

*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 this self deceivest
 By wilful taste of what thyself refuseth.
 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, in whom all ill well shows,
 Kill me with spites, yet we must not be foes.*

The reason for the speaker's confused distress surfaces suddenly in Sonnet 40, which reveals his friend's betrayal. In one of the most dramatic switches in the whole sequence, the speaker in anger and despair gives up all his loves to his friend, who has already taken them away. (He does not, however, give up his logical mode, which is his established way of dealing with emotional problems.) Immediately he questions his friend's wisdom: what more, he asks, will his friend have that he didn't have before? Addressing him a second time as "my love," he answers his own question: You are not, my love, getting anything that you can call true love. Remember, those loves have been untrue to me. (l. 3) The insistent repetition of love (five times in three lines) underscores the speaker's desperation. How can he give any more?

After the first blast, the rhetoric cools somewhat. The last line of the first quatrain repeats the second, changing the question into a statement. Then comes an argument ironically lifting the blame from his friend: How can I blame you if you take someone I love? You are simply loving a mistress I have loved. On the other hand, you are to be blamed if you deceive yourself by willfully doing what you said you wouldn't do.

Relinquishing his anger (in the third quatrain), the speaker, calling his friend "gentle thief," as he has done before, forgives the robbery of what

little he has left – his poverty. Yet, he adds, it is easier to bear an injury caused by hate than to bear “love’s wrong” (l. 12). In the end, the speaker insists that they not be enemies, although his friend, with his lewd charm which still appears virtuous, kills him with spite.