

Had I a husband or a house,  
And all that longs thereto,  
Myself could frame about to rouse  
As other women do.  
But till some household cares me tie  
My books and pen I will apply.

Your loving sister,  
Isabella Whitney.

ISABELLA WHITNEY

THE MANNER OF HER WILL, AND WHAT SHE  
LEFT TO LONDON  
FROM A SWEET NOSEGAY, OR PLEASANT POSY  
(1573)

The author, though loathe to leave the city, upon her friend's\* procurement† is constrained to depart. Wherefore she feigneth as she would die, and maketh her will and testament as followeth: with large legacies of such goods and riches which she most abundantly hath left behind her, and thereof maketh London sole executor to see her legacies performed.

A COMMUNICATION WHICH THE AUTHOR HAD TO  
LONDON BEFORE SHE MADE HER WILL

The time is come, I must depart  
From thee, ah famous city;  
I never yet, to rue my smart,  
Did find that thou hadst pity.  
Wherefore small cause there is that I  
Should grieve from thee to go; 5  
But many women, foolishly  
Like me and other mo,  
Do such a fixed fancy set  
On those which least deserve, 10  
That long it is ere wit we get  
Away from them to swerve.  
But time with pity oft will tell  
To those that will her try,

\* *friend's*: or perhaps plural, as the original reads 'Friendes'  
† *procurement*: prompting, arrangement, perhaps because the narrator was in debt and being threatened by creditors, which she alludes to below, ll. 181-92  
3. *rue ... smart*: recall sorrowfully my adverse fortune  
7-12. *But ... swerve*: Whitney adapts the usual Petrarchan scenario in which a male lover finds it difficult to distance himself from a mistress whom he believes to be unfaithful or unworthy yet cannot stop desiring  
8. *mo*: more

39. *frame ... rouse*: adapt (myself) to become active

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 And all that longs thereto,  
 Myself could frame about to rouse  
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Whether it best be more to mell,  
Or utterly defy. 15  
And now hath time me put in mind  
Of thy great cruelty,  
That never once a help would find  
To ease me in distress. 20  
Thou never yet wouldst credit give  
To board me for a year,  
Nor with apparel me relieve  
Except thou payed were.  
No, no, thou never didst me good  
Nor ever wilt, I know. 25  
Yet am I in no angry mood  
But will, or ere I go,  
In perfect love and charity  
My testament here write, 30  
And leave to thee such treasury  
As I in it recite.  
Now stand aside and give me leave  
To write my latest will,  
And see that none you do deceive  
Of that I leave them till. 35

THE MANNER OF HER WILL, AND WHAT SHE LEFT  
TO LONDON AND TO ALL THOSE IN IT, AT HER  
DEPARTING

I whole in body and in mind,  
But very weak in purse,

15. *mell*: compromise or temporise with

27–9. *angry* ... *charity*: conflicting motivations that apparently inform the contradictory tones marking Whitney's descriptions of London life: wry and satirical, even bitter, as well as light-hearted and generous. Such shifts may suggest a tension between a rhetorical persona and the author's personal feelings.

28. *or ere*: before

34. *latest*: last

36. *leave* ... *till*: leave to them

1–4. *I* ... *worse*: witty inversion of the standard opening formula of contemporary wills. Compare that of Isabella's brother (1600):  
I Geoffrey Whitney of Ryle's Green in the County of Cheshire, gentleman, being sick in body but of sound and perfect memory, thanks be to God, therefore make and set down with my own hand this my last will and testament (Whitney 1886: lxxxiii).

Do make and write my testament  
For fear it will be worse. 5  
And first I wholly do commend  
My soul and body eke  
To God the Father and the Son,  
So long as I can speak.  
And after speech, my soul to him  
And body to the grave, 10  
Till time that all shall rise again  
Their judgement for to have.  
And then I hope they both shall meet  
To dwell for aye in joy,  
Whereas I trust to see my friends  
Released from all annoy. 15  
Thus have you heard touching my soul  
And body, what I mean;  
I trust you all will witness bear  
I have a steadfast brain. 20

And now let me dispose such things  
As I shall leave behind,  
That those which shall receive the same  
May know my willing mind. 25  
I first of all to London leave,  
Because I there was bred,  
Brave buildings rare, of churches store,  
And Paules to the head.  
Between the same, fair streets there be  
And people goodly store; 30  
Because their keeping craveth cost,  
I yet will leave him more.

6. *eke*: also

14. *aye*: ever

15. *Whereas*: when

26. *bred*: but not necessarily born there. The Whitney family property was in Cheshire, although she states below (ll. 217–18) her parents lived in Smithfield, north-west of London, for some time. In accordance with the customary practice of serving as a maidservant or gentlewoman's attendant in a prominent household, Isabella would have left home as a girl or young teenager.

27, 30, 35, 73. *store*: many – a favourite word (e.g. see *Lamentation* l. 37) whose associations of abundance resonate against Whitney's apparent personal situation of material and emotional need

28. *Paules*: = Paul's (original two-syllable spelling). 'to the head' = 'to its top'.

32. *him*: London

First for their food, I butchers leave,  
 That every day shall kill;  
 By Thames you shall have brewers store 35  
 And bakers at your will.  
 And such as orders do observe  
 And eat fish thrice a week,  
 I leave two streets full fraught therewith;  
 They need not far to seek. 40  
 Watling Street and Canwick Street  
 I full of woollen leave,  
 And linen store in Friday Street,  
 If they me not deceive.  
 And those which are of calling such 45  
 That costlier they require,  
 I mercers leave, with silk so rich  
 As any would desire.  
 In Cheap, of them they store shall find,  
 And likewise in that street, 50  
 I goldsmiths leave with jewels such

33. *butchers*: were typically found in Eastcheap

37–8. *orders ... week*: the Elizabethan government sought to build up the navy by strengthening the fisheries, so in 1563 it passed an act increasing from two to three the number of fast-days on which eating meat was forbidden (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday). Invalids were exempt, and certain butchers were granted special licences to supply their needs. As Whitney's conditional phrasing suggests, however, the strictness of observance varied.

39. *two streets*: there are, as Travitsky (1980: 85) suggests, a range of possibilities: New and Old Fish Streets, Stock Fishmongers Row, Friday Street, Billingsgate, Bridge Street, and Knightrider Row

41. *Watling Street*: runs south-east of St Paul's Churchyard through Bridge Row to Canwick (or Candlewick) Street. In his *Survey of London* John Stow observes: 'The inhabitants [of Watling Street] are wealthy drapers, retailers of woollen cloths, both broad and narrow, of all sorts, more than in any one street of this city' (1603; 1971 I: 346). Canwick, earlier inhabited by candlemakers, was also known for its cloth-dealers.

43. *Friday Street*: runs south between Cheapside and Cannon Street

47. *mercens*: dealers in drapery, velvet, and silks

49. *Cheap*: Cheapside, runs east from the north-east corner of St Paul's Churchyard. The Mercers' Company Hall was found west of Bow Church (below l. 78). (I am indebted for much of my information about early modern London public places to Edward H. Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists*, Manchester, 1925.)

51. *goldsmiths*: Goldsmiths' Row lay in Cheapside between Bread Street and Bow Church

As are for ladies meet,  
 And plate to furnish cupboards with  
 Full brave there shall you find, 55  
 With purl of silver and of gold  
 To satisfy your mind;  
 With hoods, bongraces, hats or caps  
 Such store are in that street  
 As, if on t'one side you should miss,  
 The t'other serves you feat. 60  
 For nets of every kind of sort  
 I leave within the Pawn,  
 French ruffs, high purls, gorgets, and sleeves  
 Of any kind of lawn. 65  
 For purse or knives, for comb or glass,  
 Or any needful knack,  
 I by the Stocks have left a boy  
 Will ask you what you lack.  
 I hose do leave in Birchin Lane  
 Of any kind of size, 70  
 For women stitched, for men both trunks

52. *meet*: suitable

54. *brave*: fine

55. *purl*: thread used for embroidery or trimming borders

57. *hoods*: head-covering often taking the form of a pointed arch with falling material split at the shoulders into two front lappets and a curtain behind  
*bongraces*: shades worn on the front of women's bonnets to protect one's face from the sun

60. *feat*: becomingly

61. *nets*: hairnets, worn under bonnets and hoods

62. *Pawn*: covered arcade or upper walk of the Royal Exchange on Lombard Street, selling a variety of fabrics

63. *French ruffs*: pleated or layered linen collar worn to frame the head; they were stiffened with starch, wire frames, or 'setting-sticks' (stays)

*high purls*: another kind of ruff or band

*gorgets*: wimples to cover the neck and breast

*sleeves*: were often different in colour and fabric from the main body of the garment, and elaborately designed

64. *lawn*: fine linen

67. *Stocks*: market in the centre of the City taking its name from the stocks originally standing there. It occupied the site of the present Mansion House.

69. *hose*: stockings, leggings

*Birchin Lane*: running north from Lombard Street to Cornhill, known for its drapers and second-hand clothes dealers

71. *stitched ... trunks*: embroidered ... padded-out and/or rounded hose worn above the knee

And those of Gascoyne guise.  
 Boots, shoes, or pantables good store  
 St Martin's hath for you;  
 In Cornwall, there I leave you beds 75  
 And all that longs thereto.  
 For women shall you tailors have,  
 By Bow the chiefest dwell;  
 In every lane you some shall find 80  
 Can do indifferent well.  
 And for the men few streets or lanes  
 But body-makers be,  
 And such as make the sweeping cloaks  
 With guards beneath the knee.  
 Artillery at Temple Bar 85  
 And dags at Tower Hill;  
 Swords and bucklers of the best  
 Are nigh the Fleet until.

Now when thy folk are fed and clad  
 With such as I have named, 90  
 For dainty mouths and stomachs weak  
 Some junkets must be framed.  
 Wherefore I 'pothecaries leave,  
 With banquets in their shop,

72. *Gascoyne*: wide, often bag-like breeches  
 73. *pantables*: pantofles – slippers, overshoes  
 74. *St Martin's*: probably St Martin-le-Grand at the east end of St Martin's Lane, notorious for its cheap clothes and boots  
 75. *Cornwall*: Travitsky (1980: 87) says this refers to a 'Cornwallish ground' in Vintry Ward, but Stow's *Survey of London* does not mention it. It may be a printer's error for 'Cornhill' where there was a large established market.  
 78. *Bow*: Church of St Mary le Bow, between Bread Street and Bow Lane. To be born within the sound of its bells designated a true cockney.  
 80. *indifferent*: tolerably  
 82. *body-makers*: tailors  
 84. *guards*: ornamental borders  
 85. *Temple Bar*: gate marking the boundary between Westminster and the City of London, at the west end of Fleet Street  
 86. *dags*: large pistols  
 88. *nigh ... until*: close towards the Fleet  
 92. *junkets*: dish made from sweetened curds and cream, or more generally, any sweet delicacy  
 93. *'pothecaries*: apothecaries, who sold spices, drugs, and perishable foods  
 94. *banquets*: not usually a festive dinner in the modern sense but an after-dinner meal consisting of fruit, sweetmeats and wine

Physicians also for the sick, 95  
 Diseases for to stop.  
 Some roisters still must bide in thee  
 And such as cut it out,  
 That with the guiltless quarrel will 100  
 To let their blood about.  
 For them I cunning surgeons leave,  
 Some plasters to apply,  
 That ruffians may not still be hanged 105  
 Nor quiet persons die.  
 For salt, oatmeal, candles, soap,  
 Or what you else do want,  
 In many places shops are full;  
 I left you nothing scant.  
 If they that keep what I you leave 110  
 Ask money when they sell it,  
 At Mint there is such store it is  
 Unpossible to tell it.  
 At Steelyard store of wines there be  
 Your dulled minds to glad,  
 And handsome men that must not wed 115  
 Except they leave their trade.  
 They oft shall seek for proper girls  
 (And some perhaps shall find),  
 That needs compels or lucre lures 120  
 To satisfy their mind.  
 And near the same I houses leave  
 For people to repair  
 To bathe themselves, so to prevent

97. *roisters*: swaggerers, loud bullies  
 98. *cut it out*: flaunt themselves, show off  
 101. *cunning*: skilful  
 108. *scant*: scarce  
 111. *Mint*: the mint located in the Tower  
 112. *tell*: count  
 113. *Steelyard*: or Stillyard, a hall in Upper Thames Street for Hanse merchants (a commercial and political league of northern German towns) who were reputed for selling strong Rhine wines  
 115–16. *And ... trade*: according to the Statute of Artificers (1563) regulating apprentices, men had to remain single during their seven-year terms, which normally began at the age of fourteen  
 119. *needs*: emotional or sexual  
 122. *repair*: resort

- Infection of the air.  
 On Saturdays I wish that those  
 Which all the week do drug 125  
 Shall thither trudge to trim them up  
 On Sundays to look smug.  
 If any other thing be lacked  
 In thee, I wish them look, 130  
 For there it is (I little brought  
 But nothing from thee took).
- Now for the people in thee left,  
 I have done as I may,  
 And that the poor, when I am gone, 135  
 Have cause for me to pray,  
 I will to prisons portions leave  
 (What though but very small),  
 Yet that they may remember me,  
 Occasion be it shall. 140  
 And first the Counter they shall have,  
 Lest they should go to wrack,  
 Some coggers and some honest men  
 That sergeants draw aback.  
 And such as friends will not them bail, 145  
 Whose coin is very thin,  
 For them I leave a certain Hole  
 And little ease within.  
 The Newgate once a month shall have  
 A sessions for his share, 150

124. *Infection* ... *air*: notably, it was believed, the plague126. *drug*: obsolete form of 'drudge'128. *smug*: smart, gay141. *Counter*: two debtors' prisons, one called Poultry and the other Bread, after the streets in which they were located. There were four levels of cells, depending on what prisoners could afford to pay. For those without money, the worst was 'the Hole' (below l. 147), where prisoners held out a basket through the grating to collect food from passers-by.142. *wrack*: ruin; ironic, since being sent to the Counter often followed bankruptcy143. *coggers*: cheats, gamblers148. *little ease*: with a pun on the name of an infamous cramped cell that allowed the prisoner neither fully to stand nor sit149. *Newgate*: prison for those guilty of criminal or treasonable offences, located northwest of St Paul's Churchyard, east of Old Bailey150. *sessions*: normally presided over by a Justice of the Peace

- Lest, being heaped, infection might  
 Procure a further care.  
 And at those sessions some shall 'scape  
 With burning near the thumb, 155  
 And afterward to beg their fees  
 Till they have got the sum.  
 And such whose deeds deserveth death,  
 And twelve have found the same,  
 They shall be drawn up Holborn hill  
 To come to further shame. 160  
 Well, yet to such I leave a nag  
 Shall soon their sorrows cease,  
 For he shall either break their necks  
 Or gallop from the press. 165  
 The Fleet not in their circuit is,  
 Yet if I give him nought,  
 It might procure his curse ere I  
 Unto the ground be brought.  
 Wherefore I leave some Papist old  
 To underprop his roof, 170  
 And to the poor within the same,  
 A box for their behoof.  
 What makes you standers-by to smile  
 And laugh so in your sleeve?  
 I think it is because that I  
 To Ludgate nothing give. 175

151. *heaped*: crowded154. *burning*: branding, common punishment for petty and/or lower-class offenders155-6. *beg* ... *sum*: convicts could become 'professed beggars' (i.e. licensed to beg) to enable them to raise money to pay their fines158. *twelve*: members of a jury159. *Holborn hill*: a procession of condemned prisoners from Newgate typically rode past St Sepulchre's up Giltspur Street, across Smithfield and down Cow Lane to the bottom of Holborn, and from there up to Tyburn for execution163. *either* ... *necks*: by going slowly but surely164. *press*: executions were popular spectator events165. *Fleet*: prison near Ludgate Hill east of Fleet Ditch, for those found guilty in Star Chamber or Chancery169. *Papist*: Roman Catholics were subject to crushing fines for failing to attend Church of England services (= recusancy)172. *box*: presumably a money-box to collect alms for prisoners. But an additional sense, 'blow', seems appropriate since London gaols were extremely violent.176. *Ludgate*: prison for debtors and bankrupts west of St Paul's

I am not now in case to lie,  
 Here is no place of jest;  
 I did reserve that for myself  
 If I my health possessed  
 And ever came in credit so  
 A debtor for to be. 180  
 When days of payment did approach,  
 I thither meant to flee,  
 To shroud myself amongst the rest  
 That choose to die in debt. 185  
 Rather than any creditor  
 Should money from them get  
 (Yet 'cause I feel myself so weak  
 That none me credit dare), 190  
 I here revoke and do it leave  
 Some bankrupts to his share.  
 To all the bookbinders by Paul's,  
 Because I like their art,  
 They every week shall money have  
 When they from books depart. 195  
 Amongst them all my printer must  
 Have somewhat to his share;  
 I will my friends these books to buy  
 Of him, with other ware. 200  
 For maidens poor, I widowers rich  
 Do leave, that oft shall dote,  
 And by that means shall marry them  
 To set the girls afloat.  
 And wealthy widows will I leave  
 To help young gentlemen, 205  
 Which when you have, in any case,  
 Be courteous to them then,  
 And see their plate and jewels eke  
 May not be marred with rust, 210

177. *case*: a position to181. *came . . . so*: became so honoured as (and an ironic pun with 'debtor')190. *credit*: believe, and in a financial sense193. *Paul's*: i.e. St Paul's Churchyard, walled precinct around the cathedral containing houses and shops, especially booksellers197. *my printer*: Richard Jones, publisher of popular literature and pamphlets, with an apparent specialty in women writers. He printed all of Whitney's work, as well as Jane Anger's *Protection for Women* with Thomas Orwin in 1589. See Fehrenbach 1981.204. *afloat*: fully 'launched' towards prosperity210. *rust*: tarnish

Nor let their bags too long be full,  
 For fear that they do burst.  
 To every gate under the walls  
 That compass thee about, 215  
 I fruit-wives leave to entertain  
 Such as come in and out.  
 To Smithfield I must something leave,  
 My parents there did dwell;  
 So careless for to be of it  
 None would account it well. 220  
 Wherefore it thrice a week shall have  
 Of horse and neat good store,  
 And in his spital, blind and lame  
 To dwell for evermore. 225  
 And Bedlam must not be forgot,  
 For that was oft my walk;  
 I people there too many leave  
 That out of tune do talk.  
 At Bridewell there shall beadles be,  
 And matrons that shall still 230  
 See chalk well chopped, and spinning plied,  
 And turning of the mill.  
 For such as cannot quiet be  
 But strive for house or land,

215. *fruit-wives*: fruit-sellers217. *Smithfield*: north-west beyond the City walls in an area bounded by Holborn, Aldergate Street and Charterhouse Street. It was known for its horse-market, and for Bartholomew Fair (24 August, memorably caricatured in Jonson's play of the same name). More grimly, Smithfield was also the place where witches and heretics were burnt at the stake, especially Protestants during the reign of Queen Mary. Their sufferings are recorded at length by John Fox in *Acts and Monuments of these Latter and Perilous Days* (1563 – better known as the *Book of Martyrs*).222. *neat*: oxen223. *spital*: Hospital of St Bartholomew225. *Bedlam*: Hospital of St Mary of Bethlehem, at one time a priory but in Whitney's day a lunatic asylum. As she attests, Londoners visited it to watch the ravings of the mad for 'amusement'.229. *Bridewell*: on the west side of Fleet Ditch and the Thames. A former royal palace often used by Henry VIII, but later given to the City of London by Edward VI. It became a workhouse for the poor and unemployed and then a prison for women, hence the references to 'matrons' and seemingly 'domestic' forms of work/punishment in the following lines.*beadles*: officers or guards231. *chalk*: or perhaps 'limestone'

- At th'Inns of Court I lawyers leave  
To take their cause in hand. 235  
And also leave I at each Inn  
Of Court or Chancery,  
Of gentlemen, a youthful rut  
Full of activity; 240  
For whom I store of books have left  
At each bookbinder's stall,  
And part of all that London hath  
To furnish them withal.  
And when they are with study cloyed,  
To recreate their mind, 245  
Of tennis courts, of dancing schools  
And fence, they store shall find.  
And every Sunday at the least,  
I leave, to make them sport, 250  
In divers places players, that  
Of wonders shall report.
- Now London have I for thy sake  
Within thee and without,  
As comes into my memory,  
Dispersed round about 255  
Such needful things as they should have  
Here left now unto thee;

239. *rut*: company, with an association of being sexually active (literally, a company of female deer dedicated to one stag)

248. *fence*: fencing

251. *divers* ... *players*: Richard Burbage had built the first permanent public playhouse – The Theatre – in Shoreditch as early as 1567. Before The Curtain (1577) and others were founded during the remainder of the century (most famously the Globe in 1599), companies regularly performed in the yards of large London inns until these locations were forbidden by the City authorities, who objected to plays as the 'occasion of frays and quarrels, evil practices of incontinency ... inveigling and alluring of maids, specially orphans and good citizens' children under age, to privy and unmeet contracts, the publishing of unchaste, uncomely, and unshamefast speeches and doings, withdrawing of the Queen's Majesty's subjects from divine service on Sundays and holy days ... unthrifty waste of the money of the poor and fond [silly] persons, sundry robberies by picking and cutting of purses, uttering of popular, busy, and seditious matters, and many other corruptions of youth and other enormities ...' (1574, Act of London Common Council, E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, Oxford, 1923, IV, 273–4).

- When I am gone, with conscience  
Let them dispersed be. 260  
And though I nothing named have  
To bury me withal,  
Consider that above the ground  
Annoyance be I shall. 265  
And let me have a shrouding sheet  
To cover me from shame,  
And in oblivion bury me  
And never more me name.  
Ringings nor other ceremonies  
Use you not for cost, 270  
Nor at my burial make no feast;  
Your money were but lost.  
Rejoice in God that I am gone  
Out of this vale so vile,  
And that, of each thing left such store 275  
As may your wants exile,  
I make thee sole executor  
Because I loved thee best,  
And thee I put in trust to give  
The goods unto the rest. 280  
Because thou shalt a helper need  
In this so great a charge,  
I wish good fortune be thy guide, lest  
Thou shouldst run at large. 285  
The happy days and quiet times  
They both her servants be,  
Which well will serve to fetch and bring  
Such things as need to thee.  
Wherefore, good London, not refuse  
For helper her to take. 290  
Thus being weak and weary both  
An end here will I make.  
To all that ask what end I made  
And how I went away,  
Thou answer may'st like those which here 295  
No longer tarry may.

259. *with*: on your

261–2. *named* ... *me*: i.e. for burial costs

264. *Annoyance* ... *shall*: I shall trouble you further (?)

265. *shrouding sheet*: winding sheet, for wrapping corpses before burial

284. *run* ... *large*: at length (or altogether) run short

290. *her*: i.e. (good) fortune



And unto all that wish me well  
 Or rue that I am gone,  
 Do me commend and bid them cease  
 My absence for to moan. 300  
 And tell them further, if they would  
 My presence still have had,  
 They should have sought to mend my luck  
 Which ever was too bad.  
 So fare thou well a thousand times, 305  
 God shield thee from thy foe;  
 And still make thee victorious  
 Of those that seek thy woe.  
 And though I am persuade that I  
 Shall never more thee see, 310  
 Yet to the last I shall not cease  
 To wish much good to thee.  
 This 20 of October, I,  
 In Anno Domini  
 A thousand five hundred seventy three, 315  
 (As almanacs descry),  
 Did write this will with mine own hand  
 And it to London gave  
 In witness of the standers-by;  
 Whose names (if you will have) 320  
 Paper, Pen, and Standish were  
 At that same present by,  
 With Time who promised to reveal  
 So fast as she could hie  
 The same, lest of my nearer kin 325  
 From anything should vary.  
 So finally I make an end;  
 No longer can I tarry.

Finis by Isabella Whitney.

298. *rue*: regret309. *persuade*: *sic* for 'persuaded'316. *descry*: observe321. *Standish*: inkpot or stand324-5. *So ... same*: hie = dispatch, apparently meaning, 'as fast as I could sell my work'

## ISABELLA WHITNEY

THE LAMENTATION OF A GENTLEWOMAN  
 UPON THE DEATH OF HER LATE DECEASED  
 FRIEND, WILLIAM GRUFFITH, \* GENTLEMAN

(1578)

With poet's pen I do not press to write,  
 Minerva's mate I do not boast to be,  
 Parnassus mount (I speak it for no spite)  
 Can cure my cursed cares, I plainly see:  
 For why my heart contains as many woes 5  
 As ever Hector did amongst his foes.

Each man doth moan when faithful friends be dead,  
 And paint them out as well as wits do serve.

\* William Gruffith: unidentified. There is no reason, as Rollins observes (1971: 204), for linking him to the Elizabethan printer William Griffith, but he may be the W.G. who contributed an afterpiece to Whitney's *Copy of a Letter*, which was published, like *A Sweet Nosegay* and *A Gorgeous Gallery*, by Richard Jones.

1-4. *I ... see*: self-disabling gestures and denial of artistic ambition are conventional opening gambits associated with the 'modesty topos' (E. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, London, 1953). They were employed by both male and female writers in this period, though for women modesty was never merely a dispensable convention.

1. *press*: attempt, or in a stronger sense, entreat urgently

2. *Minerva's*: goddess of wisdom and the liberal arts, especially writing

3. *Parnassus*: mountain seat of the nine classical Muses

4. *Can: cannot* seems to be implied. See ll. 119-20.

5. *For why*: because

6. *Hector*: greatest of the Trojan heroes. When he was being tracked down by Achilles during the fall of Troy, Minerva tricked him into thinking his brother Deiphobus was coming to his rescue. Hector recognised the deception too late, and when he died the Greeks mutilated his body, but the extremity and pathos of his suffering confirmed his heroism, and his funeral concludes *The Illiad*. Whitney's comparison suggests that, despite the liability of her gender (like the fact of Hector's ultimate defeat), she seeks renown from the same kind of self-authorising passion.

8. *paint ... out*: depict vividly