on him. So much for that:
Be bold to ring the bell. How stand I then?
All's chared when he is gone. No, no, I lie;
My father's to be hanged for his escape,
Myself to beg, if I priced life so much
As to deny my act – but that I would not,
Should I try death by dozens. I am moped -
Food took I none these two days,
Sipped some water. I have not closed mine eyes
Save when my lids scoured off their brine. Alas,
Dissolve, my life: let not my sense unsettle,
Lest I should drown or stab or hang myself.
O state of nature, fail together in me
Since thy best props are warped. So which way now?
The best way is the next way to a grave,
Each errant step beside is torment. Lo,
The moon is down, the crickets chirp, the screech-owl
Calls in the dawn. All offices are done
Save what I fail in: but the point is this,
An end, and that is all.

3.4 I am very cold, and all the stars are out too
The little stars and all, that look like aglets -

The sun has seen my folly. Palamon!
Alas, no, he's in heaven. Where am I now?
Yonder's the sea and there's a ship – how't tumbles!
And there's a rock lies watching underwater -
Now, now, it beats upon it – now, now, now,
There's a leak sprung, a sound one-how they cry!
Open her before the wind – you'll lose all else.
Up with a course or two and tack about, boys,
Good night, good night, you're gone: I am very hungry.
Would I could find a fine frog – he would tell me
News from all parts o'th' world, then would I make
A carrack of a cockle-shell, and sail
By east and north-east to the King of Pygmies;
For he tells fortunes rarely. Now my father,
Twenty to one, is trussed up in a trice
Tomorrow morning, I'll say never a word.
(Sings)
For I'll cut my green coat, a foot above my knee.
And I'll clip my yellow locks, an inch below mine eye,
Hey nonny, nonny, nonny,
He s'buy me a white cut, forth for to ride,
And I'll go seek him, through the world that is so wide,
Hey nonny, nonny, nonny,
O for a prick now, like a nightingale,
To put my breast against. I shall sleep like a top else.

Although the *Two Noble Kinsmen* is a different story to Hamlet, we have the echoes of a prison, the passion of a besotted maid tricked by an indifferent prince, a father wronged and a maid going mad.

We never witness a meeting between the Gaoler's Daughter and Palamon, surely a scene that would have enhanced the drama, nor do we know her name or that of the Wooer her father intends her to marry.

Curious she makes a number of allusions to naval terms but spoken as if she despises seafarers. It would appear that Fletcher consulted Thomas Speght's 1602 second edition of *Chaucer's Works.* Speght was a close friend of Francis Beaumont, father of Fletcher's co-writer, also a Francis Beaumont, a friend of Mary Fitton (Chapter Six). After Beaumont's death in 1616 Fletcher co-wrote with Philip Massenger who grew up with Wlliam Herbert at Wilton House.

The story of the Gaoler's daughter in *Two Noble Kinsmen* parallels the history of Mary Fitton who kissed her prince, who rejected her, and her descent towards madness.

THE DARLING BUDS OF MAIE

In 1619, two months after the death of the actor Richard Burbadge,[304] William Herbert wrote while an after-dinner play was being put on by the Duke of Lennox,

> *& even now the company are at a play, which I being tender harted could not endure to see so soone after the loss of my old acquaintance Burbadg."*

The play was *Pericles*, the only other play missing from the First Folio!

[304] Burbadge signed his name with a "d". People who knew him called him Burbadge. The name Burbage should be considered with caution.

Appendix 4 - William Herbert's Poems

I

Can you suspect a change in me,
And value your own constancy?
O! No, you found that doubt in your own heart:
Where Love his images but kissed.
Not graved; fearing that dainty flesh would smart,
And so his painful Sculpture would resist
But wrought in mine without remorse;
Till he, of it, the perfect statue made
As full of sweetness as of force:
Only unkindness may the work invade
And so it may defaced remain
But never can another form retain.

While we dispute our liberty, I have lost mine:
And which is worse, incline
To love that knavery.
Not the great Charter, nor King's-Bench can free
Me from the Chain, wherein my thoughts she tied:
For our dull Earth what care we had is had we see,
Yet easily let our mind
Into more thraldom slide
O that she were but kind!
To give for that a pledge;
There were my Law, and there my Privilege.[305]

Dear, can you take my soul from me,
And yet have no belief
That I have grief?
Oh, did your fair eyes ever see
(Without a painful force)
That bad divorce!
The Soul and Body love like me,
Not you; the Evening kind,
The morning or another mind,
And every several hour
Slack, and increase that power.
They are by Love made perfect One

[305]The first letters of the second to penultimate lines are an anagram of MAY FITTON. These are inside the first and last letters of William Herbert, W-T.

No less then Death makes them become Alone.

When the resistless flames of my desire
Make Ætna of my heart,
And I enraged, impart
The torments unto you, and press
For pity in this violent distress;
You sing, and think I feign this fire.
Because one frown of yours can all control;
Wrong not my pains, you are the true
Higher part of my soul,
The lower tyrant is to me, and slave to you.
Why do you give me leave to sip,
And pull the cup from my so thirsty lip
Before I drink?
Desire hath left my heart to think,
And is dispersed in every outward part,
My hands, lips, eyes,
That all restraint despise.
While it was in my heart
It did your will, in chains of slavish fears,
But these have all no ears.

II

If her disdain least change in you can move,
you do not love,
For while your hopes give fuel to your fire,
you sell desire
Love is not love,[306] but given free;
And so is mine, so should yours be.

Her heart that melts to hear of other's moan,
To mine is stone;
And eyes that weep a stranger's hurt to see,
Joy to wound me:
Yet I so much affect each part
As caused by them, I love my smart.

Think her unkindness justly must be graced
With Name of chaste;

[306] See Sonnet 116 for *Love is not love.*

And that the frowns least longing should exceed
And raging preed.[307]
So can her rigour ne're offend
Except self-love seek private end.

'Tis Love breeds Love in me, and cold disdain
Kills it again:
As water maketh fire to fret and fume
till all consume:
None can of Love more free gift make,
Then to Love's self for Love's own sake.

A frown may be sometimes for physic good,
but not for food:
And for that raging humour there is sure
a gentle cure.
Why bar you Love of private end,
Which never should be public tend.

I'll never dig in Quarry of an heart
to have, nor part,
Nor roast in those fierce eyes which always are
Carnicular.[308]
Who this way would a Lover prove,
Doth show his patience, not his love.

III

I

Disdain me still, that I may[309] ever love,
For who his love enjoys, can love no more
The War once past, with Peace, men Cowards prove,
And ships returned, do rot upon the shore.
Then though thou frown, I'll say thou art most fair,
And still I'll love, though still I must despair.

II

As heat's to life, so is desire to love,
For these once quenched, both life and love are done;
Let not my sighs, nor tears, thy Virtue move,
Like basest metal, do not melt too soon:

---

[307] Plunder; spoil; booty; prey? Or Pride?
[308] Turn into flesh?
[309] May as in May Fitton? Python, later, is an anagram of Phyton. The sense is of a lost love.

Laughed at my woes, although I ever mourn;
Love surfeits with reward, his nurse is scorn.
Shall Love give Latona's[310] heir the foil,
(Proud in his Archery, and Pythons spoil)
And so enthralled him to a Nymph's disdain,
As when his hopes were dead, he full of pain,
Made him above all trees the Laurel grace
An emblem of Love's glory, and his disgrace.
Shall he, I say, be termed a Foot-boy now,
That made all powers in heaven and earth to bow:
Or is't a fancy which themselves do frame,
And therefore dare baptise by any name,
A flaming straw, which one spark kindles bright,
And first hard breath out of itself doth fright;
Whose father was a smile, and death a frown,
Soon proud of little, and for less cast down;
'Tis so, and this a Lackey term you may,
For it runs oft, and makes but shortest stay.
But thou, O Love, free from time's eating rust,
That set'st a limit unto boundless Lust,
Making desire grow infinitely strong,
And yet to one chaste subject doth belong;
Bridling self-love, that flatters us in ease,
Quickening our wits to strive that they may please.
Fixing the wandering thoughts of straying youth;
The firmest band of Faith, the knot of Truth:
That thou didst never lodge in worthless heart,
Thou art a Master wheresoe're thou art.
Thou mak'st food loathsome, sleep to be unrest;
Lost Labour easeful, scornful looks a feast.
And when thou wilt thy joys as far excel
All else, as when thou punishest thy Hell.
O make that Rebel feel thy matchless power,
Thou that made Jove a Bull, a Swan, a Shower;
Give him a love as tyrannous as fair,
That his desire go yoked with despair.
Live in her eyes, but in frozen heart
Let no thaw come, that may have sense to smart.

[310] Mother of Apollo and Diana by Jupiter; Apollo, the god of music, poetry, archery, prophecy and the healing art. His plant was the laurel and he represents youthful manhood.

Let her a constant silence never break,
Till he do with repulse to hear her speak.
And last, such sense of error let him have,
As he may never dare for mercy crave.
That none will more capitulate with thee,
But of their hearts will yield the Empire free.

IV

It is enough, a Master you grant Love
At one weapon, ‘twas all I sought to prove:
For worth, not weakness, makes him use but one;
While that subdues all strength, all Art alone.
I studied not examples in this kind,
They were far harder to avoid, than find:
And that to worthless forms Love changes us,
Makes not him blush, not his ridiculous.
For in his Wars Love diversely proceeds,
Sometime by force, sometime by sleight he speeds.
When he will force, then arms he his to fight [hies]
In strength of merit, riches of delight.
But when by stratagems he means surprise,
His men in forms more mean he will disguise:
Not bearing to the forms themselves respect,
But careful to avoid his foes’ suspect:
And when as this with jests their wits are worn,
Do Lovers or the Laughers bear the scorn?
But O I how finely with your self you play,
When with this quick conceit you run away,
That you make love to Lackey up and down,
To fetch the meaning of a smile or frown:
Alas, in these slight Errands he sends you,
Wherein your Powers trudge as if they flew,
Making the least which to his pleasure tends,
A thing wherein your weal or woe depends,
Nor Plots he to dissolve by feigned delight,
Over the Senses’ reasons Sovereign right;
But Reason finding Love to rule more fit,
She doth that Government to him commit,
And so 'twixt these there is factitious strife,
Love here the husband is, Reason the wife,
Not grudging at her husband's active sway,
But thinks she rules so just laws to obey;
And Love this title high thus got may keep,
A threadbare Proverb cannot make him creep.

And for that rabble of confused Names,
Which to Love's charge you lay, as bitter blames,
They touch not him, he in himself divine,
To falsehood nor to weakness can incline:
If not disfigured by our fleshy mask,
As Wine corrupted by a faulty cask.
He is no Mountebank his wares do reach
Beyond she setting forth of any speech,
Nor Alchemist, but that Elixir old,
Which turns Lust's Mercury to friendship's Gold.
And so the rest wherewith you stain his Name,
Will turn considered rightly to his fame.
I do not sever Love from Reason's law,
But say that they in one sweet yoke do draw;
Nor let your wit dissension strive to make,
When they in Joint command such pleasure take.
As for the joys which from these joined do flow,
To be beyond expression I do know;
So may they fall on you from Love's large hand,
As[311] to this Love you do not Rebel stand,
And we in one Opinion shall agree,
If both, to both, may fellow-servants be.
For me if Sceptic-like you will dispute,
And what I feel in heart, with words refute,
Go on, and laugh at Love's commanding fire,
Till you cannot your scorched self retire.
My Curse a Blessing was, your Prayer a Curse,
For not so love, then scorn in love is worse.
O let sighs prodigally spend my breathe
My sufferings doubled be, until my death;
So but in one kind look they her engage,
One hour so lived, is longer then an age.

V

Men sad and settled, love not to contend,
Dispute my wounds may vex, but never mend;
If Love had pleased I might have tasted joy
In as full measure as I prove annoy:

[311] So to this..?

But Princes show on some their Power, their Grace,
On some, and both without control do place.
Me for the first, O me Love kept in store,
When to that cruel Fair[312] he gave me o'er,
In whom all worth so eminent appears,
As her disdain the style of justice bears;
And thus with me Love played a Master-part,
When wish one choice he hurt and pleased my heart,
For then I am? let me more wretched prove,
If her (howe're unkind) I leave to love;
Thus to be fond of scorn, you sickness call,
In truth 'tis I, to love my Lord am thrall,
'Tis he that makes me find these wonders true,
And he may work the same as well in you;
For even in your sound health I find this strife,
Love late was reason's Lackey, now his wife:
But to conclude debate, whilst you are free,
You may make Love even what you list to be,
As those that will describe an unknown Land,
Place Cities, Rivers, Hills where none do stand
Even so you deal with Love, and straight will know
How far he shoots, that never felt his bow;
One day you may, and then confess with me,
You love his Fetters more then to be free.

VI

I

Canst thou love me, and yet doubt
So much falsehood in my heart,
That a way I should find out
to impart
Fragments of a broken love to you,
More than all, being less than due:
O no! Love must clear distrust,
Or be eaten with that rust:
Short-love liking many may find jarres
The love that's lasting knows no wars.

This belief begets delight,

[312] Fait; Fate?

And so satisfies desire,
And in them it shines a light,
No more than fire;
All the burning Qualities appeased
Each in other's joining pleased;
Not a whisper, not a thought,
But 'twixt both in common's brought;
Even to seem two they are loth,
Love being but one soul in both.

VII (song)

I

Soul's joy when I am gone,
And you alone,
Which cannot be,
Since I must leave myself with thee,
And carry thee with me;
Oh, give no way to grief,
But let belief
Of mutual love,
This wonder to the vulgar prove,
Our bodies not we move.

II

Yet when unto our eyes
Absence denies
Each other's fight,
And makes us a constant night;
When oaths change to delight,
Fools have no way to meet
But by their feet;
Why should our Day
Over our spirits so much sway,
To tie us to that way.

VIII

I left you, and new the gain of you is to me a double gain.

Dear, when I think on my first sad fall,
From your fair eyes, I needs must feel withal
The many widowed hours I since have numbered,

Which in wished shades I might have safely slumbered,
Rocked into endless heavenly Trances, by
Thy soul enchanting Grace's harmony,
Whilst I enjoyed not what I did possess,
But like an unthrift of my happiness,
Did not my loss (till 'twas too late) espy
As Children kill their birds, and after cry?
But since whole Clouds that so eclipsed thy Light
(And gave me every day so many a night,
As my life had but a dead Winter been,
Had I no better after sunshine seen)
Are fled, let us (thou best of me) redeem
Those hours we fondly did so disesteem:
And since past joys are but bewailed in vain,
Come and we'll prove them over all again,
That small division so will come the meeter,[313]
To make the Music of our bliss the sweeter.

IX
That she is only Fair.

Do not reject those titles of your due,
Which Nature's Art hath styled in your face;
The Name of *Fair* only belongs to you,
None else that title justly can embrace:
You Beauty's heir, her Coat sole spotless wear,
Where others all, some mark abatement bear.

'Tis not their Cheeks touched with Vermilion Red,
Stained with the tincture of enchanting skill,
Nor yet the curled devices of their head,
Their breasts displayed, their looks framed to their will;
Their quick-turned-eye, nor all their proud attire,
Can make me to their Perfections to admire.

All this done with Natures consent,
Thy beauty needs not Art's enticing aid;
Thine nature gave, theirs nature only lent;
Thine shall endure, when theirs are quite decayed;
Thy beauty others doth as much excel,
As Heaven base Earth, or Earth accursed Hell.

[313]Meet-er or Metre.

Others are fair if not compared to thee,
Compared to them, thy beauty doth exceed:
So lesser Stars give light, and shine we see
Till glorious Phœbus[314] lifteth up his head;
And then as things ashamed of the might,
They hide themselves, and with themselves their light.

Since Nature's skill hath given you the right,
Do not kind Nature and your self such wrong,
You are as fair as any earthly wight,[315]
You wrong your self if you correct my tongue:
Though you deny (her and) your self your due,
Yet duty bids me *Fair* entitle you.

X

Muse get thee to a Cell; and wont to sing,
Now mourn, nay now thy hands, thy heart can wring;
And if perhaps thine eyes did ever weep,
Now bleed, and in eternal sorrow sleep;
O, she that was, and only was, is gone,
And I that was but one, am left alone.
Who says that I for things ne're mine am sad?
That was all mine which others never had:
No sighs, no tears, no blood but mine was shed
For her that now must bless another's bed:
As fate bound me, had Fortune made me free,
None had had her but I, she none but me.
O had not I been swallowed up that night,
Before I saw your sun, that glorious light,
Whose beams alone do only comfort bring,
Where I still weep, had ever made me sing:
Now on a strange Horizon it doth rise
Where all do live, or else where each thing dies.

XI ***That lust is not his aim.***

Oh do not tax me with a brutish Love,
Impute not Lust alone to my desire,

[314] The Sun
[315] person

No such profane aspersions ought to move
From you the sacred Author of my fire.
I seek your love, and if you that deny,
All joys that you and all the world can give,
My lovesick soul would little satisfy,
Which wants your Grace, not food to make it live,
It is your better part I would enjoy,
Your fair affections I would call mine own;
'Tis but a prostitute, and bestial joy
Which seeks the gross material use alone;
The town's not ours the market place unwon,
Nor do I her enjoy, whose heart's not mine,
Heart's Conquest is the worthy ambition:
Seal of our worth, as ravishment Divine,
Invincible to strength of humane hand,
Union Divine of mutual burning hearts,
Which both subdued, triumphing, both command
Sovereign delights, which God to man imparts.
Oh let me in this true joy happy be,
Or never may you be enjoyed by me.

XII

That he will still persevere in his Love.

Nay, I must love thee still;
Be it for those good deeds thou hast done,
That thou hast loved me once, hath won,
And made me ever thine;
Though I am tempted and provoked with scorn,
My Love cannot decline,
Though I with hopes, doubts, and despairs am torn,
Nay should I fret, think, grieve and die
For thee, and know not why;
Yet I must love thee still.

Nothing removes my heart,
Ages that changes, and (slow things) move,
May wear my body, not my Love,
So fixed I am on thee,
That all thy spite cannot devise
A wrong to trouble me.
Alas, I dote in all thy injuries,
Though all thy looks were feigned, and thy sighs wind,
Though thy free vows thou shouldst unbind,

Nothing could move my heart.
Nay I must love thee, still
Love that wears and into ashes goeth, in thee
Raiseth new bodies up in me:

I am *Love's* wild-fire right,
Whose powerful tempered flames being rightly bred
Burns by his opposite.
Hopes kill and violent despairs have fed
My passions, I have power to live and die;
Nay, should it oppose destiny,
Yet I must love thee still.

XIII

A Sonnet.

Dear, leave thy home and come with me,
That scorn the world for love of thee:
Here we will live within this Park,
A Court of joy and pleasure's Ark.

Here we will hunt, here we will range,
Constant in Love, our sports we'll change :
Of hearts if any change we make,
I will have thine, thou mine shalt take.

Here we will walk upon the Lawns,
And see the tripping of the Fawns;
And all the Deer shall wait on thee,
Thou shalt command both them and me.

The Leaves a whispering noise shall make,
Their Music-notes the birds shall take,
And while thou art in quiet sleep,
And the green wood shall silence keep.

And while my herds about thee feed,
Love's lessons in thy face I'll read,
And feed upon thy lovely look,
For beauty hath no fairer book.

It's not the weather, nor the air,
It is thy self that is so fair;
Nor doth it rain when heaven lowers,

But when you frown, then fall the showers.

One Sun alone moves in the sky,
Two Suns thou hast, one in each eye,
Only by day that sun gives light,
Where thine doth rise, there is no night.

Fair starry twins, scorn nor to shine
Upon my Lambs, upon my Kine,
My grass doth grow, my Corn and wheat,
My fruit, my vines thrive by their heat.

Thou shalt have wool, thou shalt have silk,
Thou shalt have honey, wine and milk,
Thou shalt have all, for all is due,
Where thoughts are free, and love is true.

XIV A Sonnet

Doron, the sad Shepherd's swain,
Who abroad had a long time been,
Coming to those Fields again,
Where he *Cloris* oft had seen.

With love and sorrow waxes faint,
None but his poor Cur and he,
As he on his sheep-hook leaned,
It was his chance that bank to see.

Near a little pearling Brook,
Where the Mistress of his heart,
Leave of faithful *Doron* took,
From her presence to depart.

He quickly found the ancient flame
Which had oft bereaved his rest;
When back now to that place he came,
Where her eyes first pierced his breast.

Looking on the Mead and Grove
Where her herds were wont to browse,
Faithful witness of his Love,
Which so oft had heard his vows.

Where he had seen his *Clovis* merry,
Walking in the pleasant spring,
Tended by the Frisking *Fairy*
Dancing many a wanton Ring.
Woods (quoth he) I saw you woo her,
And as through your shades she passed,

Humbly bowed your lops[316] unto her,
With each little trembling blast.

I have seen this wandering rill
Oft the silent murmur break,
And from the natural course stand still,
Ravished to hear her speak.

In these Meadows richly dight,[317]
Gath'ring strowing for her bowers,
The bees are dazzled in her fight
Taking her blue veins for Flowers.

Stingless on her temples stuck,
Famine could not threaten death,
But their labour quite forsook,
For the sweetness of her breath.

I have seen the gentle wind
His most speedy course forbear,
And it wond'rous sport to find,
In dallying with her braided hair.

Never did the morn awake her
If her self but once she showed,
But the birds would Music make her,
Still to welcome her abroad.

Then poor shepherd Swain quoth he,
Let thy thoughts of her suffice,
It is too high a task for thee
To tell the wonders of her eyes.

O dear *Cloris* then come to us,
Bless the Summer with thy sight;
Or thy absence will undo us,
For the world would half be night.

XV
On one heart made of two.

If that you must needs go,

[316] Lordships?
[317] delight?

What shall our one heart do?
This one made of our two.
Madam, two hearts we break,
And from them both did take
The best, one heart to make.

It told me in your breast,
Where it might hope to rest;
As if it were my guest,
For certainly it knew,
That I shall still anew
Be sending it to you.

Half this is of your heart,
Mine in th' other part,
Joined by our equal art.
Were it cemented, or sown
By shreds or pieces known,
We might find our own.

But 'tis dissolved and fixed
So curiously, and mixed,
No difference is betwixt;
But shall we agree
By whom it kept shall be,
Whether by you or me?

Never I think had two
Such work, so much to do
An Unity to woo;
Yours was so cold and chaste,
Whilst mine with zeal did waste,
Like fire with water placed.

How my heart did entreat,
How pant, how did it beat,
Till it could give yours heat;
Till to that temper brought,
With either's mixture wrought,
That blessing either's thought.

It cannot two breasts fill,
One must be heartless still
Until the other will.
It was with me today,
When I willed it to say
With whether it would stay.

In such a height[318] it lies
From this base world's dull eyes,
That heaven it not envies.
All that this Earth can show,
Our hearts shall not once know,
For it too vile and low.

XVI

Saint did never yet object
Former knowledge's defect
Against those whose zealous vows,
True devotion avows:
If my merit yet be small
To procure your love withal,
Time alone to you must prove,
How well I will deserve your love.
Grace in Saints ought to abound,
Grace ne're grows on merit's ground,
Be then gracious, as I true,
Constant and faithful unto you;
And my Fortunes that have crowned
Me happy on that Relique's ground,
Shall be all ascribed to serve
You that do all praise deserve.

XVII

To his mistress, of his friend's opinion of her, and his answer to his friend's objections, with his constancy towards her.

One with admiration told me,
He did wonder much and marvel,
(As by chance he did behold ye)
How could I become so servile
To thy beauty, which he swears
Ev'ry Alehouse Lettice wears.

[318] *heighth*

Then he frames a second notion
From thy revoluting eyes,
Saying, such a wanton motion
From their lustre did arise,
That of force thou couldst not be
From the shame of woman free.

Then he blames the work of Nature,
'Cause she framed thy body tall,[319]
Alleging that so high a stature
Was most subject to a fall:
Still detracting from thy worth,
That which most does set thee forth.

So the *Buzzard Phœbus* flies,
When the Eagle's piercing eye
See those noble mysteries
Which adorn the azured sky;
Bravest objects so we find,
Strike the weaker judgements blind.

For I know thy native beauty,
Teaching Art her imitation;
Owes no mortal Power a duty,
But as free from alteration
(If not whiter) as the skin
Of the spotless *Ermylin.*[320]

And those Love-alluring Darts
Shot from thy translucent[321] eye,
To the knowing man imparts
Such an awful[322] Majesty,
That each man may read the mirror:
Of thy mind, and he his error.

If thy curious body's frame,
To thy making add no splendour,
Why adore we *Cynthias's*[323] Name,
And our Poets most commend her
When amongst her Nymphs she crushes,

---

[319] Rosalind in *As You Like It*; 1iii113; "I am more than common tall."
[320] Ermine
[321] tralucent
[322] awfnl
[323] The Moon or Dian; contemporary poets' allusion to Elizabeth I.

Cedar-like 'mongst lower bushes.

But my *Julia*[324] I am sure,
Be thou low or high of stature
Free from blemish art, and as pure
As the yester-night born creature;
And though blind men talk of light,
None can judge that wants his sight.

XVIII
To his Mistress on his Death

Oh, let me groan one word in thine ear,
And with that groan break all my vital strings;
Thou that wouldst never, now vouchsafe to hear
How Leda's bird[325] on sweet *Meander* sings:
So dying tapers lend their fiery flashes,
And deadest Cinders have some burning ashes.

Those were the looks that once maintained my strength,
Those were the words that all my parts did cherish;
And that (Unkindest) wilt thou gain at length,
If by the same, I miserably perish:
This, that a frown did in a minute starve,
That which a smile did many years preserve.

When my eyes first admiring your rare beauty,
Secretly stole the Picture of your face;
They, fearing they might err, with humble duty,
Through unknown paths, conveyed it to that place,
Where Reason and Judgment hand in hand
Sate, and each workmanship of senses stand.

Reason could find no Reason but to love it,
So rich as beauty was it, full of Grace:
True Judgement scanned each part, and did approve it
To be the model of some heavenly face;
And both agreed to place it in my heart,
Whence they agreed it never should depart.

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[324] Julia / Juliet as in R&J?
[325] A swan (N.B. Sweet swan of Avon)

Then, since I was not born to be so blessed,
Your real self fair Mistress to obtain,
Yet must your image dwell within my breast,
And in that secret closet still remain:
Where all alone retired, I'll sit and view
Your Picture, Mistress, since I may not you.

XVIII

Why with unkindest swiftness dost you turn
From me, whose absence thou didst truly mourn;
Of which thou mad'st me such a seeming view,
As Unbelievers would have thought it true.
We have been private, and thou knowest of mine,
(Which is ev'n all) as much as I of thine:
Dost thou remember? Let me call t'account
The pleasant Garden, and that leafy[326] Mount,
Whose top is with an open Arbour crowned.
Dost thou remember (O securest beauty)
Where of thy own free motion (more that duty)
And unrequired, thou solemnly didst swear,
(Of which avenging heav'n can witness bear)
That from the time thou gav'st thy spoils to me,
Thou wouldst maintain a spotless chastity,
And unprofaned by any second hand,
From sport and Love's delight removed stand,
Till I (whose absence seemingly was mourned)
Should from a foreign Kingdom be returned:[327]
Of this thou mad'st Religion, and an oath.
But see the frailty of a woman's troth;
Scarce had the sun (to many rooms assigned)
Been thrice within the changeful waves confined,
And I scarce three days' journey from thine eyes,
When thou new love in thy heart didst devise,
And gav'st the Reliques of thy Virgin-head,
Upon the easiest prayer that could be said.
Tis true, I left thee to a dangerous age,
Where vice of Angel's shape does title wage

[326] leavy
[327] It may yet be shown that he spent considerable time in Scotland with King James. There was an obvious rapport between the two men at the time James took the English throne. Herbert had a close friendship with the Scottish Duke of Lennox.

With ancient virtue, both disguising so,
That hardly weaker eyes can either know:
Besides, I left thee in the hour of fears,
And in the covetous spring of all thy years,
What time a beauty that hath well begun,
Asks other than the solace of a Nun.
But since thy wanton soul so dear did prize
The game, that thou for it didst underprize
The faith, and all that to good fame belongs;
Couldst thou not cover it with common tongues;
But cheapest eyes must see thee do amiss?
My Rhymes that won thee, never taught thee this:
Thou might'st have wandered in the pathos of love,
And neither leafless hill, nor shady grove
Have been unpressed by thy wanton weight,
Yet though thought honest, hadst thou used slight.
Much care and business hath the chastest Dame
To guard herself from undeserved blame;
What artifice and cunning then must serve
To colour them that just reproof deserve?'
Tis not a work for every woman's wit,
And the less marvel thou neglected it.
That which amazes me the most, is this,
That having never trodden but amiss,
And done me wrongs, that do so much deny
To suffer measure, as infinity:
When I approach, thou turn'st thy head awry,
As if sore eyes and scorn could satisfy,
Can second wrongs the former expiate,
And work them out of memory and date;
Or teach me ill in humane Precepts durst,
That second wrongs can expiate the first?
Thou art malicious, as incontinent,
And mightst have met with such a Patient,
Whose wronged virtue to just rage invited,
Would have revenged, and in thy duty delighted.
But I that have no gall, when once I love,
And whom no great thing under heav'n can move,
Am well secured from Fortune's weak alarms,
And free from apprehension, as from harms.
Thus do I leave thee to the multitude,
That on my leaving hastily intrude.
Enjoy thou many, or rejoice in one,

I was before them, and before me none.

XIX

Blind beauty! If it be a loss
To lose so poor a man,
As neither multiply nor cross
Good or bad fortune can;
Then are you poorer than you were,
For I am gotten free;
Unwilling to acquaint your ear
With what your eye might see.
What needed words, when from mine eyes
Such Sparks of Love flew out,
That you might easily surmise
His fires were there about.
Though I forsook the beaten way,
The path in which I trod,
Such as know all Love's Country, say
Was nearer than the Road.
The tongue did great exploits at first
So did the Canon too;
But both those now have done their worst,
And no such wonders do:
As Engines of a naughty sort
For Love to use in fight,
After to make a loud report,
Then carry to the white.
I was a Lanthorn all of Love,
Though of the closer kind,
Directing you which way to move,
When it did others blind:
And you might always undescried
Have walked from place to place;
Had you not turned the shining side
Backwards upon your face:
So since not want of light in me,
But that ill-governed light;
Both made your self unapt to see,
And taught the blind their sight:
Henceforth I'll close the Lanthorn quite,
To expiate that sin;
And seem without as dark as night,
Though bright as day within.

XX Sonnet

Fye that men should so complain
Of women for unkindness,
And accuse them of disdain,
When 'tis but their own blindness.
For though at first they do seem coy,
And use a faint denial;
It is not fit they should enjoy,
That can abide on trial.

Constant Love is like to Fire,
That being oppressed, burns clearer,
And women know when they retire,
It makes true Love love dearer:
How many favours should they miss,
What wooing and protesting,
Were't not they use some art in this,
And feed them with contesting.

Women, therefore, wildly seem
At first the more disdainful,
Because they think that men esteem
That sweet, that's somewhat painful.
But henceforth learn, although they swear
And vow they cannot love you,
Do not believe them, never fear,
'Tis but their art to prove you.

XXI *Song*

Say pretty wanton, tell me why
Thou canst not love so well as I;
Sit thee down, and thou shalt see
That I delight in none but thee.

Say pretty wanton, be not coy,
For thou alone art all my joy:
If a smile thou wilt not lend,
Yet let thy gentle ears attend.

If thou stop those gentle ears,
Then look upon those brinish tears;
Which do force me still to cry,
Pity me now, or else I die.

Fairest fair, my Love, my Jewel,
Wilt thou never cease to grieve me?
Look and pity, be not cruel,
Let thy love at length relieve me;
Stay and hear my tongue's sad speaking,
Words must keep my heart from breaking.

Long and dearly have I loved thee,
Love by right should be rewarded:
Words and Vows could never move thee,
Tears and sighs were not regarded.

Oh let Love cause some relenting,
Death succeeds thy not consenting.

XXII Sonnet

So glides along the wanton Brook
With gentle pace into the main,
Courting the banks with amorous look,
He never means to see again.
And so does Fortune use to smile
Upon the short lived favourite's face,
Whose swelling hopes she doth beguile,
And always casts him in the race;
And so doth the Fantastic boy,
The god of all ill-managed flames,
Who ne're kept word in promised joy
To Lover, nor too to loving Dames:
So all alike will constant prove,
Both Fortune, running streams, and Love.

XXIII
Of a fair Gentlewoman scarce Marriageable.

Why should Passion lead thee blind
'Cause thy *Lydia* proves unkind:
She is too young to know delight,
And is not plumed for *Cupid's* flight:
She cannot yet in height of pleasure,
Pay her Love with equal measure,
But like a Rose new blown, doth feed
The Eye alone, but yields no Seed.
She is yet but in her Spring,
And bears no Fruit till *Cupid* bring
A hotter season with his Fire,

Which soon will ripen her desire:
Autumn will shortly come and greet her,
Making her taste and colour sweeter;
And then her ripeness will be such,
That she will fall e'en with a touch.

XXIV

A paradox, that Beauty lies not in women's faces, but in their Lovers' eyes.

Why should thy look requite so ill
All other Eyes,
Making them Pris'ners to thy will,
Where alone thy Beauty lies:
When men's Eyes first looked upon thee,
They bestowed thy Beauty on thee.

When thy Colours first were seen
By judging sight,
Had men's Eyes praised Black or Green,
Then thy face had not been Bright:
He that loved thee, then would find
Thee as little fair as kind.

If all others had been blind,
Fair had not been;
None thy Red and White could find
Fleeting, if thou wert unseen.
To touch white Skins is not Divine,
Ethiop's Lips are soft as thine.

XXV

A Lover to his Mistress.

The purest piece of Nature is my choice,
This day's breath,
And tomorrow's death,
Have several dooms from her all-charming voice.

So beyond fair, that no glass can her flatter;
So sweetly mild,
That tongue defiled,
Dare not on her their envious stories scatter.

The witty forms of beauty that are shed
In flaming streams,
From Poets' themes,

Like shadows when her self appears, are fled.
O let me live in th' heaven of her bright eye!
Great Love, I'll be thy constant Votary.

XXVI

Description of a wished Mistress.

Not that I wish my Mistress,
Nor more or less than what she is,
Write I these lines; for 'tis too late,
Rules to prescribe unto my fate.

But yet as tender stomachs call
For some choice meats that bear not all;
So a queasy Lover may impart
What Mistress 'tis must take his heart.

First, I must have her richly sped
With Nature's blossoms, white and red;
For flaming hearts will quickly die,
That have no fuel from the eye.

Yet this alone will never win,
Except some treasure lie within;
For where the spoil's not worth the stay,
Men raise the siege, and march away.

I'd have her wife enough to know
When, and to whom a Grace to show;
For she that doth at random chose,
She will her choice as soon refuse.

And yet methinks I'd have her mind
T' a flowing courtesy inclined,
And tender-hearted as a Maid,
Yet pity only when I prayed.

And I could wish her true to me,
(Mistake me not) I mean to me;
She that loves me, and loves one more
Will love the Kingdom o'er and o'er.

And I would have her full of wit,
So she knows how to housewife it;
But she whose insolence makes her dare
To cry her wit, will sell more ware.

Some other things delight will bring,
And if she dance, or play or sing;
If hers be safe, what though her parts

Catch ten thousand foreign hearts.

But let me see, should she be proud,
A little pride must be allowed:
Each amorous Boy will sport and prate
Too freely, where he sees no state.[328]

I cared not much if I let down
Sometimes a chiding or a frown;
But if she wholly quench desire,
'Tis hard to kindle a new fire.

To smile, to toy, 'tis not amiss
Sometimes to interpose a kiss,
But do not cloy; Sweet things are good
And pleasant, but are naught for food.

But stay! Nature hath over-writ my Art
In her, to whom I offer up my heart:
And Evening-Passengers shall sooner trace
The wanton beams that dance on *Thames* smooth face.
And find the track where once the foot did stray
On the moist Sands, which tides have washed away;
Then men shall know my heart, or find her spot
If a revolt of hers procure it not.

XXVII Sonnet

A restless Lover I espied
That went from place to place,
Lay down and turned from side to side,
And sometimes on his face.
And when that Medicines were applied
In hope of intermission
As one that felt no ease he cried,
Has *Cupid* no Physician?

What do the Ladies with their looks,
Their kisses, and their smiles?
Can no Recites[329] in those fair Books

[328] estate?
[329] Receits

Repair their former spoils?
But they complain as well as we,
Their pains have no remission,
And when both Sexes wounded be,
Hath *Cupid* no Physician?

Have we such Palsies, and such pains
Such Fevers, and such fits,
No Quintessential Chimick Grains
No *Aesculapian* [330] wits;
No creature can (beneath the Sun)
Prevail in opposition;
And when all wonders can be done,
Has *Cupid* no Physician?

Into that Poison do they dip
Their Arrows and their Darts
That touching but an Eye or Lip,
The pain goes to our hearts.
But now I see before I get
Into their inquisition,
The Death had never Surgeon yet,
Nor *Cupid* a Physician.

XXVIII *A Pastoral*

LOVER P.
Shepherd, gentle Shepherd hark,
As one that canst call rightest
Birds by their Name
Both wild and tame,
And in their Notes delightest;
What voice is this, I prethee mark,
With so much Music in it?
Too sweet methinks to be a Lark,
Too loud to be a Linnet?

Nightingales are more confused,
At descant more at random,
Whose warbling throats,
(To hold our Notes)

[330] Esculapian; Aesculpius, Greek god of medicine. The usual offering to him was a cock.

Their airy tunes abandon.
Angels stoop not nowadays,
Such Quirresters forsake us;
Yet *Syrens* may
Our Loves betray,
And wretched pris'ners make us:
Yet they must use some other way,
When singing to deprive us
Of our poor lives, since such sweet lays
As these would soon revive us.

SHEPHERD R.
'Tis not *Syren* we descry,
Nor Bird in Grove residing,
Nor Angel's Voice,
Although as choice,
Fond Boy thou hear'st dividing;
But one if either thou or I
Should face to face resemble her,
To any of these would blushing cry,
Away, away, *Dissembler*.

XXIX
A Paradox in praise of a painted Woman.

Not kiss? By Love I must, and make impression
As long as Cupid dares to hold his session
Upon my flesh of blood, our kisses shall
Out-minute time, and without number fall.
Do I not know those Balls of blushing red,
Which on the Cheeks thus am'rously be spread;
Thy sinewy neck, those veins upon thy brow,
Which with their azure winkles sweetly bow;
Are artfully borrowed, and no more thine own
Than Chains which on Saint George's Day are shown
Are proper to the wearer; yet for this
I Idol thee, and beg a luscious kiss:
The *Fucus*, and *Ceruse*, which on thy face
Thy cunning hand lays on to add new grace,
Deceive me with such pleasing fraud, that I
Find in thy Art what can in nature lie.
Much like a Painter that upon some wall

On which the splendent sunbeams use to fall;
Paints with such art a gilded Butterfly,
That silly maids with slow moved fingers try
To catch it, and then blush at their mistake;
Yet of this painted Fly much reckoning make:
Such as our state, since that we look upon
Is nought but colour, and proportion.
Take me a face as full of fraud and lies
As Gypsies, or your running Lotteries;
That is more false, or more sophisticate
Than are faints reliques, or a man of state;
Yet such being glazed by the slight of art
Gains admiration, wins in many a heart;
Put [331] case there be a difference in the mould,
Yet may thy *Venus* be more choice, and hold
A dearer treasure; oftentimes we see
Rich *Candian* wines in wooden boles to be.
The odoriferous Civet doth not lie
Within the Musk-cat's nose, or ear or eye;
But in a baser place, for prudent nature
In drawing up of various forms and stature,
Gives from the curious shop of her rich treasure
To fair parts comeliness, to baser pleasure.
The fairest flowers that in Spring do grow
Are not so much for use, as for the show;
As Lilies, Hyacinth, and Gorgeous birth
Of all pied flowers which diaper the earth,
Please more with their discoloured purple train,
Than wholesome potherbs which for use remain.
Shall I a gaudy speckled serpent kiss
Because the colour that he wears is his?
A perfumed Cordavant who will wear?
For that his scent is borrowed other-where.
The robes and vestments which grace us all
Are not our own, but adventitial.
Time rifles Nature's Beauty, but sly Art
Repairs by cunning this decaying part.
Fills here a wrinkle, and there purls [332] a Vein,
And with her cunning hand runs o'er again
The Breaches dented in the Arm of Time,

[331] But?
[332] Pearls?

And makes deformity to be no crime;
As when great men are gripped with sickness' hand,
Industrious Physic pregnantly doth stand
To patch up foul Diseases, and doth strive
To keep their tottering Carcasses alive:
Beauty a Candle is, which every puff
Blows out, and leaves nought but a stinking snuff
To fill our Nostrils with this boldly think,
Your clearest candle yields the greatest stink;
As your pure food, and choicest nutriment,
Yields the most hot, and nose-strong excrement:
Why hang we then on things so apt to vary,
So fleeting, brittle and so temporary?
That agues, coughs, toothaches, and catarrh,
Slight touches of diseases, spoil or mar:
But when old age their beauty hath in chase,
And ploughs up furrows in their own smooth face,
Then they become forsaken, and do show
Like stately Abbeys ruined long ago.
Nature but gives the model and first draught
Of fair Complexion, which by art is taught
To speak itself a complete form and birth,
So stand a Copy to the shapes on earth.
Love grants me then a reparable face,
Which whilst that colours are, can want no grace.
Pygmalion's painted statues I could love,
So it were warm, and soft, and could but move.

XXX SONG

Come saddest thoughts possess my heart,
And in my grief come bear a part,
Let all my words be turned to groans,
Those sounds do best befit my moans;
Each breath I take a sigh must be
To make my sorrows harmony:
Mine eyes once glutted with delight,
Are now eclipsed from that sight,
From whose pure light and influence
I borrowed both life and sense:
Whilst then I draw this tedious breath,
I shall but lead a living death:
In sable weeds I'll clothed be,
And put on sorrow's livery;

Then to some desert will I go,
The fittest place to harbour woe;
Where Owls' and Ravens' horrid cries
Shall echo forth my miseries:
My meat shall be of troubled cares,
My drink shall be of brinish tears;
My house shall be of the dark Cell,
Where no house is, there will I dwell;
The hardest rock shall be my bed
Whereon to rest my troubled head;
Instead of man's society,
Wild beasts shall keep me company;
I will converse without all fear
With Lion, Tiger, Wolf or Bear;
No Music but their roaring cries
Each night shall close my wretched eyes;
Death's living Tomb thus will I be,
And living die continually.
To Birds and Worms I'll it expose,
Hat on by body when I die
They may engrave this Elegy:
No solemn burial will I crave,
My Cell shall be my Tomb and Grave;
And ere I breath my last thereon,
I'll write this sad Inscription;
Here lies enclosed in this Tomb
He that endured Love's Martyrdom.