

*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 offenses of affections new.
 Most true it is that I have looked on truth
 Askance and strangely; but by all above,
 These blenches gave my heart another youth,
 And worse essays prov'd thee my best of love.
 Now all is done, save what shall have no end;
 Mine appetite I nevermore will grind
 On newer proof to try an older friend,
 A god in love, to whom I am confined.
 Then give me welcome, next my heav'n the best,
 Ev'n to thy pure and most, most loving breast.*

Like Sonnet 109, this poem actually does; yet it is dramatic, too. "Alas, 'tis true" signals a confession, and we learn—however vaguely—of actions the speaker regrets. In going "here and there" (l. 1) he has made himself a "motley" (a clown) to the "view" ("the world") (l. 2). He has defiled ("gored") his own thoughts, cheapened what was valuable, and repeated the same infidelities with new infatuations. (ll. 3-4)

Though cloudy, the picture is clarified somewhat in the second quatrain because the speaker accuses himself of falsity in playing fast and loose with truth. He also swears that his strayings ("blenches," l. 7) gave him youthful pleasure and that the worst of them made clear that his love for his friend was the best. Now, he says in the third quatrain, I have done with that and shall be eternally faithful. He vows never to test his friend's love by experimenting—or, as he puts it, "grinding" (sharpening) his appetite—with other objects of attraction.

His "older friend" (l. 11) is, of course, the young man whom the speaker calls "a god in love," the one he worships. The speaker asks, in the couplet, to be welcomed back to the best person (next to heaven) and his "pure" and "most loving breast." "Pure" is a clever adjective: it absolves his friend from unfaithfulness, at the same time lightening, if not erasing, his own sins.