

Classic Poetry Series

John Donne
- poems -

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John Donne(24 January 1572 - 31 March 1631)

John Donne was an English poet, satirist, lawyer and priest. He is considered the pre-eminent representative of the metaphysical poets. His works are noted for their strong, sensual style and include sonnets, love poetry, religious poems, Latin translations, epigrams, elegies, songs, satires and sermons. His poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphor, especially compared to that of his contemporaries. Donne's style is characterised by abrupt openings and various paradoxes, ironies and dislocations. These features, along with his frequent dramatic or everyday speech rhythms, his tense syntax and his tough eloquence, were both a reaction against the smoothness of conventional Elizabethan poetry and an adaptation into English of European baroque and mannerist techniques. His early career was marked by poetry that bore immense knowledge of British society and he met that knowledge with sharp criticism. Another important theme in Donne's poetry is the idea of true religion, something that he spent much time considering and theorising about. He wrote secular poems as well as erotic and love poems. He is particularly famous for his mastery of metaphysical conceits.

Despite his great education and poetic talents, Donne lived in poverty for several years, relying heavily on wealthy friends. He spent much of the money he inherited during and after his education on womanising, literature, pastimes, and travel. In 1601, Donne secretly married Anne Moore, with whom he had twelve children. In 1615, he became an Anglican priest, although he did not want to take Anglican orders. He did so because King James I persistently ordered it. In 1621, he was appointed the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in London. He also served as a member of parliament in 1601 and in 1614.

Biography

Early Life

Donne was born in London, into a Roman Catholic family when practice of that religion was illegal in England. Donne was the third of six children. His father, also named John Donne, was of Welsh descent and a warden of the Ironmongers Company in the City of London. Donne's father was a respected Roman Catholic who avoided unwelcome government attention out of fear of persecution.

Donne's father died in 1576, leaving his wife, Elizabeth Heywood, the responsibility of raising their children. Elizabeth was also from a recusant Roman Catholic family, the daughter of John Heywood, the playwright, and sister of the

Reverend Jasper Heywood, a Jesuit priest and translator. She was a great-niece of the Roman Catholic martyr Thomas More. This tradition of martyrdom would continue among Donne's closer relatives, many of whom were executed or exiled for religious reasons. Donne was educated privately; however, there is no evidence to support the popular claim that he was taught by Jesuits. Donne's mother married Dr. John Syminges, a wealthy widower with three children, a few months after Donne's father died. Two more of his sisters, Mary and Katherine, died in 1581. Donne's mother, who had lived in the Deanery after Donne became Dean of St. Paul's, survived him, dying in 1632.

Donne was a student at Hart Hall, now Hertford College, Oxford, from the age of 11. After three years at Oxford he was admitted to the University of Cambridge, where he studied for another three years. He was unable to obtain a degree from either institution because of his Catholicism, since he could not take the Oath of Supremacy required of graduates.

In 1591 he was accepted as a student at the Thavies Inn legal school, one of the Inns of Chancery in London. On 6 May 1592 he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, one of the Inns of Court. His brother Henry was also a university student prior to his arrest in 1593 for harbouring a Catholic priest, William Harrington, whom Henry betrayed under torture. Harrington was tortured on the rack, hanged until not quite dead, then was subjected to disembowelment. Henry Donne died in Newgate prison of bubonic plague, leading John Donne to begin questioning his Catholic faith.

During and after his education, Donne spent much of his considerable inheritance on women, literature, pastimes and travel. Although there is no record detailing precisely where he travelled, it is known that he travelled across Europe and later fought with the Earl of Essex and Sir Walter Raleigh against the Spanish at Cadiz (1596) and the Azores (1597) and witnessed the loss of the Spanish flagship, the San Felipe. According to Izaak Walton, who wrote a biography of Donne in 1658:

... he returned not back into England till he had stayed some years, first in Italy, and then in Spain, where he made many useful observations of those countries, their laws and manner of government, and returned perfect in their languages.
—Izaak Walton

By the age of 25 he was well prepared for the diplomatic career he appeared to be seeking. He was appointed chief secretary to the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, Sir Thomas Egerton, and was established at Egerton's London home, York House, Strand close to the Palace of Whitehall, then the most influential social centre in England.

Marriage to Anne More

During the next four years, he fell in love with Egerton's niece Anne More. They were married just before Christmas in 1601, against the wishes of both Egerton and George More, who was Lieutenant of the Tower and Anne's father. This wedding ruined Donne's career and earned him a short stay in Fleet Prison, along with Samuel Brooke, who married them, and the man who acted as a witness to the wedding. Donne was released when the marriage was proven valid, and he soon secured the release of the other two. Walton tells us that when Donne wrote to his wife to tell her about losing his post, he wrote after his name: John Donne, Anne Donne, Un-done. It was not until 1609 that Donne was reconciled with his father-in-law and received his wife's dowry.

After his release, Donne had to accept a retired country life in Pyrford, Surrey. Over the next few years, he scraped a meagre living as a lawyer, depending on his wife's cousin Sir Francis Wolly to house him, his wife, and their children. Because Anne Donne bore a new baby almost every year, this was a very generous gesture. Though he practised law and may have worked as an assistant pamphleteer to Thomas Morton, Donne was in a constant state of financial insecurity, with a growing family to provide for.

Anne bore twelve children in sixteen years of marriage (including two stillbirths—their eighth and then, in 1617, their last child); indeed, she spent most of her married life either pregnant or nursing. The ten surviving children were Constance, John, George, Francis, Lucy (named after Donne's patroness Lucy, Countess of Bedford, her godmother), Bridget, Mary, Nicholas, Margaret, and Elizabeth.

Francis, Nicholas, and Mary died before they were ten. In a state of despair, Donne noted that the death of a child would mean one less mouth to feed, but he could not afford the burial expenses. During this time, Donne wrote, but did not publish, *Biathanatos*, his defence of suicide. His wife died on 15 August 1617, five days after giving birth to their twelfth child, a still-born baby. Donne mourned her deeply, and wrote of his love and loss in his 17th Holy Sonnet.

Career and Later Life

Donne was elected as Member of Parliament for the constituency of Brackley in 1602, but this was not a paid position. The fashion for coterie poetry of the period gave him a means to seek patronage and many of his poems were written for wealthy friends or patrons, especially Sir Robert Drury, who came to be

Donne's chief patron in 1610. Donne wrote the two Anniversaries, *An Anatomy of the World* (1611) and *Of the Progress of the Soul*, (1612), for Drury. In 1610 and 1611 he wrote two anti-Catholic polemics: *Pseudo-Martyr* and *Ignatius his Conclave*. Although James was pleased with Donne's work, he refused to reinstate him at court and instead urged him to take holy orders. At length, Donne acceded to the King's wishes and in 1615 was ordained into the Church of England.

Donne was awarded an honorary doctorate in divinity from Cambridge in 1615 and became a Royal Chaplain in the same year, and was made a Reader of Divinity at Lincoln's Inn in 1616. In 1618 he became chaplain to Viscount Doncaster, who was on an embassy to the princes of Germany. Donne did not return to England until 1620. In 1621 Donne was made Dean of St Paul's, a leading (and well-paid) position in the Church of England and one he held until his death in 1631. During his period as Dean his daughter Lucy died, aged eighteen. In late November and early December 1623 he suffered a nearly fatal illness, thought to be either typhus or a combination of a cold followed by a period of fever. During his convalescence he wrote a series of meditations and prayers on health, pain, and sickness that were published as a book in 1624 under the title of *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*. One of these meditations, *Meditation XVII*, later became well known for its phrase "for whom the bell tolls" and the statement that "no man is an island". In 1624 he became vicar of St Dunstan-in-the-West, and 1625 a prolocutor to Charles I. He earned a reputation as an eloquent preacher and 160 of his sermons have survived, including the famous *Death's Duel* sermon delivered at the Palace of Whitehall before King Charles I in February 1631.

Death

It is thought that his final illness was stomach cancer, although this has not been proven. He died on 31 March 1631 having written many poems, most only in manuscript. Donne was buried in old St Paul's Cathedral, where a memorial statue of him was erected (carved from a drawing of him in his shroud), with a Latin epigraph probably composed by himself. Donne's monument survived the 1666 fire, and is on display in the present building.

Writings

Early Poetry

Donne's earliest poems showed a developed knowledge of English society coupled with sharp criticism of its problems. His satires dealt with common

Elizabethan topics, such as corruption in the legal system, mediocre poets, and pompous courtiers. His images of sickness, vomit, manure, and plague reflected his strongly satiric view of a world populated by all the fools and knaves of England. His third satire, however, deals with the problem of true religion, a matter of great importance to Donne. He argued that it was better to examine carefully one's religious convictions than blindly to follow any established tradition, for none would be saved at the Final Judgment, by claiming "A Harry, or a Martin taught [them] this."

Donne's early career was also notable for his erotic poetry, especially his elegies, in which he employed unconventional metaphors, such as a flea biting two lovers being compared to sex. In *Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed*, he poetically undressed his mistress and compared the act of fondling to the exploration of America. In *Elegy XVIII*, he compared the gap between his lover's breasts to the Hellespont. Donne did not publish these poems, although did allow them to circulate widely in manuscript form.

"... any mans death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankinde; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee..☐☐
— Donne, *Meditation XVII*

Some have speculated that Donne's numerous illnesses, financial strain, and the deaths of his friends all contributed to the development of a more somber and pious tone in his later poems. The change can be clearly seen in "An Anatomy of the World" (1611), a poem that Donne wrote in memory of Elizabeth Drury, daughter of his patron, Sir Robert Drury of Hawstead, Suffolk. This poem treats Elizabeth's demise with extreme gloominess, using it as a symbol for the Fall of Man and the destruction of the universe.

The poem "A Nocturnal upon S. Lucy's Day, Being the Shortest Day", concerns the poet's despair at the death of a loved one. In it Donne expresses a feeling of utter negation and hopelessness, saying that "I am every dead thing...re-begot / Of absence, darkness, death." This famous work was probably written in 1627 when both Donne's friend Lucy, Countess of Bedford, and his daughter Lucy Donne died. Three years later, in 1630, Donne wrote his will on Saint Lucy's day (13 December), the date the poem describes as "Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight."

The increasing gloominess of Donne's tone may also be observed in the religious works that he began writing during the same period. His early belief in the value of scepticism now gave way to a firm faith in the traditional teachings of the Bible. Having converted to the Anglican Church, Donne focused his literary career

on religious literature. He quickly became noted for his sermons and religious poems. The lines of these sermons would come to influence future works of English literature, such as Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, which took its title from a passage in *Meditation XVII of Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, and Thomas Merton's *No Man is an Island*, which took its title from the same source.

Towards the end of his life Donne wrote works that challenged death, and the fear that it inspired in many men, on the grounds of his belief that those who die are sent to Heaven to live eternally. One example of this challenge is his Holy Sonnet X, *Death Be Not Proud*, from which come the famous lines "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee / Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so." Even as he lay dying during Lent in 1631, he rose from his sickbed and delivered the *Death's Duel* sermon, which was later described as his own funeral sermon. *Death's Duel* portrays life as a steady descent to suffering and death, yet sees hope in salvation and immortality through an embrace of God, Christ and the Resurrection.

Style

His work has received much criticism over the years, especially concerning his metaphysical form. Donne is generally considered the most prominent member of the Metaphysical poets, a phrase coined in 1781 by the critic Dr Johnson, following a comment on Donne by the poet John Dryden. Dryden had written of Donne in 1693: "He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love." In *Life of* Cowley (from Samuel Johnson's 1781 work of biography and criticism *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*), Johnson refers to the beginning of the seventeenth century in which there "appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets". Donne's immediate successors in poetry therefore tended to regard his works with ambivalence, with the Neoclassical poets regarding his conceits as abuse of the metaphor. However he was revived by Romantic poets such as Coleridge and Browning, though his more recent revival in the early twentieth century by poets such as T. S. Eliot and critics like F R Leavis tended to portray him, with approval, as an anti-Romantic.

Donne's work suggests a healthy appetite for life and its pleasures, while also expressing deep emotion. He did this through the use of conceits, wit and intellect—as seen in the poems "The Sun Rising" and "Batter My Heart".

Donne is considered a master of the metaphysical conceit, an extended metaphor that combines two vastly different ideas into a single idea, often using imagery. An example of this is his equation of lovers with saints in "The Canonization". Unlike the conceits found in other Elizabethan poetry, most notably Petrarchan conceits, which formed clichéd comparisons between more closely related objects (such as a rose and love), metaphysical conceits go to a greater depth in comparing two completely unlike objects. One of the most famous of Donne's conceits is found in "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" where he compares two lovers who are separated to the two legs of a compass.

Donne's works are also witty, employing paradoxes, puns, and subtle yet remarkable analogies. His pieces are often ironic and cynical, especially regarding love and human motives. Common subjects of Donne's poems are love (especially in his early life), death (especially after his wife's death), and religion.

John Donne's poetry represented a shift from classical forms to more personal poetry. Donne is noted for his poetic metre, which was structured with changing and jagged rhythms that closely resemble casual speech (it was for this that the more classical-minded Ben Jonson commented that "Donne, for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging").

Some scholars believe that Donne's literary works reflect the changing trends of his life, with love poetry and satires from his youth and religious sermons during his later years. Other scholars, such as Helen Gardner, question the validity of this dating—most of his poems were published posthumously (1633). The exception to these is his Anniversaries which were published in 1612 and Devotions upon Emergent Occasions published in 1624. His sermons are also dated, sometimes specifically by date and year.

Legacy

Donne is commemorated as a priest in the calendar of the Church of England and in the Calendar of Saints of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on 31 March.

Sylvia Plath, interviewed on BBC Radio in late 1962, said the following about a book review of her collection of poems titled *The Colossus* that had been

published in the United Kingdom two years earlier: "I remember being appalled when someone criticised me for beginning just like John Donne but not quite managing to finish like John Donne, and I felt the weight of English literature on me at that point."

The memorial to Donne, modelled after the engraving pictured above, was one of the few such memorials to survive the Great Fire of London in 1666 and now appears in St Paul's Cathedral where Donne is buried.

Donne in Literature

In Margaret Edson's Pulitzer prize-winning play *Wit* (1999), the main character, a professor of 17th century poetry specialising in Donne, is dying of cancer. The play was adapted for the HBO film *Wit* starring Emma Thompson.

Donne's *Songs and Sonnets* feature in *The Calligrapher* (2003), a novel by Edward Docx.

In the 2006 novel *The Meaning of Night* by Michael Cox, Donne's works are frequently quoted.

Donne appears, along with his wife Anne and daughter Pegge, in the award-winning novel *Conceit* (2007) by Mary Novik.

Joseph Brodsky has a poem called "Elegy for John Donne".

The love story of Donne and Anne More is the subject of Maeve Haran's 2010 historical novel *The Lady and the Poet*.

An excerpt from "Meditation 17 Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions" serves as the opening for Ernest Hemingway's *For Whom The Bell Tolls*.

Marilynne Robinson's Pulitzer prize-winning novel *Gilead* makes several references to Donne's work.

Donne is the favourite poet of Dorothy Sayers' fictional detective Lord Peter Wimsey, and the Wimsey books include numerous quotations from, and allusions to, his work.

Donne's poem 'A Fever' (incorrectly called 'The Fever') is mentioned in the penultimate paragraph of the novel "The Silence of the Lambs" by Thomas Harris.

Edmund "Bunny" Corcoran writes a paper on Donne in Donna Tartt's novel *The Secret History*, in which he ties together Donne and Izaak Walton with help of an imaginary philosophy called "Metahemeralism".

Donne plays a significant role in Christie Dickason's *The Noble Assassin* (2011), a novel based on the life of Donne's patron and putative lover, Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford.

Donne in Popular Culture

John Renbourn, on his 1966 debut album *John Renbourn*, sings a version of the poem, "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star". (He alters the last line to "False, ere I count one, two, three.")

Tarwater, in their album *Salon des Refusés*, have put "The Relic" to song.

The plot of Neil Gaiman's novel *Stardust* is based upon the poem "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star," with the fallen star turned into a major character.

Bob Chilcott has arranged a choral piece to Donne's "Go and Catch a Falling Star".

Van Morrison pays tribute to the poet on "Rave On John Donne" and makes references in many other songs.

Lost in Austen, the British mini series based on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, has Bingley refer to Donne when he describes taking Jane to America, "John Donne, don't you know? 'License my roving hands,' and so forth."

Las Cruces, in their album *Ringmaster*, used a sample of "Death be not Proud" from the movie "Exorcist III" for their song "Black Waters".

A Burnt Ship

Out of a fired ship, which by no way
But drowning could be rescued from the flame,
Some men leap'd forth, and ever as they came
Near the foes' ships, did by their shot decay;
So all were lost, which in the ship were found,
They in the sea being burnt, they in the burnt ship drown'd.

John Donne

A Dialogue Between Sir Henry Wootton And Mr. Donne

[W.]

IF her disdain least change in you can move,
You do not love,
For when that hope gives fuel to the fire,
You sell desire.
Love is not love, but given free ;
And so is mine ; so should yours be.

[D.]

Her heart, that weeps to hear of others' moan,
To mine is stone.
Her eyes, that weep a stranger's eyes to see,
Joy to wound me.
Yet I so well affect each part,
As—caused by them—I love my smart.

[W.]

Say her disdainings justly must be graced
With name of chaste ;
And that she frowns lest longing should exceed,
And raging breed ;
So her disdains can ne'er offend,
Unless self-love take private end.

[D.]

'Tis love breeds love in me, and cold disdain
Kills that again,
As water causeth fire to fret and fume,
Till all consume.
Who can of love more rich gift make,
That to Love's self for love's own sake?

I'll never dig in quarry of an heart

To have no part,
Nor roast in fiery eyes, which always are
Canicular.
Who this way would a lover prove,
May show his patience, not his love.

A frown may be sometimes for physic good,
But not for food ;
And for that raging humour there is sure
A gentler cure.
Why bar you love of private end,
Which never should to public tend?

John Donne

A Fever

Oh do not die, for I shall hate
All women so, when thou art gone,
That thee I shall not celebrate,
When I remember, thou wast one.

But yet thou canst not die, I know;
To leave this world behind, is death,
But when thou from this world wilt go,
The whole world vapours with thy breath.

Or if, when thou, the world's soul, go'st,
It stay, 'tis but thy carcase then,
The fairest woman, but thy ghost,
But corrupt worms, the worthiest men.

Oh wrangling schools, that search what fire
Shall burn this world, had none the wit
Unto this knowledge to aspire,
That this her fever might be it ?

And yet she cannot waste by this,
Nor long bear this torturing wrong,
For much corruption needful is
To fuel such a fever long.

These burning fits but meteors be,
Whose matter in thee is soon spent.
Thy beauty, and all parts, which are thee,
Are unchangeable firmament.

Yet 'twas of my mind, seizing thee,
Though it in thee cannot persevere.
For I had rather owner be
Of thee one hour, than all else ever.

John Donne

A Hymn To Christ At The Author's Last Going Into Germany

In what torn ship soever I embark,
That ship shall be my emblem of thy Ark;
What sea soever swallow me, that flood
Shall be to me an emblem of thy blood;
Though thou with clouds of anger do disguise
Thy face, yet through that mask I know those eyes,
Which, though they turn away sometimes,
They never will despise.

I sacrifice this Island unto thee,
And all whom I loved there, and who loved me;
When I have put our seas 'twixt them and me,
Put thou thy sea betwixt my sins and thee.
As the tree's sap doth seek the root below
In winter, in my winter now I go,
Where none but thee, th' Eternal root
Of true Love, I may know.

Nor thou nor thy religion dost control
The amorousness of an harmonious Soul,
But thou wouldst have that love thyself: as thou
Art jealous, Lord, so I am jealous now,
Thou lov'st not, till from loving more, Thou free
My soul: who ever gives, takes liberty:
O, if thou car'st not whom I love
Alas, thou lov'st not me.

Seal then this bill of my Divorce to All,
On whom those fainter beams of love did fall;
Marry those loves, which in youth scattered be
On Fame, Wit, Hopes (false mistresses) to thee.
Churches are best for Prayer, that have least light:
To see God only, I go out of sight:
And to 'scape stormy days, I choose
An Everlasting night.

A Hymn To God The Father

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

John Donne

A Jet Ring Sent

Thou art not so black as my heart,
Nor half so brittle as her heart, thou art ;
What would'st thou say ? shall both our properties by thee be spoke,
—Nothing more endless, nothing sooner broke?

Marriage rings are not of this stuff ;
Oh, why should ought less precious, or less tough
Figure our loves ? except in thy name thou have bid it say,
'—I'm cheap, and nought but fashion ; fling me away.'

Yet stay with me since thou art come,
Circle this finger's top, which didst her thumb ;
Be justly proud, and gladly safe, that thou dost dwell with me ;
She that, O ! broke her faith, would soon break thee.

John Donne

A Lame Beggar

I am unable, yonder beggar cries,
To stand, or move; if he say true, he lies.

John Donne

A Lecture Upon The Shadow

Stand still, and I will read to thee
A lecture, love, in love's philosophy.
 These three hours that we have spent,
 Walking here, two shadows went
Along with us, which we ourselves produc'd.
But, now the sun is just above our head,
 We do those shadows tread,
 And to brave clearness all things are reduc'd.
So whilst our infant loves did grow,
Disguises did, and shadows, flow
From us, and our cares; but now 'tis not so.
That love has not attain'd the high'st degree,
Which is still diligent lest others see.

Except our loves at this noon stay,
We shall new shadows make the other way.
 As the first were made to blind
 Others, these which come behind
Will work upon ourselves, and blind our eyes.
If our loves faint, and westwardly decline,
 To me thou, falsely, thine,
 And I to thee mine actions shall disguise.
The morning shadows wear away,
But these grow longer all the day;
But oh, love's day is short, if love decay.
Love is a growing, or full constant light,
And his first minute, after noon, is night.

John Donne

A Licentious Person

Thy sins and hairs may no man equal call ;
For, as thy sins increase, thy hairs do fall.

John Donne

A Litany

I.

THE FATHER.

FATHER of Heaven, and Him, by whom
It, and us for it, and all else for us,
Thou madest, and govern'st ever, come
And re-create me, now grown ruinous:
My heart is by dejection, clay,
And by self-murder, red.
From this red earth, O Father, purge away
All vicious tinctures, that new-fashioned
I may rise up from death, before I'm dead.

II.

THE SON.

O Son of God, who, seeing two things,
Sin and Death, crept in, which were never made,
By bearing one, tried'st with what stings
The other could Thine heritage invade ;
O be Thou nail'd unto my heart,
And crucified again ;
Part not from it, though it from Thee would part,
But let it be by applying so Thy pain,
Drown'd in Thy blood, and in Thy passion slain.

III.

THE HOLY GHOST.

O Holy Ghost, whose temple I
Am, but of mud walls , and condensèd dust,
And being sacrilegiously
Half wasted with youth's fires of pride and lust,
Must with new storms be weather-beat,
Double in my heart Thy flame,

Which let devout sad tears intend, and let—
Though this glass lanthorn, flesh, do suffer maim—
Fire, sacrifice, priest, altar be the same.

IV.

THE TRINITY.

O blessed glorious Trinity,
Bones to philosophy, but milk to faith,
Which, as wise serpents, diversely
Most slipperiness, yet most entanglings hath,
As you distinguish'd, undistinct,
By power, love, knowledge be,
Give me a such self different instinct,
Of these let all me elemented be,
Of power, to love, to know you unnumbered three.

V.

THE VIRGIN MARY.

For that fair blessed mother-maid,
Whose flesh redeem'd us, that she-cherubin,
Which unlock'd paradise, and made
One claim for innocence, and disseizèd sin,
Whose womb was a strange heaven, for there
God clothed Himself, and grew,
Our zealous thanks we pour. As her deeds were
Our helps, so are her prayers ; nor can she sue
In vain, who hath such titles unto you.

VI.

THE ANGELS.

And since this life our nonage is,
And we in wardship to Thine angels be,
Native in heaven's fair palaces

Where we shall be but denizen'd by Thee ;
As th' earth conceiving by the sun,
Yields fair diversity,
Yet never knows what course that light doth run ;
So let me study that mine actions be
Worthy their sight, though blind in how they see.

VII.

THE PATRIARCHS.

And let Thy patriarchs' desire,
—Those great grandfathers of Thy Church, which saw
More in the cloud than we in fire,
Whom nature clear'd more, than us grace and law,
And now in heaven still pray, that we
May use our new helps right—
Be satisfied, and fructify in me ;
Let not my mind be blinder by more light,
Nor faith by reason added lose her sight.

VIII.

THE PROPHETS.

Thy eagle-sighted prophets too,
—Which were Thy Church's organs, and did sound
That harmony which made of two
One law, and did unite, but not confound ;
Those heavenly poets which did see
Thy will, and it express
In rhythmic feet—in common pray for me,
That I by them excuse not my excess
In seeking secrets, or poeticness.

IX.

THE APOSTLES.

And thy illustrious zodiac
Of twelve apostles, which engirt this All,
—From whom whosoever do not take
Their light, to dark deep pits throw down and fall ;—
As through their prayers Thou'st let me know
That their books are divine,
May they pray still, and be heard, that I go
Th' old broad way in applying ; O decline
Me, when my comment would make Thy word mine.

X.

THE MARTYRS.

And since Thou so desirously
Didst long to die, that long before Thou couldst,
And long since Thou no more couldst die,
Thou in thy scatter'd mystic body wouldst
In Abel die, and ever since
In Thine ; let their blood come
To beg for us a discreet patience
Of death, or of worse life ; for O, to some
Not to be martyrs, is a martyrdom.

XI.

THE CONFESSORS.

Therefore with Thee triumpheth there
A virgin squadron of white confessors,
Whose bloods betroth'd not married were,
Tender'd, not taken by those ravishers.
They know, and pray that we may know,
In every Christian
Hourly tempestuous persecutions grow ;
Temptations martyr us alive ; a man
Is to himself a Diocletian.

XII.

THE VIRGINS.

The cold white snowy nunnery,
Which, as Thy Mother, their high abbess, sent
Their bodies back again to Thee,
As Thou hadst lent them, clean and innocent ;
Though they have not obtain'd of Thee,
That or Thy Church or I
Should keep, as they, our first integrity,
Divorce Thou sin in us, or bid it die,
And call chaste widowhead virginity.

XIII.

THE DOCTORS.

The sacred academy above
Of Doctors, whose pains have unclasp'd, and taught
Both books of life to us—for love
To know Thy scriptures tells us, we are wrote
In Thy other book—pray for us there,
That what they have misdome
Or missaid, we to that may not adhere.
Their zeal may be our sin. Lord, let us run
Mean ways, and call them stars, but not the sun.

XIV.

And whilst this universal quire,
That Church in triumph, this in warfare here,
Warm'd with one all-partaking fire
Of love, that none be lost, which cost Thee dear,
Prays ceaselessly, and Thou hearken too
—Since to be gracious
Our task is treble, to pray, bear, and do—
Hear this prayer, Lord ; O Lord, deliver us
From trusting in those prayers, though pour'd out
thus.

XV.

From being anxious, or secure,
Dead clods of sadness, or light squibs of mirth,
From thinking that great courts immure
All, or no happiness, or that this earth
Is only for our prison framed,
Or that Thou'rt covetous
To them whom Thou lovest, or that they are maim'd
From reaching this world's sweet who seek Thee
thus,
With all their might, good Lord, deliver us.

XVI.

From needing danger, to be good,
From owing Thee yesterday's tears to-day,
From trusting so much to Thy blood
That in that hope we wound our soul away,
From bribing Thee with alms, to excuse
Some sin more burdenous,
From light affecting, in religion, news,
From thinking us all soul, neglecting thus
Our mutual duties, Lord, deliver us.

XVII.

From tempting Satan to tempt us,
By our connivance, or slack company,
From measuring ill by vicious
Neglecting to choke sin's spawn, vanity,
From indiscreet humility,
Which might be scandalous
And cast reproach on Christianity,
From being spies, or to spies pervious,
From thirst or scorn of fame, deliver us.

XVIII.

Deliver us through Thy descent
Into the Virgin, whose womb was a place
Of middle kind ; and Thou being sent
To ungracious us, stay'dst at her full of grace ;
And through Thy poor birth, where first Thou
Glorified'st poverty ;
And yet soon after riches didst allow,
By accepting kings' gifts in th' Epiphany ;
Deliver us, and make us to both ways free.

XIX.

And through that bitter agony,
Which is still th' agony of pious wits,
Disputing what distorted Thee,
And interrupted evenness with fits ;
And through Thy free confession,
Though thereby they were then
Made blind, so that Thou mightst from them have gone ;
Good Lord, deliver us, and teach us when
We may not, and we may, blind unjust men.

XX.

Through Thy submitting all, to blows
Thy face, Thy robes to spoil, Thy fame to scorn,
All ways, which rage, or justice knows,
And by which Thou couldst show that Thou wast born ;
And through Thy gallant humbleness
Which Thou in death didst show,
Dying before Thy soul they could express ;
Deliver us from death, by dying so
To this world, ere this world do bid us go.

XXI.

When senses, which Thy soldiers are,
We arm against Thee, and they fight for sin ;

When want, sent but to tame, doth war,
And work despair a breach to enter in ;
When plenty, God's image, and seal,
Makes us idolatrous,
And love it, not him, whom it should reveal ;
When we are moved to seem religious
Only to vent wit ; Lord, deliver us.

XXII.

In churches, when th' infirmity
Of him which speaks, diminishes the word ;
When magistrates do misapply
To us, as we judge, lay or ghostly sword ;
When plague, which is Thine angel, reigns,
Or wars, Thy champions, sway ;
When heresy, Thy second deluge, gains ;
In th' hour of death, th' eve of last Judgment day ;
Deliver us from the sinister way.

XXIII.

Hear us, O hear us, Lord; to Thee
A sinner is more music, when he prays,
Than spheres' or angels' praises be,
In panegyric alleluias ;
Hear us, for till Thou hear us, Lord,
We know not what to say ;
Thine ear to our sighs, tears, thoughts, gives voice and word ;
O Thou, who Satan heard'st in Job's sick day,
Hear Thyself now, for Thou in us dost pray.

XXIV.

That we may change to evenness
This intermitting aguish piety ;
That snatching cramps of wickedness
And apoplexies of fast sin may die ;
That music of Thy promises,

Not threats in thunder may
Awaken us to our just offices ;
What in Thy book Thou dost, or creatures say,
That we may hear, Lord, hear us when we pray.

XXV.

That our ears' sickness we may cure,
And rectify those labyrinths aright,
That we by heark'ning not procure
Our praise, nor others' dispraise so invite ;
That we get not a slipp'riness
And senselessly decline,
From hearing bold wits jest at kings' excess,
To admit the like of majesty divine ;
That we may lock our ears, Lord, open Thine.

XXVI.

That living law, the magistrate,
Which to give us, and make us physic, doth
Our vices often aggravate ;
That preachers taxing sin, before her growth ;
That Satan, and envenom'd men—
Which will, if we starve, dine—
When they do most accuse us, may see then
Us to amendment hear them, Thee decline ;
That we may open our ears, Lord, lock Thine.

XXVII.

That learning, Thine ambassador,
From Thine allegiance we never tempt ;
That beauty, paradise's flower
For physic made, from poison be exempt ;
That wit—born apt high good to do—
By dwelling lazily
On nature's nothing be not nothing too ;
That our affections kill us not, nor die ;

Hear us, weak echoes, O, Thou Ear and Eye.

XXVIII.

Son of God, hear us, and since Thou
By taking our blood, owest it us again,
Gain to Thyself, or us allow ;
And let not both us and Thyself be slain ;
O Lamb of God, which took'st our sin,
Which could not stick to Thee,
O let it not return to us again ;
But patient and physician being free,
As sin is nothing, let it nowhere be.

John Donne

A Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy's Day, Being The Shortest Day

'Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,
Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks;
The sun is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;
The world's whole sap is sunk;
The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the bed's feet, life is shrunk,
Dead and interr'd; yet all these seem to laugh,
Compar'd with me, who am their epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers be
At the next world, that is, at the next spring;
For I am every dead thing,
In whom Love wrought new alchemy.
For his art did express
A quintessence even from nothingness,
From dull privations, and lean emptiness;
He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death: things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soul, form, spirit, whence they being have;
I, by Love's limbec, am the grave
Of all that's nothing. Oft a flood
Have we two wept, and so
Drown'd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two chaoses, when we did show
Care to aught else; and often absences
Withdrew our souls, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing the elixir grown;
Were I a man, that I were one
I needs must know; I should prefer,
If I were any beast,
Some ends, some means; yea plants, yea stones detest,
And love; all, all some properties invest;

If I an ordinary nothing were,
As shadow, a light and body must be here.

But I am none; nor will my sun renew.
You lovers, for whose sake the lesser sun
 At this time to the Goat is run
 To fetch new lust, and give it you,
 Enjoy your summer all;
Since she enjoys her long night's festival,
Let me prepare towards her, and let me call
This hour her vigil, and her eve, since this
Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight is.

John Donne

A Self Accuser

Your mistress, that you follow whores, still taxeth
you ;
'Tis strange that she should thus confess it, though 't be true.

John Donne

A Sheaf Of Snakes Used Heretofore To Be My Seal, The Crest Of Our Poor Family

ADOPTED in God's family and so
Our old coat lost, unto new arms I go.
The Cross—my seal at baptism—spread below
Does, by that form, into an Anchor grow.
Crosses grow Anchors ; bear, as thou shouldst do
Thy Cross, and that Cross grows an Anchor too.
But He that makes our Crosses Anchors thus,
Is Christ, who there is crucified for us.
Yet may I, with this, my first serpents hold ;
God gives new blessings, and yet leaves the old.
The serpent may, as wise, my pattern be ;
My poison, as he feeds on dust, that's me.
And, as he rounds the earth to murder sure,
My death he is, but on the Cross, my cure.
Crucify nature then, and then implore
All grace from Him, crucified there before ;
Then all is Cross, and that Cross Anchor grown ;
This seal's a catechism, not a seal alone.
Under that little seal great gifts I send,
Works, and prayers, pawns, and fruits of a friend.
And may that saint which rides in our great seal,
To you who bear his name,* great bounties deal !

John Donne

A Valediction Of Weeping

Let me pour forth

My tears before thy face, whilst I stay here,
For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear,
And by this mintage they are something worth,
For thus they be
Pregnant of thee;
Fruits of much grief they are, emblems of more,
When a tear falls, that thou falls which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a diverse shore.

On a round ball

A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afric, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, all;
So doth each tear
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world, by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mix'd with mine do overflow
This world; by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.

O more than moon,

Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere,
Weep me not dead, in thine arms, but forbear
To teach the sea what it may do too soon;
Let not the wind
Example find,
To do me more harm than it purposeth;
Since thou and I sigh one another's breath,
Whoe'er sighs most is cruellest, and hastes the other's death.

John Donne

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
'The breath goes now,' and some say, 'No:'

So let us melt, and make no noise,
No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears;
Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love
(Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin'd,
That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end, where I begun.

John Donne

A Valediction: Of Weeping

Let me pour forth
My tears before thy face, whil'st I stay here,
For thy face coins them, and thy stamp they bear,
And by this Mintage they are something worth,
For thus they be
Pregnant of thee;
Fruits of much grief they are, emblems of more,
When a tear falls, that thou falls which it bore,
So thou and I are nothing then, when on a divers shore.
On a round ball
A workman that hath copies by, can lay
An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,
So doth each tear,
Which thee doth wear,
A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
Till thy tears mixt with mine do overflow
This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.
O more than Moon,
Draw not up seas to drown me in thy sphere,
Weep me not dead, in thine arms, but forbear
To teach the sea, what it may do too soon;
Let not the wind
Example find,
To do me more harm, than it purposeth;
Since thou and I sigh one another's breath,
Who e'r sighs most, is cruellest, and hastes the other's death.

John Donne

Air And Angels

Twice or thrice had I loved thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame,
Angels affect us oft, and worshipped be;
Still when, to where thou wert, I came,
Some lovely glorious nothing I did see.
But since my soul, whose child love is,
Takes limbs of flesh, and else could nothing do,
More subtle than the parent is,
Love must not be, but take a body too;
And therefore what thou wert, and who,
I bid love ask, and now
That it assume thy body I allow,
And fix itself to thy lip, eye, and brow.

Whilst thus to ballast love I thought,
And so more steadily to have gone,
With wares which would sink admiration,
I saw I had love's pinnace overfraught
Every thy hair for love to work upon
Is much too much, some fitter must be sought;
For, nor in nothing, nor in things
Extreme and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere.
Then as an angel, face and wings
Of air, not pure as it, yet pure doth wear,
So thy love may be my love's sphere.
Just such disparity
As is 'twixt air and angel's purity,
'Twixt women's love and men's will ever be.

John Donne

An Anatomy Of The World...

When that rich soul which to her heaven is gone,
Whom all do celebrate, who know they have one
(For who is sure he hath a soul, unless
It see, and judge, and follow worthiness,
And by deeds praise it? He who doth not this,
May lodge an inmate soul, but 'tis not his)
When that queen ended here her progress time,
And, as t'her standing house, to heaven did climb,
Where loath to make the saints attend her long,
She's now a part both of the choir, and song;
This world, in that great earthquake languished;
For in a common bath of tears it bled,
Which drew the strongest vital spirits out;
But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
Whether the world did lose, or gain in this,
(Because since now no other way there is,
But goodness, to see her, whom all would see,
All must endeavour to be good as she)
This great consumption to a fever turn'd,
And so the world had fits; it joy'd, it mourn'd;
And, as men think, that agues physic are,
And th' ague being spent, give over care,
So thou, sick world, mistak'st thy self to be
Well, when alas, thou'rt in a lethargy.
Her death did wound and tame thee then, and then
Thou might'st have better spar'd the sun, or man.
That wound was deep, but 'tis more misery
That thou hast lost thy sense and memory.
'Twas heavy then to hear thy voice of moan,
But this is worse, that thou art speechless grown.
Thou hast forgot thy name thou hadst; thou wast
Nothing but she, and her thou hast o'erpast.
For, as a child kept from the font until
A prince, expected long, come to fulfill
The ceremonies, thou unnam'd had'st laid,
Had not her coming, thee her palace made;
Her name defin'd thee, gave thee form, and frame,
And thou forget'st to celebrate thy name.
Some months she hath been dead (but being dead,

Measures of times are all determined)
But long she'ath been away, long, long, yet none
Offers to tell us who it is that's gone.
But as in states doubtful of future heirs,
When sickness without remedy impairs
The present prince, they're loath it should be said,
'The prince doth languish,' or 'The prince is dead;'
So mankind feeling now a general thaw,
A strong example gone, equal to law,
The cement which did faithfully compact
And glue all virtues, now resolv'd, and slack'd,
Thought it some blasphemy to say sh'was dead,
Or that our weakness was discovered
In that confession; therefore spoke no more
Than tongues, the soul being gone, the loss deplore.
But though it be too late to succour thee,
Sick world, yea dead, yea putrified, since she
Thy' intrinsic balm, and thy preservative,
Can never be renew'd, thou never live,
I (since no man can make thee live) will try,
 What we may gain by thy anatomy.
Her death hath taught us dearly that thou art
Corrupt and mortal in thy purest part.
Let no man say, the world itself being dead,
'Tis labour lost to have discovered
The world's infirmities, since there is none
Alive to study this dissection;
For there's a kind of world remaining still,
Though she which did inanimate and fill
The world, be gone, yet in this last long night,
Her ghost doth walk; that is a glimmering light,
A faint weak love of virtue, and of good,
Reflects from her on them which understood
Her worth; and though she have shut in all day,
The twilight of her memory doth stay,
Which, from the carcass of the old world free,
Creates a new world, and new creatures be
Produc'd. The matter and the stuff of this,
Her virtue, and the form our practice is.
And though to be thus elemented, arm
These creatures from home-born intrinsic harm,
(For all assum'd unto this dignity

So many weedless paradises be,
Which of themselves produce no venomous sin,
Except some foreign serpent bring it in)
Yet, because outward storms the strongest break,
And strength itself by confidence grows weak,
This new world may be safer, being told
The dangers and diseases of the old;
For with due temper men do then forgo,
Or covet things, when they their true worth know.
There is no health; physicians say that we
At best enjoy but a neutrality.
And can there be worse sickness than to know
That we are never well, nor can be so?
We are born ruinous: poor mothers cry
That children come not right, nor orderly;
Except they headlong come and fall upon
An ominous precipitation.
How witty's ruin! how importunate
Upon mankind! It labour'd to frustrate
Even God's purpose; and made woman, sent
For man's relief, cause of his languishment.
They were to good ends, and they are so still,
But accessory, and principal in ill,
For that first marriage was our funeral;
One woman at one blow, then kill'd us all,
And singly, one by one, they kill us now.
We do delightfully our selves allow
To that consumption; and profusely blind,
We kill our selves to propagate our kind.
And yet we do not that; we are not men;
There is not now that mankind, which was then,
When as the sun and man did seem to strive,
(Joint tenants of the world) who should survive;
When stag, and raven, and the long-liv'd tree,
Compar'd with man, died in minority;
When, if a slow-pac'd star had stol'n away
From the observer's marking, he might stay
Two or three hundred years to see't again,
And then make up his observation plain;
When, as the age was long, the size was great
(Man's growth confess'd, and recompens'd the meat),
So spacious and large, that every soul

Did a fair kingdom, and large realm control;
And when the very stature, thus erect,
Did that soul a good way towards heaven direct.
Where is this mankind now? Who lives to age,
Fit to be made Methusalem his page?
Alas, we scarce live long enough to try
Whether a true-made clock run right, or lie.
Old grandsires talk of yesterday with sorrow,
And for our children we reserve tomorrow.
So short is life, that every peasant strives,
In a torn house, or field, to have three lives.
And as in lasting, so in length is man
Contracted to an inch, who was a span;
For had a man at first in forests stray'd,
Or shipwreck'd in the sea, one would have laid
A wager, that an elephant, or whale,
That met him, would not hastily assail
A thing so equall to him; now alas,
The fairies, and the pigmies well may pass
As credible; mankind decays so soon,
We're scarce our fathers' shadows cast at noon,
Only death adds t'our length: nor are we grown
In stature to be men, till we are none.
But this were light, did our less volume hold
All the old text; or had we chang'd to gold
Their silver; or dispos'd into less glass
Spirits of virtue, which then scatter'd was.
But 'tis not so; w'are not retir'd, but damp'd;
And as our bodies, so our minds are cramp'd;
'Tis shrinking, not close weaving, that hath thus
In mind and body both bedwarfed us.
We seem ambitious, God's whole work t'undo;
Of nothing he made us, and we strive too,
To bring our selves to nothing back; and we
Do what we can, to do't so soon as he.
With new diseases on our selves we war,
And with new physic, a worse engine far.
Thus man, this world's vice-emperor, in whom
All faculties, all graces are at home
(And if in other creatures they appear,
They're but man's ministers and legates there
To work on their rebellions, and reduce

Them to civility, and to man's use);
This man, whom God did woo, and loath t'attend
Till man came up, did down to man descend,
This man, so great, that all that is, is his,
O what a trifle, and poor thing he is!
If man were anything, he's nothing now;
Help, or at least some time to waste, allow
T'his other wants, yet when he did depart
With her whom we lament, he lost his heart.
She, of whom th'ancients seem'd to prophesy,
When they call'd virtues by the name of she;
She in whom virtue was so much refin'd,
That for alloy unto so pure a mind
She took the weaker sex; she that could drive
The poisonous tincture, and the stain of Eve,
Out of her thoughts, and deeds, and purify
All, by a true religious alchemy,
She, she is dead; she's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowest how poor a trifling thing man is,
And learn'st thus much by our anatomy,
The heart being perish'd, no part can be free,
And that except thou feed (not banquet) on
The supernatural food, religion,
Thy better growth grows withered, and scant;
Be more than man, or thou'rt less than an ant.
Then, as mankind, so is the world's whole frame
Quite out of joint, almost created lame,
For, before God had made up all the rest,
Corruption ent'red, and depriv'd the best;
It seiz'd the angels, and then first of all
The world did in her cradle take a fall,
And turn'd her brains, and took a general maim,
Wronging each joint of th'universal frame.
The noblest part, man, felt it first; and then
Both beasts and plants, curs'd in the curse of man.
So did the world from the first hour decay,
That evening was beginning of the day,
And now the springs and summers which we see,
Like sons of women after fifty be.
And new philosophy calls all in doubt,
The element of fire is quite put out,
The sun is lost, and th'earth, and no man's wit

Can well direct him where to look for it.
And freely men confess that this world's spent,
When in the planets and the firmament
They seek so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out again to his atomies.
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,
All just supply, and all relation;
Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinks he hath got
To be a phoenix, and that then can be
None of that kind, of which he is, but he.
This is the world's condition now, and now
She that should all parts to reunion bow,
She that had all magnetic force alone,
To draw, and fasten sund'red parts in one;
She whom wise nature had invented then
When she observ'd that every sort of men
Did in their voyage in this world's sea stray,
And needed a new compass for their way;
She that was best and first original
Of all fair copies, and the general
Steward to fate; she whose rich eyes and breast
Gilt the West Indies, and perfum'd the East;
Whose having breath'd in this world, did bestow
Spice on those Isles, and bade them still smell so,
And that rich India which doth gold inter,
Is but as single money, coin'd from her;
She to whom this world must it self refer,
As suburbs or the microcosm of her,
She, she is dead; she's dead: when thou know'st this,
Thou know'st how lame a cripple this world is
....

John Donne

An Obscure Writer

Philo with twelve years' study hath been grieved
To be understood ; when will he be believed?

John Donne

Annunciation

Salvation to all that will is nigh;
That All, which always is all everywhere,
Which cannot sin, and yet all sins must bear,
Which cannot die, yet cannot choose but die,
Lo, faithful virgin, yields Himself to lie
In prison, in thy womb; and though He there
Can take no sin, nor thou give, yet He will wear,
Taken from thence, flesh, which death's force may try.
Ere by the spheres time was created, thou
Wast in His mind, who is thy Son and Brother;
Whom thou conceivst, conceived; yea thou art now
Thy Maker's maker, and thy Father's mother;
Thou hast light in dark, and shutst in little room,
Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb.

John Donne

Antiquary

If in his study he hath so much care
To hang all old strange things, let his wife beware.

John Donne

Ascension

Salute the last and everlasting day,
Joy at th' uprising of this Sun, and Son,
Ye whose true tears, or tribulation
Have purely wash'd, or burnt your drossy clay.
Behold, the Highest, parting hence away,
Lightens the dark clouds, which He treads upon ;
Nor doth He by ascending show alone,
But first He, and He first enters the way.
O strong Ram, which hast batter'd heaven for me !
Mild Lamb, which with Thy Blood hast mark'd the path !
Bright Torch, which shinest, that I the way may see !
O, with Thy own Blood quench Thy own just wrath ;
And if Thy Holy Spirit my Muse did raise,
Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise.

John Donne

At The Round Earth's Imagin'D Corners

At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattered bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warre, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law, chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.

John Donne

Break Of Day

'Tis true, 'tis day; what though it be?
O wilt thou therefore rise from me?
Why should we rise, because 'tis light?
Did we lie down, because 'twas night?
Love which in spite of darkness brought us hither
Should in despite of light keep us together.

Light hath no tongue, but is all eye;
If it could speak as well as spy,
This were the worst that it could say -
That being well, I fain would stay,
And that I loved my heart and honour so,
That I would not from her, that had them, go.

Must business thee from hence remove?
Oh, that's the worst disease of love!
The poor, the foul, the false, love can
Admit, but not the busied man.
He which hath business, and makes love, doth do
Such wrong as when a married man doth woo.

John Donne

Community

Good we must love, and must hate ill,
For ill is ill, and good good still ;
But there are things indifferent,
Which wee may neither hate, nor love,
But one, and then another prove,
As we shall find our fancy bent.

If then at first wise Nature had
Made women either good or bad,
Then some wee might hate, and some choose ;
But since she did them so create,
That we may neither love, nor hate,
Only this rests, all all may use.

If they were good it would be seen ;
Good is as visible as green,
And to all eyes itself betrays.
If they were bad, they could not last ;
Bad doth itself, and others waste ;
So they deserve nor blame, nor praise.

But they are ours as fruits are ours ;
He that but tastes, he that devours,
And he that leaves all, doth as well ;
Changed loves are but changed sorts of meat ;
And when he hath the kernel eat,
Who doth not fling away the shell?

John Donne

Confined Love

Some man unworthy to be possessor
Of old or new love, himself being false or weak,
Thought his pain and shame would be lesser
If on womankind he might his anger wreak,
And thence a law did grow,
One might but one man know;
But are other creatures so?

Are Sun, Moon, or Stars by law forbidden
To smile where they list, or lend away their light?
Are birds divorced, or are they chidden
If they leave their mate, or lie abroad a-night?
Beasts do no jointures lose
Though they new lovers choose,
But we are made worse than those.

Who e'er rigged fair ship to lie in harbours
And not to seek new lands, or not to deal withal?
Or built fair houses, set trees, and arbors,
Only to lock up, or else to let them fall?
Good is not good unless
A thousand it possess,
But dost waste with greediness.

John Donne

Crucifying

By miracles exceeding power of man,
He faith in some, envy in some begat,
For, what weak spirits admire, ambitious hate :
In both affections many to Him ran.
But O ! the worst are most, they will and can,
Alas ! and do, unto th' Immaculate,
Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a fate,
Measuring self-life's infinity to span,
Nay to an inch. Lo ! where condemned He
Bears His own cross, with pain, yet by and by
When it bears him, He must bear more and die.
Now Thou art lifted up, draw me to Thee,
And at Thy death giving such liberal dole,
Moist with one drop of Thy blood my dry soul.

John Donne

Daybreak

STAY, O sweet and do not rise!
The light that shines comes from thine eyes;
The day breaks not: it is my heart,
 Because that you and I must part.
 Stay! or else my joys will die
 And perish in their infancy.

John Donne

Death Be Not Proud

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for, thou art not soe,
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poore death, nor yet canst thou kill mee.
From rest and sleepe, which but thy pictures bee,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee doe goe,
Rest of their bones, and soules deliverie.
Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poyson, warre, and sicknesse dwell,
And poppie, or charmes can make us sleepe as well,
And better then thy stroake; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleepe past, wee wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

John Donne

Disinherited

Thy father all from thee, by his last will,
Gave to the poor ; thou hast good title still.

John Donne

Eclogue

ALLOPHANES.

UNSEASONABLE man, statue of ice,
What could to countries solitude entice
Thee, in this year's cold and decrepit time ?
Nature's instinct draws to the warmer clime
Even smaller birds, who by that courage dare
In numerous fleets sail through their sea, the air.
What delicacy can in fields appear,
Whilst Flora herself doth a frieze jerkin wear ?
Whilst winds do all the trees and hedges strip
Of leaves, to furnish rods enough to whip
Thy madness from thee, and all springs by frost
Have taken cold, and their sweet murmurs lost?
If thou thy faults or fortunes wouldst lament
With just solemnity, do it in Lent.
At court the spring already advanced is,
The sun stays longer up ; and yet not his
The glory is ; far other, other fires.
First, zeal to prince and state, then love's desires
Burn in one breast, and like heaven's two great lights,
The first doth govern days, the other, nights.
And then that early light which did appear
Before the sun and moon created were,
The prince's favour is diffused o'er all,
From which all fortunes, names, and natures fall.
Then from those wombs of stars, the bride's bright eyes,
At every glance, a constellation flies,
And sows the court with stars, and doth prevent
In light and power, the all-eyed firmament.
First her eyes kindle other ladies' eyes,
Then from their beams their jewels' lustres rise,
And from their jewels torches do take fire,
And all is warmth, and light, and good desire.
Most other courts, alas ! are like to hell,
Where in dark places, fire without light doth dwell ;
Or but like stoves ; for lust and envy get
Continual, but artificial heat.

Here zeal and love grown one all clouds digest,
And make our court an everlasting east.
And canst thou be from thence ?

IDIOS. No, I am there ;
As heaven—to men disposed—is everywhere,
So are those courts, whose princes animate
Not only all their house but all their state.
Let no man think, because he's full, he hath all.
Kings—as their pattern, God—are liberal
Not only in fullness, but capacity,
Enlarging narrow men to feel and see,
And comprehend the blessings they bestow.
So, reclused hermits oftentimes do know
More of heaven's glory than a worldling can.
As man is of the world, the heart of man
Is an epitome of God's great book
Of creatures, and man need no farther look ;
So is the country of courts, where sweet peace doth,
As their one common soul, give life to both ;
And am I then from court ?

ALLOPHANES. Dreamer, thou art :
Think'st thou, fantastic, that thou hast a part
In the Indian fleet, because thou hast
A little spice or amber in thy taste ?
Because thou art not frozen, art thou warm ?
Seest thou all good, because thou seest no harm ?
The earth doth in her inner bowels hold
Stuff well-disposed, and which would fain be gold ;
But never shall, except it chance to lie
So upward, that heaven gild it with his eye.
As, for divine things, faith comes from above,
So, for best civil use, all tinctures move
From higher powers ; from God religion springs,
Wisdom and honour from the use of kings :
Then unbeguile thyself, and know with me,
That angels, though on earth employ'd they be,
Are still in heaven, so is he still at home
That doth abroad to honest actions come.
Chide thyself then, O fool, which yesterday
Mightst have read more than all thy books bewray ;

Hast thou a history, which doth present
A court, where all affections do assent
Unto the king's, and that that king's are just ;
And where it is no levity to trust ;
Where there is no ambition, but to obey ;
Where men need whisper nothing, and yet may ;
Where the king's favours are so placed, that all
Find that the king therein is liberal
To them, in him, because his favours bend
To virtue, to the which they all pretend ?
Thou hast no such ; yet here was this, and more.
An earnest lover, wise then, and before,
Our little Cupid hath sued livery,
And is no more in his minority ;
He is admitted now into that breast
Where the king's counsels and his secrets rest.
What hast thou lost, O ignorant man ?

IDIOS. I knew

All this, and only therefore I withdrew.
To know and feel all this, and not to have
Words to express it, makes a man a grave
Of his own thoughts ; I would not therefore stay
At a great feast, having no grace to say.
And yet I 'scaped not here ; for being come
Full of the common joy, I utter'd some.
Read then this nuptial song, which was not made
Either the court or men's hearts to invade ;
But since I am dead and buried, I could frame
No epitaph, which might advance my fame
So much as this poor song, which testifies
I did unto that day some sacrifice.

I.

THE TIME OF THE MARRIAGE.

Thou art reprieved, old year, thou shalt not die ;
Though thou upon thy death-bed lie,
And should'st within five days expire,
Yet thou art rescued by a mightier fire,

Than thy old soul, the sun,
When he doth in his largest circle run.
The passage of the west or east would thaw,
And open wide their easy liquid jaw
To all our ships, could a Promethean art
Either unto the northern pole impart
The fire of these inflaming eyes, or of this loving
heart.

II.

EQUALITY OF PERSONS.

But undiscerning Muse, which heart, which eyes,
In this new couple, dost thou prize,
When his eye as inflaming is
As hers, and her heart loves as well as his ?
Be tried by beauty, and then
The bridegroom is a maid, and not a man ;
If by that manly courage they be tried,
Which scorns unjust opinion ; then the bride
Becomes a man. Should chance or envy's art
Divide these two, whom nature scarce did part,
Since both have the inflaming eye, and both the
loving heart?

III.

RAISING OF THE BRIDEGROOM.

Though it be some divorce to think of you
Single, so much one are you two,
Let me here contemplate thee,
First, cheerful bridegroom, and first let me see,
How thou prevent'st the sun,
And his red foaming horses dost outrun ;
How, having laid down in thy Sovereign's breast
All businesses, from thence to reinvest
Them when these triumphs cease, thou forward art
To show to her, who doth the like impart,

The fire of thy inflaming eyes, and of thy loving heart.

IV.

RAISING OF THE BRIDE.

But now to thee, fair bride, it is some wrong,
To think thou wert in bed so long.
Since soon thou liest down first, 'tis fit
Thou in first rising shouldst allow for it.
Powder thy radiant hair,
Which if without such ashes thou wouldst wear,
Thou which, to all which come to look upon,
Wert meant for Phoebus, wouldst be Phaëton.
For our ease, give thine eyes th' unusual part
Of joy, a tear ; so quench'd, thou mayst impart,
To us that come, thy inflaming eyes ; to him, thy
loving heart.

V.

HER APPARELLING.

Thus thou descend'st to our infirmity,
Who can the sun in water see.
So dost thou, when in silk and gold
Thou cloud'st thyself ; since we which do behold
Are dust and worms, 'tis just,
Our objects be the fruits of worms and dust.
Let every jewel be a glorious star,
Yet stars are not so pure as their spheres are ;
And though thou stoop, to appear to us, in part,
Still in that picture thou entirely art,
Which thy inflaming eyes have made within his
loving heart.

VI.

GOING TO THE CHAPEL.

Now from your easts you issue forth, and we,
As men, which through a cypress see
The rising sun, do think it two ;
So, as you go to church, do think of you ;
But that veil being gone,
By the church rites you are from thenceforth one.
The church triumphant made this match before,
And now the militant doth strive no more.
Then, reverend priest, who God's Recorder art,
Do, from his dictates, to these two impart
All blessings which are seen, or thought, by angel's
eye or heart.

VII.

THE BENEDICTION.

Blest pair of swans, O may you interbring
Daily new joys, and never sing ;
Live, till all grounds of wishes fail,
Till honour, yea, till wisdom grow so stale,
That new great heights to try,
I must serve your ambition, to die ;
Raise heirs, and may here, to the world's end, live
Heirs from this king, to take thanks, you, to give.
Nature and grace do all, and nothing art ;
May never age or error overthwart
With any west these radiant eyes, with any north
this heart.

VIII.

FEASTS AND REVELS.

But you are over-blest. Plenty this day
Injures ; it causeth time to stay ;
The tables groan, as though this feast
Would, as the flood, destroy all fowl and beast.
And were the doctrine new

That the earth moved, this day would make it true ;
For every part to dance and revel goes,
They tread the air, and fall not where they rose.
Though six hours since the sun to bed did part,
The masks and banquets will not yet impart
A sunset to these weary eyes, a centre to this heart.

IX.

THE BRIDE'S GOING TO BED.

What mean'st thou, bride, this company to keep ?
To sit up, till thou fain wouldst sleep ?
Thou mayst not, when thou'rt laid, do so ;
Thyself must to him a new banquet grow ;
And you must entertain
And do all this day's dances o'er again.
Know that if sun and moon together do
Rise in one point, they do not set so too.
Therefore thou mayst, fair bride, to bed depart ;
Thou art not gone, being gone ; where'er thou art,
Thou leavest in him thy watchful eyes, in him thy
loving heart.

X.

THE BRIDEGROOM'S COMING.

As he that sees a star fall, runs apace,
And finds a jelly in the place,
So doth the bridegroom haste as much,
Being told this star is fallen, and finds her such.
And as friends may look strange,
By a new fashion, or apparel's change,
Their souls, though long acquainted they had been,
These clothes, their bodies, never yet had seen.
Therefore at first she modestly might start,
But must forthwith surrender every part,
As freely as each to each before gave either eye or
heart.

XI.

THE GOOD-NIGHT.

Now, as in Tullia's tomb, one lamp burnt clear,
Unchanged for fifteen hundred year,
May these love-lamps we here enshrine,
In warmth, light, lasting, equal the divine.
Fire ever doth aspire,
And makes all like itself, turns all to fire,
But ends in ashes ; which these cannot do,
For none of these is fuel, but fire too.
This is joy's bonfire, then, where love's strong arts
Make of so noble individual parts
One fire of four inflaming eyes, and of two loving hearts.

IDIOS. As I have brought this song, that I may do
A perfect sacrifice, I'll burn it too.

ALLOPHANES. No, sir. This paper I have justly got,
For, in burnt incense, the perfume is not
His only that presents it, but of all ;
Whatever celebrates this festival
Is common, since the joy thereof is so.
Nor may yourself be priest ; but let me go
Back to the court, and I will lay it upon
Such altars, as prize your devotion.

John Donne

Elegy I: Jealousy

Fond woman, which wouldst have thy husband die,
And yet complain'st of his great jealousy;
If swol'n with poison, he lay in his last bed,
His body with a sere-bark covered,
Drawing his breath, as thick and short, as can
The nimblest crocheting musician,
Ready with loathsome vomiting to spew
His soul out of one hell, into a new,
Made deaf with his poor kindred's howling cries,
Begging with few feigned tears, great legacies,
Thou wouldst not weep, but jolly and frolic be,
As a slave, which tomorrow should be free;
Yet weep'st thou, when thou seest him hungerly
Swallow his own death, hearts-bane jealousy.
O give him many thanks, he's courteous,
That in suspecting kindly warneth us
Wee must not, as we used, flout openly,
In scoffing riddles, his deformity;
Nor at his board together being sat,
With words, nor touch, scarce looks adulterate;
Nor when he swol'n, and pampered with great fare
Sits down, and snorts, caged in his basket chair,
Must we usurp his own bed any more,
Nor kiss and play in his house, as before.
Now I see many dangers; for that is
His realm, his castle, and his diocese.
But if, as envious men, which would revile
Their Prince, or coin his gold, themselves exile
Into another country, and do it there,
We play in another house, what should we fear?
There we will scorn his household policies,
His seely plots, and pensionary spies,
As the inhabitants of Thames' right side
Do London's Mayor; or Germans, the Pope's pride.

John Donne

Elegy Ii: The Anagram

Marry, and love thy Flavia, for she
Hath all things whereby others beautious be,
For, though her eyes be small, her mouth is great,
Though they be ivory, yet her teeth be jet,
Though they be dim, yet she is light enough,
And though her harsh hair fall, her skin is rough;
What though her cheeks be yellow, her hair's red;
Give her thine, and she hath a maidenhead.
These things are beauty's elements, where these
Meet in one, that one must, as perfect, please.
If red and white and each good quality
Be in thy wench, ne'er ask where it doth lie.
In buying things perfumed, we ask if there
Be musk and amber in it, but not where.
Though all her parts be not in th' usual place,
She hath yet an anagram of a good face.
If we might put the letters but one way,
In the lean dearth of words, what could we say?
When by the Gamut some Musicians make
A perfect song, others will undertake,
By the same Gamut changed, to equal it.
Things simply good can never be unfit.
She's fair as any, if all be like her,
And if none be, then she is singular.
All love is wonder; if we justly do
Account her wonderful, why not lovely too?
Love built on beauty, soon as beauty, dies;
Choose this face, changed by no deformities.
Women are all like angels; the fair be
Like those which fell to worse; but such as thee,
Like to good angels, nothing can impair:
'Tis less grief to be foul than t' have been fair.
For one night's revels, silk and gold we choose,
But, in long journeys, cloth and leather use.
Beauty is barren oft; best husbands say,
There is best land where there is foulest way.
Oh what a sovereign plaster will she be,
If thy past sins have taught thee jealousy!
Here needs no spies, nor eunuchs; her commit

Safe to thy foes; yea, to a Marmosit.
When Belgia's cities the round countries drown,
That dirty foulness guards, and arms the town:
So doth her face guard her; and so, for thee,
Which, forced by business, absent oft must be,
She, whose face, like clouds, turns the day to night;
Who, mightier than the sea, makes Moors seem white;
Who, though seven years she in the stews had laid,
A Nunnery durst receive, and think a maid;
And though in childbed's labour she did lie,
Midwives would swear 'twere but a tympany;
Whom, if she accuse herself, I credit less
Than witches, which impossibles confess;
Whom dildoes, bedstaves, and her velvet glass
Would be as loath to touch as Joseph was:
One like none, and liked of none, fittest were,
For, things in fashion every man will wear.

John Donne

Elegy Iii: Change

Although thy hand and faith, and good works too,
Have seal'd thy love which nothing should undo,
Yea though thou fall back, that apostasy
Confirm thy love; yet much, much I fear thee.
Women are like the Arts, forc'd unto none,
Open to'all searchers, unpriz'd, if unknown.
If I have caught a bird, and let him fly,
Another fouler using these means, as I,
May catch the same bird; and, as these things be,
Women are made for men, not him, nor me.
Foxes and goats; all beasts change when they please,
Shall women, more hot, wily, wild then these,
Be bound to one man, and did Nature then
Idly make them apter to endure than men?
They are our clogges, not their owne; if a man be
Chain'd to a galley, yet the galley is free;
Who hath a plow-land, casts all his seed corn there,
And yet allows his ground more corn should bear;
Though Danuby into the sea must flow,
The sea receives the Rhene, Volga, and Po.
By nature, which gave it, this liberty
Thou lov'st, but Oh! canst thou love it and me?
Likeness glues love: Then if so thou do,
To make us like and love, must I change too?
More than thy hate, I hate it, rather let me
Allow her change, then change as oft as she,
And so not teach, but force my opinion
To love not any one, nor every one.
To live in one land is captivity,
To run all countries, a wild roguery;
Waters stink soon, if in one place they bide,
And in the vast sea are worse putrified:
But when they kiss one bank, and leaving this
Never look back, but the next bank do kiss,
Then are they purest; Change is the nursery
Of music, joy, life, and eternity.

John Donne

Elegy Iv: The Perfume

Once, and but once found in thy company,
All thy supposed escapes are laid on me;
And as a thief at bar is questioned there
By all the men that have been robed that year,
So am I (by this traiterous means surprized)
By thy hydroptic father catechized.
Though he had wont to search with glazed eyes,
As though he came to kill a cockatrice,
Though he hath oft sworn that he would remove
Thy beauty's beauty, and food of our love,
Hope of his goods, if I with thee were seen,
Yet close and secret, as our souls, we've been.
Though thy immortal mother, which doth lie
Still-buried in her bed, yet will not die,
Takes this advantage to sleep out daylight,
And watch thy entries and returns all night,
And, when she takes thy hand, and would seem kind,
Doth search what rings and armlets she can find,
And kissing, notes the colour of thy face,
And fearing lest thou'rt swol'n, doth thee embrace;
To try if thou long, doth name strange meats,
And notes thy paleness, blushing, sighs, and sweats;
And politicly will to thee confess
The sins of her own youth's rank lustiness;
Yet love these sorceries did remove, and move
Thee to gull thine own mother for my love.
Thy little brethren, which like faery sprites
Oft skipped into our chamber, those sweet nights,
And kissed, and ingled on thy father's knee,
Were bribed next day to tell what they did see:
The grim eight-foot-high iron-bound servingman,
That oft names God in oaths, and only then,
He that to bar the first gate doth as wide
As the great Rhodian Colossus stride,
Which, if in hell no other pains there were,
Makes me fear hell, because he must be there:
Though by thy father he were hired to this,
Could never witness any touch or kiss.
But Oh, too common ill, I brought with me

That which betrayed me to my enemy:
A loud perfume, which at my entrance cried
Even at thy father's nose, so were we spied;
When, like a tyrannical King, that in his bed
Smelt gunpowder, the pale wretch shivered.
Had it been some bad smell he would have thought
That his own feet, or breath, that smell had wrought.
But as we in our isle imprisoned,
Where cattle only, and diverse dogs are bred,
The precious Unicorns strange monsters call,
So thought he good, strange, that had none at all.
I taught my silks their whistling to forbear,
Even my oppressed shoes dumb and speechless were,
Only, thou bitter sweet, whom I had laid
Next me, me traiterously hast betrayed,
And unsuspected hast invisibly
At once fled unto him, and stayed with me.
Base excrement of earth, which dost confound
Sense from distinguishing the sick from sound;
By thee the seely amorous sucks his death
By drawing in a leprous harlot's breath;
By thee the greatest stain to man's estate
Falls on us, to be called effeminate;
Though you be much loved in the Prince's hall,
There, things that seem, exceed substantial.
Gods, when ye fumed on altars, were pleased well,
Because you were burnt, not that they liked your smell;
You're loathsome all, being taken simply alone,
Shall we love ill things joined, and hate each one?
If you were good, your good doth soon decay;
And you are rare, that takes the good away.
All my perfumes I give most willingly
T' embalm thy father's corse; What? will he die?

John Donne

Elegy Ix: The Autumnal

No spring nor summer beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in one autumnal face.
Young beauties force our love, and that's a rape,
This doth but counsel, yet you cannot scape.
If 'twere a shame to love, here 'twere no shame;
Affection here takes reverence's name.
Were her first years the golden age? That's true,
But now she's gold oft tried and ever new.
That was her torrid and inflaming time,
This is her tolerable tropic clime.
Fair eyes, who asks more heat than comes from hence,
He in a fever wishes pestilence.
Call not these wrinkles, graves; if graves they were,
They were Love's graves, for else he is no where.
Yet lies not Love dead here, but here doth sit
Vow'd to this trench, like an anachorit;
And here till hers, which must be his death, come,
He doth not dig a grave, but build a tomb.
Here dwells he; though he sojourn ev'rywhere
In progress, yet his standing house is here:
Here where still evening is, not noon nor night,
Where no voluptuousness, yet all delight.
In all her words, unto all hearers fit,
You may at revels, you at council, sit.
This is Love's timber, youth his underwood;
There he, as wine in June, enrages blood,
Which then comes seasonabliest when our taste
And appetite to other things is past.
Xerxes' strange Lydian love, the platan tree,
Was lov'd for age, none being so large as she,
Or else because, being young, nature did bless
Her youth with age's glory, barrenness.
If we love things long sought, age is a thing
Which we are fifty years in compassing;
If transitory things, which soon decay,
Age must be loveliest at the latest day.
But name not winter faces, whose skin's slack,
Lank as an unthrift's purse, but a soul's sack;
Whose eyes seek light within, for all here's shade;

Whose mouths are holes, rather worn out than made;
Whose every tooth to a several place is gone,
To vex their souls at resurrection:
Name not these living death's-heads unto me,
For these, not ancient, but antique be.
I hate extremes, yet I had rather stay
With tombs than cradles, to wear out a day.
Since such love's natural lation is, may still
My love descend, and journey down the hill,
Not panting after growing beauties. So,
I shall ebb on with them who homeward go.

John Donne

Elegy V: His Picture

Here take my picture; though I bid farewell
Thine, in my heart, where my soul dwells, shall dwell.
'Tis like me now, but I dead, 'twill be more
When we are shadows both, than 'twas before.
When weather-beaten I come back, my hand
Perhaps with rude oars torn, or sun beams tann'd,
My face and breast of haircloth, and my head
With care's rash sudden storms being o'erspread,
My body'a sack of bones, broken within,
And powder's blue stains scatter'd on my skin;
If rival fools tax thee to'have lov'd a man
So foul and coarse as, oh, I may seem then,
This shall say what I was, and thou shalt say,
'Do his hurts reach me? doth my worth decay?
Or do they reach his judging mind, that he
Should now love less, what he did love to see?
That which in him was fair and delicate,
Was but the milk which in love's childish state
Did nurse it; who now is grown strong enough
To feed on that, which to disus'd tastes seems tough.'

John Donne

Elegy Vi

Oh, let me not serve so, as those men serve
Whom honour's smokes at once fatten and starve;
Poorly enrich't with great men's words or looks;
Nor so write my name in thy loving books
As those idolatrous flatterers, which still
Their Prince's styles, with many realms fulfil
Whence they no tribute have, and where no sway.
Such services I offer as shall pay
Themselves, I hate dead names: Oh then let me
Favourite in Ordinary, or no favourite be.
When my soul was in her own body sheathed,
Nor yet by oaths betrothed, nor kisses breathed
Into my Purgatory, faithless thee,
Thy heart seemed wax, and steel thy constancy:
So, careless flowers strowed on the waters face
The curled whirlpools suck, smack, and embrace,
Yet drown them; so, the taper's beamy eye
Amorously twinkling beckons the giddy fly,
Yet burns his wings; and such the devil is,
Scarce visiting them who are entirely his.
When I behold a stream which, from the spring,
Doth with doubtful melodious murmuring,
Or in a speechless slumber, calmly ride
Her wedded channels' bosom, and then chide
And bend her brows, and swell if any bough
Do but stoop down, or kiss her upmost brow:
Yet, if her often gnawing kisses win
The traitorous bank to gape, and let her in,
She rusheth violently, and doth divorce
Her from her native, and her long-kept course,
And roars, and braves it, and in gallant scorn,
In flattering eddies promising return,
She flouts the channel, who thenceforth is dry;
Then say I, That is she, and this am I.
Yet let not thy deep bitterness beget
Careless despair in me, for that will whet
My mind to scorn; and Oh, love dulled with pain
Was ne'er so wise, nor well armed as disdain.
Then with new eyes I shall survey thee, and spy

Death in thy cheeks, and darkness in thine eye.
Though hope bred faith and love: thus taught, I shall,
As nations do from Rome, from thy love fall.
My hate shall outgrow thine, and utterly
I will renounce thy dalliance: and when I
Am the recusant, in that resolute state,
What hurts it me to be excommunicate?

John Donne

Elegy Vii

Nature's lay idiot, I taught thee to love,
And in that sophistry, Oh, thou dost prove
Too subtle: Foole, thou didst not understand
The mystic language of the eye nor hand:
Nor couldst thou judge the difference of the air
Of sighs, and say, This lies, this sounds despair:
Nor by th' eyes water call a malady
Desperately hot, or changing feverously.
I had not taught thee, then, the Alphabet
Of flowers, how they devisefully being set
And bound up might with speechless secrecy
Deliver errands mutely, and mutually.
Remember since all thy words used to be
To every suitor, Ay, if my friends agree;
Since, household charms, thy husband's name to teach,
Were all the love tricks that thy wit could reach;
And since, an hour's discourse could scarce have made
One answer in thee, and that ill arrayed
In broken proverbs and torn sentences.
Thou art not by so many duties his,
That from the world's Common having severed thee,
Inlaid thee, neither to be seen, nor see,
As mine: who have with amorous delicacies
Refined thee into a blisful Paradise.
Thy graces and good words my creatures be;
I planted knowledge and life's tree in thee,
Which Oh, shall strangers taste? Must I alas
Frame and enamel plate, and drink in glass?
Chaf wax for others' seals? break a colt's force
And leave him then, being made a ready horse?

John Donne

Elegy VIII: The Comparison

As the sweet sweat of roses in a still,
As that which from chafed musk-cats' pores doth trill,
As the almighty balm of th' early East,
Such are the sweat drops of my mistress' breast,
And on her brow her skin such lustre sets,
They seem no sweat drops, but pearl coronets.
Rank sweaty froth thy Mistress's brow defiles,
Like spermatic issue of ripe menstruous boils,
Or like the scum, which, by need's lawless law
Enforced, Sanserra's starved men did draw
From parboiled shoes and boots, and all the rest
Which were with any sovereigne fatness blest,
And like vile lying stones in saffroned tin,
Or warts, or weals, they hang upon her skin.
Round as the world's her head, on every side,
Like to the fatal ball which fell on Ide,

Or that whereof God had such jealousy,
As, for the ravishing thereof we die.
Thy head is like a rough-hewn statue of jet,
Where marks for eyes, nose, mouth, are yet scarce set;
Like the first Chaos, or flat-seeming face
Of Cynthia, when th' earth's shadows her embrace.
Like Proserpine's white beauty-keeping chest,
Or Jove's best fortunes urn, is her fair breast.
Thine's like worm-eaten trunks, clothed in seals' skin,
Or grave, that's dust without, and stink within.
And like that slender stalk, at whose end stands
The woodbine quivering, are her arms and hands.
Like rough barked elm-boughs, or the russet skin
Of men late scourged for madness, or for sin,
Like sun-parched quarters on the city gate,
Such is thy tanned skin's lamentable state.
And like a bunch of ragged carrots stand
The short swol'n fingers of thy gouty hand.
Then like the Chimic's masculine equal fire,
Which in the Lyubecks warm womb doth inspire
Into th' earth's worthless dirt a soul of gold,
Such cherishing heat her best loved part doth hold.

Thine's like the dread mouth of a fired gun,
Or like hot liquid metals newly run
Into clay moulds, or like to that Etna
Where round about the grass is burnt away.
Are not your kisses then as filthy, and more,
As a worm sucking an envenomed sore?
Doth not thy feareful hand in feeling quake,
As one which gath'ring flowers still fears a snake?
Is not your last act harsh, and violent,
As when a plough a stony ground doth rent?
So kiss good turtles, so devoutly nice
Are priests in handling reverent sacrifice,
And such in searching wounds the surgeon is
As we, when we embrace, or touch, or kiss.
Leave her, and I will leave comparing thus,
She, and comparisons are odious.

John Donne

Elegy X: The Dream

Image of her whom I love, more than she,
Whose fair impression in my faithful heart
Makes me her medal, and makes her love me,
As Kings do coins, to which their stamps impart
The value: go, and take my heart from hence,
Which now is grown too great and good for me:
Honours oppress weak spirits, and our sense
Strong objects dull; the more, the less we see.

When you are gone, and Reason gone with you,
Then Fantasy is queen and soul, and all;
She can present joys meaner than you do;
Convenient, and more proportional.
So, if I dream I have you, I have you,
For, all our joys are but fantastical.
And so I 'scape the pain, for pain is true;
And sleep which locks up sense, doth lock out all.

After a such fruition I shall wake,
And, but the waking, nothing shall repent;
And shall to love more thankful sonnets make
Than if more honour, tears, and pains were spent.
But dearest heart, and dearer image, stay;
Alas, true joys at best are dream enough;
Though you stay here you pass too fast away:
For even at first life's taper is a snuff.

Filled with her love, may I be rather grown
Mad with much heart, than idiot with none.

John Donne

Elegy Xi: The Bracelet

Upon the Loss of His Mistress's Chain, for Which He Made Satisfaction

NOT that in colour it was like thy hair,
For armlets of that thou mayst let me wear;
Nor that thy hand it oft embraced and kiss'd,
For so it had that good, which oft I miss'd;
Nor for that silly old morality,
That, as these links were knit, our love should be,
Mourn I that I thy sevenfold chain have lost;
Nor for the luck sake; but the bitter cost.
O, shall twelve righteous angels, which as yet
No leaven of vile solder did admit;
Nor yet by any way have stray'd or gone
From the first state of their creation;
Angels, which heaven commanded to provide
All things to me, and be my faithful guide;
To gain new friends, to appease great enemies;
To comfort my soul, when I lie or rise;
Shall these twelve innocents, by thy severe
Sentence, dread judge, my sin's great burden bear?
Shall they be damn'd, and in the furnace thrown,
And punish'd for offenses not their own?
They save not me, they do not ease my pains,
When in that hell they're burnt and tied in chains.
Were they but crowns of France, I care'd not,
For most of these their country's natural rot,
I think, possesseth; they come here to us
So pale, so lame, so lean, so ruinous.
And howsoe'er French kings most Christian be,
Their crowns are circumcised most Jewishly.
Or were they Spanish stamps, still travelling,
That are become as Catholic as their king;
These unlick'd bear-whelps, unfiled pistols,
That—more than cannon shot—avails or lets;
Which, negligently left unrounded, look
Like many-angled figures in the book
Of some great conjurer that would enforce
Nature, so these do justice, from her course;
Which, as the soul quickens head, feet and heart,

As streams, like veins, run through th' earth's every part,
Visit all countries, and have slily made
Gorgeous France, ruin'd, ragged and decay'd,
Scotland, which knew no state, proud in one day,
And mangled seventeen-headed Belgia.
Or were it such gold as that wherewithal
Almighty chemics, from each mineral
Having by subtle fire a soul out-pull'd,
Are dirtily and desperately gull'd;
I would not spit to quench the fire they're in,
For they are guilty of much heinous sin.
But shall my harmless angels perish? Shall
I lose my guard, my ease, my food, my all?
Much hope which they would nourish will be dead.
Much of my able youth, and lustihead
Will vanish; if thou love, let them alone,
For thou wilt love me less when they are gone;
And be content that some loud squeaking crier,
Well-pleas'd with one lean threadbare goat, for hire,
May like a devil roar through every street,
And gall the finder's conscience, if he meet.
Or let me creep to some dread conjurer,
That with fantastic schemes fills full much paper;
Which hath divided heaven in tenements,
And with whores, thieves, and murderers stuff'd his rents
So full, that though he pass them all in sin,
He leaves himself no room to enter in.
But if, when all his art and time is spent,
He say 'twill ne'er be found; yet be content;
Receive from him that doom ungrudgingly,
Because he is the mouth of destiny.
Thou say'st, alas! the gold doth still remain,
Though it be changed, and put into a chain.
So in the first fallen angels resteth still
Wisdom and knowledge, but 'tis turn'd to ill;
As these should do good works, and should provide
Necessities; but now must nurse thy pride.
And they are still bad angels; mine are none;
For form gives being, and their form is gone.
Pity these angels yet; their dignities
Pass Virtues, Powers, and Principalities.
But thou art resolute; thy will be done;

Yet with such anguish, as her only son
The mother in the hungry grave doth lay,
Unto the fire these martyrs I betray.
Good souls—for you give life to everything—
Good angels—for good messages you bring—
Destined you might have been to such an one,
As would have loved and worshipp'd you alone;
One that would suffer hunger, nakedness,
Yea death, ere he would make your number less;
But, I am guilty of your sad decay;
May your few fellows longer with me stay.
But O! thou wretched finder whom I hate
So, that I almost pity thy estate,
Gold being the heaviest metal amongst all,
May my most heavy curse upon thee fall.
Here fetter'd, manacled, and hang'd in chains,
First mayst thou be; then chain'd to hellish pains;
Or be with foreign gold bribed to betray
Thy country, and fail both of it and thy pay.
May the next thing thou stoop'st to reach, contain
Poison, whose nimble fume rot thy moist brain;
Or libels, or some interdicted thing,
Which negligently kept thy ruin bring.
Lust-bred diseases rot thee; and dwell with thee
Itching desire, and no ability.
May all the evils that gold ever wrought;
All mischief that all devils ever thought;
Want after plenty, poor and gouty age,
The plagues of travellers, love, marriage
Afflict thee, and at thy life's last moment,
May thy swollen sins themselves to thee present.
But, I forgive; repent thee, honest man!
Gold is restorative; restore it then:
But if from it thou be'st loth to depart,
Because 'tis cordial, would 'twere at thy heart.

John Donne

Elegy Xii

COME Fates ; I fear you not ! All whom I owe
Are paid, but you ; then 'rest me ere I go.
But Chance from you all sovereignty hath got ;
Love woundeth none but those whom Death dares not ;
True if you were, and just in equity,
I should have vanquish'd her, as you did me ;
Else lovers should not brave Death's pains, and live ;
But 'tis a rule, " Death comes not to relieve."
Or, pale and wan Death's terrors, are they laid
So deep in lovers, they make Death afraid ?
Or—the least comfort—have I company ?
O'ercame she Fates, Love, Death, as well as me ?
Yes, Fates do silk unto her distaff pay,
For ransom, which tax they on us do lay.
Love gives her youth—which is the reason why
Youths, for her sake, some wither and some die.
Poor Death can nothing give ; yet, for her sake,
Still in her turn, he doth a lover take.
And if Death should prove false, she fears him not ;
Our Muses, to redeem her, she hath got.
That fatal night we last kiss'd, I thus pray'd,
—Or rather, thus despair'd, I should have said—
Kisses, and yet despair ! The forbid tree
Did promise (and deceive) no more than she.
Like lambs, that see their teats, and must eat hay,
A food, whose taste hath made me pine away.
Dives, when thou saw'st bliss, and craved'st to touch
A drop of water, thy great pains were such.
Here grief wants a fresh wit, for mine being spent,
And my sighs weary, groans are all my rent.
Unable longer to endure the pain,
They break like thunder, and do bring down rain.
Thus till dry tear solder my eye, I weep ;
And then, I dream, how you securely sleep,
And in your dreams do laugh at me. I hate,
And pray Love all may ; he pities my state,
But says, I therein no revenge shall find ;
The sun would shine, though all the world were blind.
Yet, to try my hate, Love show'd me your tear ;

And I had died, had not your smile been there.
Your frown undoes me ; your smile is my wealth ;
And as you please to look, I have my health.
Methought, Love pitying me, when he saw this,
Gave me your hands, the backs and palms to kiss.
That cured me not, but to bear pain gave strength ;
And what is lost in force, is took in length.
I call'd on Love again, who fear'd you so,
That his compassion still proved greater woe ;
For, then I dream'd I was in bed with you,
But durst not feel, for fear it should not be true.
This merits not your anger, had it been ;
The queen of chastity was naked seen ;
And in bed not to feel, the pain I took,
Was more than for Actæon not to look ;
And that breast which lay ope, I did not know,
But for the clearness, from a lump of snow ;
Nor that sweet teat which on the top it bore
From the rose-bud which for my sake you wore.
These griefs to issue forth, by verse I prove ;
Or turn their course by travel and new love.
All would not do ; the best at last I tried ;
Unable longer to hold out, I died.
And then I found I lost life, death by flying ;
Who hundreds live, are but so long in dying.
Charon did let me pass ; I'll him requite.
To mark the groves or shades wrongs my delight ;
I'll speak but of those ghosts I found alone,
Those thousand ghosts, whereof myself made one,
All images of thee ; I asked them why ?
The judge told me, all they for thee did die,
And therefore had for their Elysian bliss,
In one another their own loves to kiss.
O here I miss'd not blissh, but being dead ;
For lo ! I dreamt, I dreamt, and waking said,
" Heaven, if who are in thee there must dwell,
How is't I now was there, and now I fell ?"

John Donne

Elegy Xiii: His Parting From Her

SINCE she must go, and I must mourn, come night,
Environ me with darkness, whilst I write ;
Shadow that hell unto me, which alone
I am to suffer when my love is gone.
Alas ! the darkest magic cannot do it,
Thou and great hell, to boot, are shadows to it.
Should Cynthia quit thee, Venus, and each star,
It would not form one thought dark as mine are.
I could lend them obscureness now, and say
Out of my self, there should be no more day.
Such is already my self-want of sight,
Did not the fire within me force a light.
O Love, that fire and darkness should be mix'd,
Or to thy triumphs such strange torments fix'd !
Is it because thou thyself art blind, that we,
Thy martyrs, must no more each other see ?
Or takest thou pride to break us on the wheel,
And view old Chaos in the pains we feel ?
Or have we left undone some mutual rite,
That thus with parting thou seek'st us to spite ?
No, no. The fault is mine, impute it to me,
Or rather to conspiring destiny,
Which, since I loved in jest before, decreed
That I should suffer, when I loved indeed ;
And therefore, sooner now than I can say,
I saw the golden fruit, 'tis rapt away ;
Or as I'd watch'd one drop in the vast stream,
And I left wealthy only in a dream.
Yet, Love, thou'rt blinder than myself in this,
To vex my dove-like friend for my amiss ;
And where one sad truth may expiate
Thy wrath, to make her fortune run my fate.
So blinded justice doth, when favourites fall,
Strike them, their house, their friends, their favourites all.
Was't not enough that thou didst dart thy fires
Into our bloods, inflaming our desires,
And madest us sigh, and blow, and pant, and burn,
And then thyself into our flames didst turn ?
Was't not enough that thou didst hazard us

To paths in love so dark and dangerous,
And those so ambush'd round with household spies,
And over all thy husband's towering eyes,
Inflamed with th' ugly sweat of jealousy ;
Yet went we not still on in constancy ?
Have we for this kept guards, like spy on spy ?
Had correspondence whilst the foe stood by ?
Stolen, more to sweeten them, our many blisses
Of meetings, conference, embracements, kisses ?
Shadow'd with negligence our best respects ?
Varied our language through all dialects
Of becks, winks, looks, and often under boards
Spoke dialogues with our feet far from our words ?
Have we proved all the secrets of our art,
Yea, thy pale inwards, and thy panting heart ?
And, after all this passed purgatory,
Must sad divorce make us the vulgar story ?
First let our eyes be riveted quite through
Our turning brain, and both our lips grow to ;
Let our arms clasp like ivy, and our fear
Freeze us together, that we may stick here,
Till Fortune, that would ruin us with the deed,
Strain his eyes open, and yet make them bleed.
For Love it cannot be, whom hitherto
I have accused, should such a mischief do.
O Fortune, thou'rt not worth my least exclaim,
And plague enough thou hast in thy own name.
Do thy great worst ; my friend and I have charms,
Though not against thy strokes, against thy harms.
Rend us in sunder ; thou canst not divide
Our bodies so, but that our souls are tied,
And we can love by letters still and gifts,
And thoughts and dreams ; love never wanteth shifts.
I will not look upon the quickening sun,
But straight her beauty to my sense shall run ;
The air shall note her soft, the fire, most pure ;
Waters suggest her clear, and the earth sure.
Time shall not lose our passages ; the spring,
How fresh our love was in the beginning ;
The summer, how it ripen'd in the year ;
And autumn, what our golden harvests were ;
The winter I'll not think on to spite thee,

But count it a lost season ; so shall she.
And dearest friend, since we must part, drown night
With hope of day—burdens well borne are light— ;
The cold and darkness longer hang somewhere,
Yet Phoebus equally lights all the sphere ;
And what we cannot in like portion pay
The world enjoys in mass, and so we may.
Be then ever yourself, and let no woe
Win on your health, your youth, your beauty ; so
Declare yourself base Fortune's enemy,
No less be your contempt than her inconstancy ;
That I may grow enamour'd on your mind,
When mine own thoughts I here neglected find.
And this to the comfort of my dear I vow,
My deeds shall still be what my deeds are now ;
The poles shall move to teach me ere I start ;
And when I change my love, I'll change my heart.
Nay, if I wax but cold in my desire,
Think, heaven hath motion lost, and the world, fire.
Much more I could, but many words have made
That oft suspected which men most persuade.
Take therefore all in this ; I love so true,
As I will never look for less in you.

John Donne

Elegy Xiv: Julia

Hark, news, O envy ; thou shalt hear descried
My Julia ; who as yet was ne'er envied.
To vomit gall in slander, swell her veins
With calumny, that hell itself disdains,
Is her continual practice ; does her best,
To tear opinion e'en out of the breast
Of dearest friends, and—which is worse than vile—
Sticks jealousy in wedlock ; her own child
Scapes not the showers of envy. To repeat
The monstrous fashions how, were alive to eat
Deare reputation ; would to God she were
But half so loth to act vice, as to hear
My mild reproof. Lived Mantuan now again
That female Mastix to limn with his pen,
This she Chimera that hath eyes of fire,
Burning with anger—anger feeds desire—
Tongued like the night crow, whose ill boding cries
Give out for nothing but new injuries ;
Her breath like to the juice in Tænarus,
That blasts the springs, though ne'er so prosperous ;
Her hands, I know not how, used more to spill
The food of others than herself to fill ;
But O ! her mind, that Orcus, which includes
Legions of mischiefs, countless multitudes
Of formless curses, projects unmade up,
Abuses yet unfashion'd, thoughts corrupt,
Misshapen cavils, palpable untroths,
Inevitable errors, self-accusing loaths.
These, like those atoms swarming in the sun,
Throng in her bosom for creation.
I blush to give her halfe her due ; yet say,
No poison's half so bad as Julia.

John Donne

Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going To Bed

Come, madam, come, all rest my powers defy,
Until I labor, I in labor lie.
The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,
Is tired with standing though he never fight.
Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glistening,
But a far fairer world encompassing.
Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
That th' eyes of busy fools may be stopped there.
Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime
Tells me from you that now it is bed time.
Off with that happy busk, which I envy,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.
Your gown, going off, such beauteous state reveals,
As when from flowry meads th' hill's shadow steals.
Off with that wiry coronet and show
The hairy diadem which on you doth grow:
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes, heaven's angels used to be
Received by men; thou, Angel, bring'st with thee
A heaven like Mahomet's Paradise; and though
Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know
By this these angels from an evil sprite:
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.

License my roving hands, and let them go
Before, behind, between, above, below.
O my America! my new-found-land,
My kingdom, safest when with one man manned,
My mine of precious stones, my empery,
How blest am I in this discovering of thee!
To enter in these bonds is to be free;
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

Full nakedness! All joys are due to thee,
As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,
That when a fools' eye lighteth on a gem,

His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.
Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made
For lay-men, are all women thus arrayed;
Themselves are mystic books, which only we
(Whom their imputed grace will dignify)
Must see revealed. Then, since that I may know,
As liberally as to a midwife, show
Thyself: cast all, yea, this white linen hence,
There is no penance due to innocence.
To teach thee, I am naked first; why than,
What needst thou have more covering than a man?

John Donne

Elegy Xvi: On His Mistress

By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words' masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threatened me,
I calmly beg: but by thy father's wrath,
By all pains, which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee, and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus,
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
Temper, O fair Love, love's impetuous rage,
Be my true Mistress still, not my feigned Page;
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind
Thirst to come back; O if thou die before,
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.
Thy (else Almighty) beauty cannot move
Rage from the Seas, nor thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness; thou hast read
How roughly he in pieces shivered
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he loved.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have proved
Dangers unurg'd; feed on this flattery,
That absent Lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind's; be not strange
To thyself only; all will spy in thy face
A blushing womanly discovering grace;
Richly clothed Apes are called Apes, and as soon
Eclipsed as bright we call the Moon the Moon.
Men of France, changeable chameleons,
Spitals of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of Players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee, and no less, alas!
Th' indifferent Italian, as we pass
His warm land, well content to think thee Page,

Will hunt thee with such lust, and hideous rage,
As Lot's fair guests were vexed. But none of these
Nor spongy hydroptic Dutch shall thee displease,
If thou stay here. O stay here, for, for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation, till from thence
Our greatest King call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness,
Nor let thy looks our long-hid love confess,
Nor praise, nor dispraise me, nor bless nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy Nurse
With midnight's startings, crying out—oh, oh
Nurse, O my love is slain, I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone; I saw him, I,
Assailed, fight, taken, stabbed, bleed, fall, and die.
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me t' have had thy love.

John Donne

Elegy Xvi: The Expostulation

TO make the doubt clear, that no woman's true,
Was it my fate to prove it strong in you?
Thought I, but one had breathèd purest air ;
And must she needs be false, because she's fair?
Is it your beauty's mark, or of your youth,
Or your perfection, not to study truth?
Or think you heaven is deaf, or hath no eyes?
Or those it hath smile at your perjuries?
Are vows so cheap with women, or the matter
Whereof they're made, that they are writ in water,
And blown away with wind? Or doth their breath
Both hot and cold, at once make life and death?
Who could have thought so many accents sweet
Form'd into words, so many sighs should meet
As from our hearts, so many oaths, and tears
Sprinkled among, all sweeten'd by our fears,
And the divine impression of stolen kisses,
That seal'd the rest, should now prove empty blisses?
Did you draw bonds to forfeit? sign to break?
Or must we read you quite from what you speak,
And find the truth out the wrong way? or must
He first desire you false, would wish you just?
O ! I profane ! though most of women be
This kind of beast, my thoughts shall except thee,
My dearest love ; though froward jealousy
With circumstance might urge thy inconstancy,
Sooner I'll think the sun will cease to cheer
The teeming earth, and that forget to bear ;
Sooner that rivers will run back, or Thames
With ribs of ice in June will bind his streams ;
Or nature, by whose strength the world endures,
Would change her course, before you alter yours.
But O ! that treacherous breast, to whom weak you
Did drift our counsels, and we both may rue,
Having his falsehood found too late ; 'twas he
That made me cast you guilty, and you me ;
Whilst he, black wretch, betray'd each simple word
We spake, unto the cunning of a third.
Cursed may he be, that so our love hath slain,

And wander on the earth, wretched as Cain,
Wretched as he, and not deserve least pity.
In plaguing him, let misery be witty ;
Let all eyes shun him, and he shun each eye,
Till he be noisome as his infamy ;
May he without remorse deny God thrice,
And not be trusted more on his soul's price ;
And, after all self-torment, when he dies,
May wolves tear out his heart, vultures his eyes,
Swine eat his bowels, and his falser tongue
That utter'd all, be to some raven flung ;
And let his carrion corse be a longer feast
To the king's dogs, than any other beast.
Now have I cursed, let us our love revive ;
In me the flame was never more alive.
I could begin again to court and praise,
And in that pleasure lengthen the short days
Of my life's lease ; like painters that do take
Delight, not in made work, but whiles they make.
I could renew those times, when first I saw
Love in your eyes, that gave my tongue the law
To like what you liked ; and at masks and plays
Commend the self-same actors, the same ways ;
Ask how you did, and often with intent
Of being officious, be impertinent ;
All which were such soft pastimes, as in these
Love was as subtly catch'd as a disease.
But being got, it is a treasure sweet,
Which to defend is harder than to get ;
And ought not be profaned, on either part,
For though 'tis got by chance, 'tis kept by art.

John Donne

Elegy Xvii: On His Mistress

By our first strange and fatal interview,
By all desires which thereof did ensue,
By our long starving hopes, by that remorse
Which my words masculine persuasive force
Begot in thee, and by the memory
Of hurts, which spies and rivals threaten'd me,
I calmly beg. But by thy father's wrath,
By all pains, which want and divorcement hath,
I conjure thee, and all the oaths which I
And thou have sworn to seal joint constancy,
Here I unswear, and overswear them thus ;
Thou shalt not love by ways so dangerous.
Temper, O fair love, love's impetuous rage ;
Be my true mistress still, not my feign'd page.
I'll go, and, by thy kind leave, leave behind
Thee, only worthy to nurse in my mind
Thirst to come back ; O ! if thou die before,
My soul from other lands to thee shall soar.
Thy else almighty beauty cannot move
Rage from the seas, nor thy love teach them love,
Nor tame wild Boreas' harshness ; thou hast read
How roughly he in pieces shivered
Fair Orithea, whom he swore he loved.
Fall ill or good, 'tis madness to have proved
Dangers unurg'd ; feed on this flattery,
That absent lovers one in th' other be.
Dissemble nothing, not a boy, nor change
Thy body's habit, nor mind ; be not strange
To thyself only. All will spy in thy face
A blushing womanly discovering grace.
Richly clothed apes are call'd apes, and as soon
Eclipsed as bright, we call the moon the moon.
Men of France, changeable chameleons,
Spitals of diseases, shops of fashions,
Love's fuellers, and the rightest company
Of players, which upon the world's stage be,
Will quickly know thee, and no less, alas !
Th' indifferent Italian, as we pass
His warm land, well content to think thee page,

Will hunt thee with such lust, and hideous rage,
As Lot's fair guests were vex'd. But none of these
Nor spongy hydroptic Dutch shall thee displease,
If thou stay here. O stay here, for for thee
England is only a worthy gallery,
To walk in expectation, till from thence
Our greatest king call thee to his presence.
When I am gone, dream me some happiness ;
Nor let thy looks our long-hid love confess ;
Nor praise, nor dispraise me, nor bless nor curse
Openly love's force, nor in bed fright thy nurse
With midnight's startings, crying out, O ! O !
Nurse, O ! my love is slain ; I saw him go
O'er the white Alps alone ; I saw him, I,
Assail'd, fight, taken, stabb'd, bleed, fall, and die.
Augur me better chance, except dread Jove
Think it enough for me to have had thy love.

John Donne

Elegy XVIII: Love's Progress

Who ever loves, if he do not propose
The right true end of love, he's one that goes
To sea for nothing but to make him sick.
Love is a bear-whelp born: if we o'erlick
Our love, and force it new strange shapes to take,
We err, and of a lump a monster make.
Were not a calf a monster that were grown
Faced like a man, though better than his own?
Perfection is in unity: prefer
One woman first, and then one thing in her.
I, when I value gold, may think upon
The ductileness, the application,
The wholsomeness, the ingenuity,
From rust, from soil, from fire ever free;
But if I love it, 'tis because 'tis made
By our new nature (Use) the soul of trade.
All these in women we might think upon
(If women had them) and yet love but one.
Can men more injure women than to say
They love them for that by which they're not they?
Makes virtue woman? Must I cool my blood
Till I both be, and find one, wise and good?
May barren angels love so! But if we
Make love to woman, virtue is not she,
As beauty's not, nor wealth. He that strays thus
From her to hers is more adulterous
Than if he took her maid. Search every sphere
And firmament, our Cupid is not there;
He's an infernal god, and under ground
With Pluto dwells, where gold and fire abound:
Men to such gods their sacrificing coals
Did not in altars lay, but pits and holes.
Although we see celestial bodies move
Above the earth, the earth we till and love:
So we her airs contemplate, words and heart
And virtues, but we love the centric part.
Nor is the soul more worthy, or more fit,
For love than this, as infinite is it.
But in attaining this desired place

How much they err that set out at the face.
 The hair a forest is of ambushes,
 Of springs, snares, fetters and manacles;
 The brow becalms us when 'tis smooth and plain,
 And when 'tis wrinkled shipwrecks us again—
 Smooth, 'tis a paradise where we would have
 Immortal stay, and wrinkled 'tis our grave.
 The nose (like to the first meridian) runs
 Not 'twixt an East and West, but 'twixt two suns;
 It leaves a cheek, a rosy hemisphere,
 On either side, and then directs us where
 Upon the Islands Fortunate we fall,
 (Not faint Canaries, but Ambrosial)
 Her swelling lips; to which when we are come,
 We anchor there, and think ourselves at home,
 For they seem all: there Sirens' songs, and there
 Wise Delphic oracles do fill the ear;
 There in a creek where chosen pearls do swell,
 The remora, her cleaving tongue doth dwell.
 These, and the glorious promontory, her chin,
 O'erpassed, and the straight Hellespont between
 The Sestos and Abydos of her breasts,
 (Not of two lovers, but two loves the nests)
 Succeeds a boundless sea, but yet thine eye
 Some island moles may scattered there descry;
 And sailing towards her India, in that way
 Shall at her fair Atlantic navel stay;
 Though thence the current be thy pilot made,
 Yet ere thou be where thou wouldst be embayed
 Thou shalt upon another forest set,
 Where many shipwreck and no further get.
 When thou art there, consider what this chase
 Misspent by thy beginning at the face.
 Rather set out below; practise my art.
 Some symetry the foot hath with that part
 Which thou dost seek, and is thy map for that,
 Lovely enough to stop, but not stay at;
 Least subject to disguise and change it is—
 Men say the devil never can change his.
 It is the emblem that hath figured
 Firmness; 'tis the first part that comes to bed.
 Civility we see refined; the kiss

Which at the face began, transplanted is,
Since to the hand, since to the imperial knee,
Now at the papal foot delights to be:
If kings think that the nearer way, and do
Rise from the foot, lovers may do so too;
For as free spheres move faster far than can
Birds, whom the air resists, so may that man
Which goes this empty and ethereal way,
Than if at beauty's elements he stay.
Rich nature hath in women wisely made
Two purses, and their mouths aversely laid:
They then which to the lower tribute owe
That way which that exchequer looks must go:
He which doth not, his error is as great
As who by clyster gave the stomach meat.

John Donne

Elegy Xx (Alternate) Love's War

Till I have peace with thee, warr other Men,
And when I have peace, can I leave thee then?
All other Warrs are scrupulous; Only thou
O fayr free Citty, maist thyselfe allow
To any one: In Flanders, who can tell
Whether the Master presse; or men rebell?
Only we know, that which all Ideots say,
They beare most blows which come to part the fray.
France in her lunatique giddines did hate
Ever our men, yea and our God of late;
Yet she relyes upon our Angels well,
Which nere returne; no more than they which fell.
Sick Ireland is with a strange warr possest
Like to an Ague; now raging, now at rest;
Which time will cure: yet it must doe her good
If she were purg'd, and her head vayne let blood.
And Midas joyes our Spanish journeys give,
We touch all gold, but find no food to live.
And I should be in the hott parching clime,
To dust and ashes turn'd before my time.
To mew me in a Ship, is to inthrall
Mee in a prison, that weare like to fall;
Or in a Cloyster; save that there men dwell
In a calme heaven, here in a swaggering hell.
Long voyages are long consumptions,
And ships are carts for executions.
Yea they are Deaths; Is't not all one to flye
Into an other World, as t'is to dye?
Here lett mee warr; in these armes lett mee lye;
Here lett mee parle, batter, bleede, and dye.
Thyne armes imprison me, and myne armes thee,
Thy hart thy ransome is, take myne for mee.
Other men war that they their rest may gayne;
But wee will rest that wee may fight agayne.
Those warrs the ignorant, these th'experienc'd love,
There wee are alwayes under, here above.
There Engins farr off breed a just true feare,
Neere thrusts, pikes, stabs, yea bullets hurt not here.
There lyes are wrongs; here safe uprightly ly;

Tltere men kill men, we'll make one by and by,
Thou nothing; I not halfe so much shall do
In these Warrs, as they may which from us two
Shall spring. Thousands wee see which travaile not
To warrs; But stay swords, armes, and shott
To make at home; And shall not I do then
More glorious service, staying to make men?

John Donne

Elegy: The End Of Funeral Elegies

MADAM—

That I might make your cabinet my tomb,
And for my fame, which I love next my soul,
Next to my soul provide the happiest room,
Admit to that place this last funeral scroll.
Others by wills give legacies, but I
Dying, of you do beg a legacy.

My fortune and my will this custom break,
When we are senseless grown to make stones speak,
Though no stone tell thee what I was, yet thou
In my grave's inside seest what thou art now,
Yet thou 'rt not yet so good ; till death us lay
To ripe and mellow there, we're stubborn clay.
Parents make us earth, and souls dignify
Us to be glass ; here to grow gold we lie.
Whilst in our souls sin bred and pamper'd is,
Our souls become worm-eaten carcasses.

John Donne

Epithalamion Made At Lincoln's Inn

I

HAIL sun-beams in the east are spread ;
Leave, leave, fair bride, your solitary bed ;
No more shall you return to it alone ;
It nurseth sadness, and your body's print,
Like to a grave, the yielding down doth dint ;
You, and your other you, meet there anon.
Put forth, put forth, that warm balm-breathing thigh,
Which when next time you in these sheets will smother,
There it must meet another,
Which never was, but must be, oft, more nigh.
Come glad from thence, go gladder than you came ;
To-day put on perfection, and a woman's name.
Daughters of London, you which be
Our golden mines, and furnish'd treasury ;
You which are angels, yet still bring with you
Thousands of angels on your marriage days ;
Help with your presence, and devise to praise
These rites, which also unto you grow due ;
Conceitedly dress her, and be assign'd,
By you fit place for every flower and jewel ;
Make her for love fit fuel,
As gay as Flora and as rich as Ind ;
So may she, fair and rich in nothing lame,
To-day put on perfection, and a woman's name.

And you frolic patricians,
Sons of those senators, wealth's deep oceans ;
Ye painted courtiers, barrels of other's wits ;
Ye countrymen, who but your beasts love none ;
Ye of those fellowships, whereof he's one,
Of study and play made strange hermaphrodites,
Here shine ; this bridegroom to the temple bring.
Lo, in yon path which store of strew'd flowers graceth,
The sober virgin paceth ;
Except my sight fail, 'tis no other thing.
Weep not, nor blush, here is no grief nor shame,
To-day put on perfection, and a woman's name.

Thy two-leaved gates, fair temple, unfold,
And these two in thy sacred bosom hold,
Till mystically join'd but one they be ;
Then may thy lean and hunger-starvèd womb
Long time expect their bodies, and their tomb,
Long after their own parents fatten thee.
All elder claims, and all cold barrenness,
All yielding to new loves, be far for ever,
Which might these two dissever ;
Always, all th'other may each one possess ;
For the best bride, best worthy of praise and fame,
To-day puts on perfection, and a woman's name.

Winter days bring much delight,
Not for themselves, but for they soon bring night ;
Other sweets wait thee than these diverse meats,
Other disports than dancing jollities,
Other love-tricks than glancing with the eyes,
But that the sun still in our half sphere sweats ;
He flies in winter, but he now stands still.
Yet shadows turn ; noon point he hath attain'd ;
His steeds will be restrain'd,
But gallop lively down the western hill.
Thou shalt, when he hath run the heaven's half frame,
To-night put on perfection, and a woman's name.

The amorous evening star is rose,
Why then should not our amorous star inclose
Herself in her wish'd bed ? Release your strings,
Musicians ; and dancers take some truce
With these your pleasing labours, for great use
As much weariness as perfection brings.
You, and not only you, but all toil'd beasts
Rest duly ; at night all their toils are dispensed ;
But in their beds commenced
Are other labours, and more dainty feasts.
She goes a maid, who, lest she turn the same,
To-night puts on perfection, and a woman's name.

Thy virgin's girdle now untie,
And in thy nuptial bed, love's altar, lie

A pleasing sacrifice ; now dispossess
Thee of these chains and robes, which were put on
To adorn the day, not thee ; for thou, alone,
Like virtue and truth, art best in nakedness.
This bed is only to virginity
A grave, but to a better state, a cradle.
Till now thou wast but able
To be, what now thou art ; then, that by thee
No more be said, " I may be," but, " I am,"
To-night put on perfection, and a woman's name.

Even like a faithful man content,
That this life for a better should be spent,
So she a mother's rich stile doth prefer,
And at the bridegroom's wish'd approach doth lie,
Like an appointed lamb, when tenderly
The priest comes on his knees to embowel her.
Now sleep or watch with more joy ; and, O light
Of heaven, to-morrow rise thou hot, and early ;
This sun will love so dearly
Her rest, that long, long we shall want her sight.
Wonders are wrought, for she, which had no maim,
To-night puts on perfection, and a woman's name.

John Donne

Fall Of A Wall

Under an undermined and shot-bruised wall
A too-bold captain perish'd by the fall,
Whose brave misfortune happiest men envied,
That had a town for tomb, his bones to hide.

John Donne

Farewell To Love

Whilst yet to prove,
I thought there was some deity in love
So did I reverence, and gave
Worship, as atheists at their dying hour
Call, what they cannot name, an unknown power,
As ignorantly did I crave:
Thus when
Things not yet known are coveted by men,
Our desires give them fashion, and so
As they wax lesser, fall, as they size, grow.

But, from late fair
His highness sitting in a golden chair,
Is not less cared for after three days
By children, than the thing which lovers so
Blindly admire, and with such worship woo;
Being had, enjoying it decays:
And thence,
What before pleased them all, takes but one sense,
And that so lamely, as it leaves behind
A kind of sorrowing dullness to the mind.

Ah cannot we,
As well as cocks and lions jocund be,
After such pleasures ? Unless wise
Nature decreed (since each such act, they say
Diminish the length of life a day)
This; as she would man should despise
The sport,
Because that other curse of being short,
And only for a minute made to be
Eager, desires to raise posterity.

Since so, my mind
Shall not desire what no man else can find,
I`ll no more dote and run
To purse things which had, endamaged me.
And when I come where moving beauties be,
As men do when the summer's sun

Grows great,
Though I admire their greatness, shun their heat;
Each place can afford shadow. If all fail,
'Tis but applying worm-seed to the tail.

John Donne

For Whom The Bell Tolls

PERCHANCE he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is Catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. There was a contention as far as a suit (in which both piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled), which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined, that they should ring first that rose earliest. If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his, whose indeed it is. The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that this occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were: any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for

thee. Neither can we call this a begging of misery, or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves, but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbours. Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did, for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction. If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current money, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it, except we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it. Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels, as gold in a mine, and be of no use to him; but this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out and applies that gold to me: if by this consideration of another's danger I take mine own into contemplation, and so secure myself, by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

John Donne

From 'the Cross'

Who can blot out the Cross, which th'instrument
Of God, dew'd on me in the Sacrament?
Who can deny me power, and liberty
To stretch mine arms, and mine own Cross to be?
Swim, and at every stroke, thou art thy Cross;
The Mast and yard make one, where seas do toss;
Look down, thou spiest out Crosses in small things;
Look up, thou seest birds rais'd on crossed wings;
All the Globes frame, and spheres, is nothing else
But the Meridians crossing Parallels.
Material Crosses then, good physic bee,
But yet spiritual have chief dignity.
These for extracted chemic medicine serve,
And cure much better, and as well preserve;
Then are you your own physic, or need none,
When Still'd, or purg'd by tribulation.
For when that Cross ungrudg'd, unto you sticks,
Then are you to your self, a Crucifix.
As perchance, Carvers do not faces make,
But that away, which hid them there, do take;
Let Crosses, so, take what hid Christ in thee,
And be his image, or not his, but he.

John Donne

Go And Catch A Falling Star

Go and catch a falling star,
Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
Or who cleft the devil's foot,
Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
Or to keep off envy's stinging,
And find
What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
Till age snow white hairs on thee,
Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me,
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear,
No where
Lives a woman true, and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know,
Such a pilgrimage were sweet;
Yet do not, I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet;
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three.

John Donne

Good Friday

(Riding Westward.)

Let man's soule be a spheare, and then in this
The intelligence that moves devotion is;
And as the other spheares by being growne
Subject to forraigne motion lose their owne,
And being by others hurried every day,
Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey :
Pleasure or businesse, so our soules admit
For their first mover, and are whirled by it.
Hence is't that I am carryed toward the West
This day, when my soule's forme leads toward the East.
There I should see a Sunne by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget.
But that Christ on this Crosse did rise and fall,
Sinne had eternally benighted all.
Yet dare I almost be glad I do not see
The spectacle of too much weight for mee.
Who sees God's face, that is selfe life, must dye;
What a death were it then to see God dye!
It made his own lieutenant Nature shrinke,
It made his footstoole crack, and the sunne winke.
Could I behold those hands which span the poles
And tune all spheares at once pierc'd with those holes ?
Could I behold that endlesse height which is
Zenith to us, and our antipodes
Humbled below us? or that blood which is
The seat of all our soules, if not of his,
Made dust of dust ? or that flesh which was worne
By God, for his apparell, rag'd and torne ?
If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was God's partner here, and furnish'd thus
Halfe of that Sacrifice which ransom'd us ?
Though these things as I ride be from mine eye,
They are present yet into my memory;
For that looks towards them, and thou lookst towards mee,
Saviour, as thou hangst upon the tree:
I turne my backe to thee but to receive

Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O thinke mee worth thine anger ; punish mee ;
Burne off my rusts and my deformity ;
Restore thine image so much by thy grace
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.

John Donne

Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward

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The intelligence that moves, devotion is
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Restore shine Image, so much, by thy grace,
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.

John Donne

Good Morrow

I wonder, by my truth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved; were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere.
Let sead discoveries to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess our world; each hath one and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one; or thou and I
Love so alike that none do slacken, none can die.

John Donne

Hero And Leander

Both robb'd of air, we both lie in one ground ;
Both whom one fire had burnt, one water drown'd

John Donne

Holy Sonnet ?

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste,
I run to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday;
I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feebled flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it t'wards hell doth weigh.
Only thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
That not one hour I can myself sustain;
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet I: Thou Hast Made Me

Thou hast made me, and shall thy work decay?
Repair me now, for now mine end doth haste;
I run to death, and death meets me as fast,
And all my pleasures are like yesterday.
I dare not move my dim eyes any way,
Despair behind, and death before doth cast
Such terror, and my feeble flesh doth waste
By sin in it, which it towards hell doth weigh.
Only thou art above, and when towards thee
By thy leave I can look, I rise again;
But our old subtle foe so tempteth me
That not one hour myself I can sustain.
Thy grace may wing me to prevent his art,
And thou like adamant draw mine iron heart.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet ii: As Due By Many Titles

As due by many titles I resigne
My selfe to thee, O God, first I was made
By thee, and for thee, and when I was decay'd
Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine;
I am thy sonne, made with thy selfe to shine,
Thy servant, whose paines thou hast still repaid,
Thy sheepe, thine Image, and, till I betray'd
My selfe, a temple of thy Spirit divine;
Why doth the devill then usurpe on mee?
Why doth he steale, nay ravish that's thy right?
Except thou rise and for thine own worke fight,
Oh I shall soone despaire, when I doe see
That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt'not chuse me,
And Satan hates mee, yet is loth to lose me.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet ii: As Due By Many Titles I Resign

As due by many titles I resign
My self to Thee, O God; first I was made
By Thee, and for Thee, and when I was decayed
Thy blood bought that, the which before was Thine;
I am Thy son, made with Thy Self to shine,
Thy servant, whose pains Thou hast still repaid,
Thy sheep, thine image, and, till I betrayed
My self, a temple of Thy Spirit divine;
Why doth the devil then usurp on me?
Why doth he steal, nay ravish that's thy right?
Except thou rise and for thine own work fight,
Oh I shall soon despair, when I do see
That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt not choose me,
And Satan hates me, yet is loth to lose me.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Iii: O Might Those Sighes

O might those sighes and teares returne againe
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourne with some fruit, as I have mourn'd in vaine;
In mine Idolatry what showres of raine
Mine eyes did waste? what griefs my heart did rent?
That sufferance was my sinne; now I repent;
'Cause I did suffer I must suffer paine.
Th'hydroptique drunkard, and night-scouting thiefe,
The itchy Lecher, and selfe-tickling proud
Have the remembrance of past joyes, for reliefe
Of comming ill. To (poore) me is allow'd
No ease; for, long, yet vehement grieffe hath beene
Th'effect and cause, the punishment and sinne.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Iv: Oh My Black Soul!

Oh my black soul! now art thou summoned
By sickness, death's herald, and champion;
Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turn to whence he is fled;
Or like a thief, which till death's doom be read,
Wisheth himself delivered from prison,
But damned and haled to execution,
Wisheth that still he might be imprisoned.
Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lack;
But who shall give thee that grace to begin?
Oh make thy self with holy mourning black,
And red with blushing, as thou art with sin;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red souls to white.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet IX: If Poisonous Minerals, And If That Tree

If poisonous minerals, and if that tree
Whose fruit threw death on else immortal us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damned, alas, why should I be?
Why should intent or reason, born in me,
Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous?
And Mercy being easy, and glorious
To God; in his stern wrath, why threatens he?
But who am I, that dare dispute with thee
O God? Oh! of thine only worthy blood,
And my tears, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
And drown in it my sin's black memory;
That thou remember them, some claim as debt,
I think it mercy, if thou wilt forget.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet V: I Am A Little World

I am a little world made cunningly
Of Elements, and an Angelike spright,
But black sinne hath betraid to endlesse night
My worlds both parts, and (oh) both parts must die.
You which beyond that heaven which was most high
Have found new sphears, and of new lands can write,
Powre new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
Drowne my world with my weeping earnestly,
Or wash it if it must be drown'd no more;
But oh it must be burnt! alas the fire
Of lust and envie have burnt it heretofore,
And made it fouler; Let their flames retire,
And burne me o Lord, with a fiery zeale
Of thee and thy house, which doth in eating heale.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet V: I Am A Little World Made Cunningly

I am a little world made cunningly
Of elements, and an angelic sprite;
But black sin hath betrayed to endless night
My worlds both parts, and (oh!) both parts must die.
You which beyond that heaven which was most high
Have found new spheres, and of new lands can write,
Pour new seas in mine eyes, that so I might
Drown my world with my weeping earnestly,
Or wash it if it must be drowned no more:
But oh it must be burnt! alas the fire
Of lust and envy have burnt it heretofore,
And made it fouler: Let their flames retire,
And burn me, O Lord, with a fiery zeal
Of Thee and Thy house, which doth in eating heal.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Vi: This Is My Playes Last Scene

This is my playes last scene, here heavens appoint
My pilgrimages last mile; and my race
Idly, yet quickly runne, hath this last pace,
My spans last inch, my minutes latest point,
And gluttonous death, will instantly unjoynt
My body, and soule, and I shall sleepe a space,
But my'ever-waking part shall see that face,
Whose feare already shakes my every joynt;
Then, as my soule, to'heaven her first seate, takes flight,
And earth-borne body, in the earth shall dwell,
So, fall my sinnes, that all may have their right,
To where they're bred, and would presse me, to hell.
Impute me righteous, thus purg'd of evill,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devill.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Vii: At The Round Earth's

At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise
From death, you numberlesse infinities
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,
All whom warre, dearth, sage, agues, tyrannies,
Despaire, law chance, hath slaine, and you whose eyes,
Shall behold God, and never tast deaths woe.
But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,
'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,
Teach mee how to repent; for that's as good
As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon, with thy blood.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Vii: At The Round Earth's Imagined Corners Blow

At the round earth's imagined corners blow
Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go,
All whom the flood did, and fire shall, overthrow,
All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these my sins abound,
'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
As if Thou'dst sealed my pardon, with Thy blood.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Viii: If Faithful Souls Be Alike Glorified

If faithful souls be alike glorified
As angels, then my fathers soul doth see,
And adds this even to full felicity,
That valiantly I hells wide mouth o'erstride:
But if our minds to these souls be descried
By circumstances, and by signs that be
Apparent in us, not immediately,
How shall my mind's white truth by them be tried?
They see idolatrous lovers weep and mourn,
And vile blasphemous conjurers to call
On Jesus name, and Pharisaical
Dissemblers feign devotion. Then turn,
O pensive soul, to God, for he knows best
Thy true grief, for he put it in my breast.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Viii: If Faithfull Soules

If faithfull soules be alike glorifi'd
As Angels, then my fathers soul doth see,
And adds this even to full felecitie,
That valiantly I hels wide mouth o'stride:
But if our mindes to these soules be descry'd
By circumstances, and by signes that be
Apparent in us, not immediatly,
How shall my mindes white truth by them be try'd?
They see idolatrous lovers weepe and mourne,
And vile blasphemous Conjurers to call
On Jesus name, and Pharisaicall
Dissemblers feigne devotion. Then turne
O pensive soule, to God, for he knows best
Thy true grieffe, for he put it in my breast.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet X

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet X: Death Be Not Proud

Death, be not proud, though some have callèd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which yet thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more, must low
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings and desperate men
And dost with poison, war and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then ?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xi: Spit In My Face You Jewes

Spit in my face you Jewes, and pierce my side,
Buffet, and scoffe, scourge, and crucifie mee,
For I have sinn'd, and sinn'd, and onely hee,
Who could do no iniquitie, hath dyed:
But by my death can not be satisfied
My sinnes, which passe the Jewes impiety:
They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I
Crucifie him daily, being now glorified.
Oh let mee then, his strange love still admire:
Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
And Jacob came cloth'd in vile harsh attire
But to supplant, and with gainfull intent:
God cloth'd himsele in vile mans flesh, that so
Hee might be weake enough to suffer woe.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xi: Spit In My Face You Jews, And Pierce My Side

Spit in my face you Jews, and pierce my side,
Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucify me,
For I have sinned, and sinned, and only he
Who could do no iniquity hath died:
But by my death can not be satisfied
My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety:
They killed once an inglorious man, but I
Crucify him daily, being now glorified.
Oh let me, then, his strange love still admire:
Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire
But to supplant, and with gainful intent:
God clothed himself in vile man's flesh, that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xi: Spit In My Face You Jews, And Pierce My Side

Spit in my face you Jews, and pierce my side,
Buffet, and scoff, scourge, and crucify me,
For I have sinned, and sinned, and only he
Who could do no iniquity hath died:
But by my death can not be satisfied
My sins, which pass the Jews' impiety:
They killed once an inglorious man, but I
Crucify him daily, being now glorified.
Oh let me, then, his strange love still admire:
Kings pardon, but he bore our punishment.
And Jacob came clothed in vile harsh attire
But to supplant, and with gainful intent:
God clothed himself in vile man's flesh, that so
He might be weak enough to suffer woe.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xii: Why Are We

Why are wee by all creatures waited on?
Why doe the prodigall elements supply
Life and food to mee, being more pure than I,
Simple, and further from corruption?
Why brook'st thou, ignorant horse, subjection?
Why dost thou bull, and bore so seelily
Dissemble weaknesse, and by one mans stroke die,
Whose whole kinde, you might swallow and feed upon?
Weaker I am, woe is mee, and worse than you,
You have not sinn'd, nor need be timorous.
But wonder at a greater wonder, for to us
Created nature doth these things subdue,
But their Creator, whom sin, nor nature tyed,
For us, his Creatures, and his foes, hath dyed.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xii: Why Are We By All Creatures Waited On?

Why are we by all creatures waited on?
Why do the prodigal elements supply
Life and food to me, being more pure than I,
Simple, and further from corruption?
Why brook'st thou, ignorant horse, subjection?
Why dost thou, bull, and bore so seelily,
Dissemble weakness, and by one man's stroke die,
Whose whole kind you might swallow and feed upon?
Weaker I am, woe is me, and worse than you,
You have not sinned, nor need be timorous.
But wonder at a greater wonder, for to us
Created nature doth these things subdue,
But their Creator, whom sin nor nature tied,
For us, His creatures, and His foes, hath died.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xiii: What If This Present

What if this present were the worlds last night?
Marke in my heart, O Soule, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Teares in his eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills his frownes, which from his pierc'd head fell.
And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes fierce spight?
No, no; but as in my idolatrie
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pittie, foulnesse onely is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xiii: What If This Present Were The World's Last Night?

What if this present were the world's last night?
Mark in my heart, O soul, where thou dost dwell,
The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
Whether that countenance can thee affright,
Tears in his eyes quench the amazing light,
Blood fills his frowns, which from his pierced head fell.
And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
Which prayed forgiveness for his foes' fierce spite?
No, no; but as in my idolatry
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assigned,
This beauteous form assures a piteous mind.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xiv

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to'another due,
Labor to'admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly'I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me,'untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you'enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xiv: Batter My Heart

Batter my heart, three-personed God; for You
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labor to admit You, but O, to no end;
Reason, Your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love You, and would be loved fain,
But am betrothed unto Your enemy.
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;
Take me to You, imprison me, for I
Except You enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except You ravish me.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xix: Oh, To Vex Me

Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begott
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vowes, and in devotione.
As humorous is my contritione
As my prophane Love, and as soone forgott:
As ridlingly distemper'd, cold and hott,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day
In prayers, and flattering speaches I court God:
To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod.
So my devout fitts come and go away
Like a fantistique Ague: save that here
Those are my best dayes, when I shake with feare.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xix: Oh, To Vex Me, Contraries Meet In One

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot
A constant habit; that when I would not
I change in vows, and in devotion.
As humorous is my contrition
As my profane love, and as soon forgot:
As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.
So my devout fits come and go away
Like a fantastic ague; save that here
Those are my best days, when I shake with feare.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xix: Oh, To Vex Me, Contraries Meet In One

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A constant habit; that when I would not
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As my profane love, and as soon forgot:
As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,
As praying, as mute; as infinite, as none.
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today
In prayers and flattering speeches I court God:
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.
So my devout fits come and go away
Like a fantastic ague; save that here
Those are my best days, when I shake with fear.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xv: Wilt Thou Love God

Wilt thou love God, as he thee? then digest,
My Soule, this wholsome meditation,
How God the Spirit, by Angels waited on
In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy brest.
The Father having begot a Sonne most blest,
And still begetting, (for he ne'r begonne)
Hath deign'd to chuse thee by adoption,
Coheire to his glory, and Sabbaths endlesse rest;
And as a robb'd man, which by search doth finde
His stolne stuffe sold, must lose or buy it againe;
The Sonne of glory came downe, and was slaine,
Us whom he had made, and Satan stolne, to unbinde.
'Twas much, that man was made like God before,
But, that God should be made like man, much more.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xv: Wilt Thou Love God, As He Thee? Then Digest

Wilt thou love God, as he thee? Then digest,
My soul, this wholesome meditation,
How God the Spirit, by angels waited on
In heaven, doth make his Temple in thy breast.
The Father having begot a Son most blest,
And still begetting, (for he ne'er be gone)
Hath deigned to choose thee by adoption,
Co-heir t' his glory, and Sabbath' endless rest.
And as a robbed man, which by search doth find
His stol'n stuff sold, must lose or buy 't again:
The Son of glory came down, and was slain,
Us whom he'd made, and Satan stol'n, to unbind.
'Twas much that man was made like God before,
But, that God should be made like man, much more.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xvi: Father

Father, part of his double interest
Unto thy kingdome, thy Sonne gives to mee,
His joynture in the knottie Trinitie
Hee keepes, and gives to me his deaths conquest.
This Lambe, whose death, with life the world hath blest,
Was from the worlds beginning slaine, and he
Hath made two Wills, which with the Legacie
Of his and thy kingdome, doe thy Sonnes invest.
Yet such are thy laws, that men argue yet
Whether a man those statutes can fulfill;
None doth; but all-healing grace and spirit
Revive againe what law and letter kill.
Thy lawes abridgement, and thy last command
Is all but love; Oh let this last Will stand!

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xvi: Father, Part Of His Double Interest

Father, part of his double interest
Unto thy kingdom, thy Son gives to me,
His jointure in the knotty Trinity
He keeps, and gives to me his death's conquest.
This Lamb, whose death with life the world hath blest,
Was from the world's beginning slain, and he
Hath made two Wills which with the Legacy
Of his and thy kingdom do thy Sons invest.
Yet such are thy laws that men argue yet
Whether a man those statutes can fulfil;
None doth; but all-healing grace and spirit
Revive again what law and letter kill.
Thy law's abridgement, and thy last command
Is all but love; Oh let this last Will stand!

John Donne

Holy Sonnet Xvii: Since She Whom I Loved

Since she whom I loved hath paid her last debt
To Nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her soul early into heaven ravished,
Wholly on heavenly things my mind is set.
here the admiring her my mind did whet
To seek thee, God; so streams do show the head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
a holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet.
But why should I beg more love, whenas thou
Dost woo my soul, for hers offering all thine:
And dost not only fear lest I allow
My love to saints and angels, things divine,
but in they tender jealousy dost doubt
lest the world, flesh, yea, devil put thee out.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet XVIII: Show Me, Dear Christ

Show me, dear Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.
What! is it She, which on the other shore
Goes richly painted? or which, robbed and tore,
Laments and mourns in Germany and here?
Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?
Is she self-truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?
Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travail we to seek and then make love?
Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights,
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove,
Who is most true and pleasing to thee then
When she's embraced and open to most men.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet XVIII: Show Me, Dear Christ, Thy Spouse, So Bright And Clear

Show me, dear Christ, thy Spouse, so bright and clear.
What! is it She, which on the other shore
Goes richly painted? or which, robbed and tore,
Laments and mourns in Germany and here?
Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?
Is she self-truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
On one, on seven, or on no hill appear?
Dwells she with us, or like adventuring knights
First travail we to seek and then make love?
Betray, kind husband, thy spouse to our sights,
And let mine amorous soul court thy mild dove,
Who is most true and pleasing to thee then
When she's embraced and open to most men.

John Donne

Holy Sonnets: Since She Whom I Lov'D Hath Paid Her Last Debt

Since she whom I lov'd hath paid her last debt
To nature, and to hers, and my good is dead,
And her soul early into heaven ravished,
Wholly in heavenly things my mind is set.
Here the admiring her my mind did whet
To seek thee, God; so streams do show the head;
But though I have found thee, and thou my thirst hast fed,
A holy thirsty dropsy melts me yet.
But why should I beg more love, whenas thou
Dost woo my soul, for hers off'ring all thine,
And dost not only fear lest I allow
My love to saints and angels, things divine,
But in thy tender jealousy dost doubt
Lest the world, flesh, yea devil put thee out.

John Donne

Hym To God, My God In My Sickness

Since I am coming to that holy room,
Where, with thy choir of saints for evermore,
I shall be made thy music; as I come
I tune the instrument here at the door,
And what I must do then, think here before.

Whilst my physicians by their love are grown
Cosmographers, and I their map, who lie
Flat on this bed, that by them may be shown
That this is my south-west discovery,
[lang l]Per fretum febris[lang e], by these straits to die,

I joy, that in these straits I see my west;
For, though their currents yield return to none,
What shall my west hurt me? As west and east
In all flat maps (and I am one) are one,
So death doth touch the resurrection.

Is the Pacific Sea my home? Or are
The eastern riches? Is Jerusalem?
Anyan, and Magellan, and Gibraltar,
All straits, and none but straits, are ways to them,
Whether where Japhet dwelt, or Cham, or Shem.

We think that Paradise and Calvary,
Christ's cross, and Adam's tree, stood in one place;
Look, Lord, and find both Adams met in me;
As the first Adam's sweat surrounds my face,
May the last Adam's blood my soul embrace.

So, in his purple wrapp'd, receive me, Lord;
By these his thorns, give me his other crown;
And as to others' souls I preach'd thy word,
Be this my text, my sermon to mine own:
'Therefore that he may raise, the Lord throws down.'

John Donne

Klockius

Klockius so deeply hath sworn ne'er more to come
In bawdy house, that he dares not go home.

John Donne

La Corona

Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,
Weaved in my lone devout melancholy,
Thou which of good hast, yea, art treasury,
All changing unchanged Ancient of days.
But do not with a vile crown of frail bays
Reward my Muse's white sincerity ;
But what Thy thorny crown gain'd, that give me,
A crown of glory, which doth flower always.
The ends crown our works, but Thou crown'st our ends,
For at our ends begins our endless rest.
The first last end, now zealously possess'd,
With a strong sober thirst my soul attends.
'Tis time that heart and voice be lifted high ;
Salvation to all that will is nigh.

John Donne

Love's Alchemy

Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie;

I have lov'd, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery.

Oh, 'tis imposture all!
And as no chemic yet th'elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
So, lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

Our ease, our thrift, our honour, and our day,
Shall we for this vain bubble's shadow pay?

Ends love in this, that my man
Can be as happy'as I can, if he can
Endure the short scorn of a bridegroom's play?

That loving wretch that swears
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,
Would swear as justly that he hears,
In that day's rude hoarse minstrelsy, the spheres.
Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit, they'are but mummy, possess'd.

John Donne

Love's Deity

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost,
Who died before the god of love was born.
I cannot think that he, who then lov'd most,
Sunk so low as to love one which did scorn.
But since this god produc'd a destiny,
And that vice-nature, custom, lets it be,
I must love her, that loves not me.

Sure, they which made him god, meant not so much,
Nor he in his young godhead practis'd it.
But when an even flame two hearts did touch,
His office was indulgently to fit
Actives to passives. Correspondency
Only his subject was; it cannot be
Love, till I love her, that loves me.

But every modern god will now extend
His vast prerogative as far as Jove.
To rage, to lust, to write to, to commend,
All is the purlieu of the god of love.
O! were we waken'd by this tyranny
To ungod this child again, it could not be
I should love her, who loves not me.

Rebel and atheist too, why murmur I,
As though I felt the worst that love could do?
Love might make me leave loving, or might try
A deeper plague, to make her love me too;
Which, since she loves before, I'am loth to see.
Falsehood is worse than hate; and that must be,
If she whom I love, should love me.

John Donne

Love's Diet

To what a cumbersome unwieldiness
And burdenous corpulence my love had grown,
But that I did, to make it less,
And keep it in proportion,
Give it a diet, made it feed upon
That which love worst endures, discretion

Above one sigh a day I allow'd him not,
Of which my fortune, and my faults had part ;
And if sometimes by stealth he got
A she sigh from my mistress' heart,
And thought to feast upon that, I let him see
'Twas neither very sound, nor meant to me.

If he wrung from me a tear, I brined it so
With scorn and shame, that him it nourish'd not ;
If he suck'd hers, I let him know
'Twas not a tear which he had got ;
His drink was counterfeit, as was his meat ;
For eyes, which roll towards all, weep not, but sweat.

Whatever he would dictate I writ that,
But burnt her letters when she writ to me ;
And if that favour made him fat,
I said, 'If any title be
Convey'd by this, ah ! what doth it avail,
To be the fortieth name in an entail?'

Thus I reclaim'd my buzzard love, to fly
At what, and when, and how, and where I choose.
Now negligent of sports I lie,
And now, as other falconers use,
I spring a mistress, swear, write, sigh, and weep ;
And the game kill'd, or lost, go talk or sleep.

John Donne

Love's Exchange

LOVE, any devil else but you
Would for a given soul give something too.
At court your fellows every day
Give th' art of rhyming, huntsmanship, or play,
For them which were their own before ;
Only I have nothing, which gave more,
But am, alas ! by being lowly, lower.

I ask no dispensation now,
To falsify a tear, or sigh, or vow ;
I do not sue from thee to draw
A non obstante on nature's law ;
These are prerogatives, they inhere
In thee and thine ; none should forswear
Except that he Love's minion were.

Give me thy weakness, make me blind,
Both ways, as thou and thine, in eyes and mind ;
Love, let me never know that this
Is love, or, that love childish is ;
Let me not know that others know
That she knows my paines, lest that so
A tender shame make me mine own new woe.

If thou give nothing, yet thou 'rt just,
Because I would not thy first motions trust ;
Small towns which stand stiff, till great shot
Enforce them, by war's law condition not ;
Such in Love's warfare is my case ;
I may not article for grace,
Having put Love at last to show this face.

This face, by which he could command
And change th' idolatry of any land,
This face, which, wheresoe'er it comes,
Can call vow'd men from cloisters, dead from tombs,
And melt both poles at once, and store
Deserts with cities, and make more
Mines in the earth, than quarries were before.

For this Love is enraged with me,
Yet kills not ; if I must example be
To future rebels, if th' unborn
Must learn by my being cut up and torn,
Kill, and dissect me, Love ; for this
Torture against thine own end is ;
Rack'd carcasses make ill anatomies.

John Donne

Love's Growth

I scarce believe my love to be so pure
As I had thought it was,
Because it doth endure
Vicissitude, and season, as the grass ;
Methinks I lied all winter, when I swore
My love was infinite, if spring make it more.

But if this medicine, love, which cures all sorrow
With more, not only be no quintessence,
But mix'd of all stuffs, vexing soul, or sense,
And of the sun his active vigour borrow,
Love's not so pure, and abstract as they use
To say, which have no mistress but their Muse ;
But as all else, being elemented too,
Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do.

And yet no greater, but more eminent,
Love by the spring is grown ;
As in the firmament
Stars by the sun are not enlarged, but shown,
Gentle love deeds, as blossoms on a bough,
From love's awakened root do bud out now.

If, as in water stirr'd more circles be
Produced by one, love such additions take,
Those like so many spheres but one heaven make,
For they are all concentric unto thee ;
And though each spring do add to love new heat,
As princes do in times of action get
New taxes, and remit them not in peace,
No winter shall abate this spring's increase.

John Donne

Love's Infiniteness

If yet I have not all thy love,
Dear, I shall never have it all,
I cannot breathe one other sigh, to move,
Nor can entreat one other tear to fall,
And all my treasure, which should purchase thee,
Sighs, tears, and oaths, and letters I have spent.
Yet no more can be due to me,
Than at the bargain made was meant;
If then thy gift of love were partial,
That some to me, some should to others fall,
Dear, I shall never have thee all.

Or if then thou gavest me all,
All was but all, which thou hadst then;
But if in thy heart, since, there be or shall
New love created be, by other men,
Which have their stocks entire, and can in tears,
In sighs, in oaths, and letters outbid me,
This new love may beget new fears,
For, this love was not vowed by thee.
And yet it was, thy gift being general;
The ground, thy heart, is mine, whatever shall
Grow there, dear, I should have it all.

Yet I would not have all yet;
He that hath all can have no more,
And since my love doth every day admit
New growth, thou shouldst have new rewards in store;
Thou canst not every day give me thy heart,
If thou canst give it, then thou never gavest it:
Love's riddles are, that though thy heart depart,
It stays at home, and thou with losing savest it:
But we will have a way more liberal,
Than changing hearts, to join them, so we shall
Be one, and one another's all.

John Donne

Love's Usury

For every hour that thou wilt spare me now,
I will allow,
Usurious God of Love, twenty to thee,
When with my brown, my grey hairs equal be;
Till then, Love, let my body reign, and let
Me travel, sojourn, snatch, plot, have, forget,
Resume my last year's relict: think that yet
We had never met.

Let me think any rival's letter mine,
And at next nine
Keep midnight's promise; mistake by the way
The maid, and tell the Lady of that delay;
Only let me love none, no, not the sport;
From country grass, to comfitures of Court,
Or city's quelque-choses, let report
My mind transport.

This bargain's good; if when I'am old, I be
Inflamed by thee,
If thine own honour, or my shame, or pain,
Thou covet, most at that age thou shalt gain.
Do thy will then, then subject and degree,
And fruit of love, Love, I submit to thee;
Spare me till then, I'll bear it, though she be
One that loves me.

John Donne

Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus

Like Esop's fellow-slaves, O Mercury,
Which could do all things, thy faith is ; and I
Like Esop's self, which nothing. I confess
I should have had more faith, if thou hadst less.
Thy credit lost thy credit. 'Tis sin to do,
In this case, as thou wouldst be done unto,
To believe all. Change thy name ; thou art like
Mercury in stealing, but liest like a Greek.

John Donne

Nativity

Immensity cloistered in thy dear womb,
Now leaves His well-belov'd imprisonment,
There He hath made Himself to His intent
Weak enough, now into the world to come;
But O, for thee, for Him, hath the inn no room?
Yet lay Him in this stall, and from the Orient,
Stars and wise men will travel to prevent
The effect of Herod's jealous general doom.
Seest thou, my soul, with thy faith's eyes, how He
Which fills all place, yet none holds Him, doth lie?
Was not His pity towards thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pitied by thee?
Kiss Him, and with Him into Egypt go,
With His kind mother, who partakes thy woe.

John Donne

Negative Love

I never stoop'd so low, as they
Which on an eye, cheeke, lip, can prey,
Seldom to them, which soare no higher
Than vertue or the minde to'admire,
For sense, and understanding may
Know, what gives fuell to their fire:
My love, though silly, is more brave,
For may I misse, when ere I crave,
If I know yet, what I would have.

If that be simply perfectest
Which can by no way be exprest
But Negatives, my love is so.
To All, which all love, I say no.
If any who deciphers best,
What we know not, our selves, can know,
Let him teach mee that nothing; This
As yet my ease, and comfort is,
Though I speed not, I cannot misse.

John Donne

Niobe

By children's births, and death, I am become
So dry, that I am now mine own sad tomb.

John Donne

No Man Is An Island

No man is an island,
Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's
Or of thine own were:
Any man's death diminishes me,
Because I am involved in mankind,
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

John Donne

Ode

I. VENGEANCE will sit above our faults ; but till
She there do sit,
We see her not, nor them. Thus blind, yet still
We lead her way ; and thus, whilst we do ill,
We suffer it.

2. Unhappy he whom youth makes not beware
Of doing ill.
Enough we labour under age, and care ;
In number, th' errors of the last place are
The greatest still.

3. Yet we, that should the ill we now begin
As soon repent,
Strange thing ! perceive not ; our faults are not seen,
But past us ; neither felt, but only in
The punishment.

4. But we know ourselves least ; mere outward shows
Our minds so store,
That our souls no more than our eyes disclose
But form and colour. Only he who knows
Himself, knows more.

John Donne

Oh My Blacke Soule! Now Thou Art Summoned

Oh my black Soule! Now thou art summoned
By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee is fled,
Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
Wisheth himselfe deliverd from prison;
But damn'd and hal'd to execution,
Wisheth that sill he might be imprisioned;
Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lacke;
But who shall give thee that grace to beginne?
Oh make thy selfe with holy mourning blacke;
And red with blushing, as thou art with sinne;
Or wash thee in Christ's blood, which hath this might
That being red, it dyes red soules to white.

John Donne

On The Lady Elizabeth, And Count Palatine Being Married On St. Valentine's Day

Hail Bishop Valentine, whose day this is,
All the air is thy Diocese,
And all the chirping choristers
And other birds are thy parishioners,
Thou marryest ever year
The lyric Lark, and the grave whispering Dove,
The Sparrow that neglects his life for love,
The household bird, with the red stomacher;
Thou maks't the black bird speed as soon,
As doth the Goldfinch, or the Halycon;
The husband cock looks out, and straight is sped,
And meets his wife, which brings her feather-bed.
This day more cheerfully than ever shine,
This day, which might enflame thy self, old Valentine.

Till now, thou warmd'st with mutiplying loves
Two larks, two sparrows, or two doves,
All that is nothing unto this,
For thou this day couplest two Phoenixes;
Thou mak'st a Taper see
What the sun never saw, and what the Ark
(Which was of fowls, and beasts, the cage and park,)
Did not contain, one bed contains, through thee,
Two Phoenixes, whose joined breasts
Are unto one another mutual nests,
Where motion kindles such fires, as shall give
Young Phoenixes, and yet the old shall love.
Whose love and courage never shall decline,
But make the whole year through, thy day, O Valentine.

Up then fair Phoenix bride, frustrate the Sun,
Thy self from thine affection
Takest warmth enough, and from thine eye
All lesser birds will take their jollity.
Up, up, fair bride, and call
Thy stars, from out their several boxes take
Thy rubies, pearls and diamonds forth, and make

Thy self a constellation of them all,
And by their blazing, signify,
That a Great Princess falls, but doth not die;
Be thou a new star, that to us portends
Ends of much wonder; and be thou those ends.
Since thou dost this day in new glory shine,
May all men date records from this thy Valentine. . .

John Donne

On The Progress Of The Soul...

Forget this rotten world, and unto thee
Let thine own times as an old story be.
Be not concern'd; study not why, nor when;
Do not so much as not believe a man.
For though to err, be worst, to try truths forth
Is far more business than this world is worth.
I'he world is but a carcass; thou art fed
By it, but as a worm, that carcass bred;
And why shouldst thou, poor worm, consider more,
When this world will grow better than before,
Than those thy fellow-worms do think upon
That carcass's last resurrection?
Forget this world, and scarce think of it so,
As of old clothes, cast off a year ago.
To be thus stupid is alacrity;
Men thus lethargic have best memory.
Look upward; that's towards her, whose happy state
We now lament not, but congratulate.
She, to whom all this world was but a stage,
Where all sat heark'ning how her youthful age
Should be employ'd, because in all she did
Some figure of the golden times was hid.
Who could not lack, what'er this world could give,
Because she was the form, that made it live;
Nor could complain that this world was unfit
To be stay'd in, then when she was in it;
She, that first tried indifferent desires
By virtue, and virtue by religious fires;
She, to whose person paradise adher'd,
As courts to princes; she, whose eyes enspher'd
Star-light enough t' have made the South control,
(Had she been there) the star-full Northern Pole;
She, she is gone; she is gone; when thou knowest this,
What fragmentary rubbish this world is
Thou knowest, and that it is not worth a thought;
He honours it too much that thinks it nought.
Think then, my soul, that death is but a groom,
Which brings a taper to the outward room,
Whence thou spiest first a little glimmering light,

And after brings it nearer to thy sight;
For such approaches doth heaven make in death.
Think thyself labouring now with broken breath,
And think those broken and soft notes to be
Division, and thy happiest harmony.
Think thee laid on thy death-bed, loose and slack,
And think that but unbinding of a pack,
To take one precious thing, thy soul, from thence.
Think thyself parch'd with fever's violence;
Anger thine ague more, by calling it
Thy physic; chide the slackness of the fit.
Think that thou hear'st thy knell, and think no more,
But that, as bells call'd thee to church before,
So this to the Triumphant Church calls thee.
Think Satan's sergeants round about thee be,
And think that but for legacies they thrust;
Give one thy pride, to'another give thy lust;
Give them those sins which they gave thee before,
And trust th' immaculate blood to wash thy score.
Think thy friends weeping round, and think that they
Weep but because they go not yet thy way.
Think that they close thine eyes, and think in this,
That they confess much in the world amiss,
Who dare not trust a dead man's eye with that
Which they from God and angels cover not.
Think that they shroud thee up, and think from thence
They reinvest thee in white innocence.
Think that thy body rots, and (if so low,
Thy soul exalted so, thy thoughts can go)
Think thee a prince, who of themselves create
Worms, which insensibly devour their state.
Think that they bury thee, and think that rite
Lays thee to sleep but a Saint Lucy's night.

....

John Donne

Phryne

Thy flattering picture, Phryne, is like thee,
Only in this, that you both painted be.

John Donne

Psalm Cxxxvii.

By Euphrates' flowry side
We did bide,
From deare Juda faire absented,
Tearing the aire with our cryes ;
And our eyes
With their streames his streame augmented.

When, poore Syon's dolefull state,
Desolate ;
Sacked, burned, and inthrall'd,
And the temple spoil'd, which wee
IS e'er should see,
To our mirthlesse mindes wee call'd :

Our mute harpes, untun'd, unstrung,
Up wee hung
On greene willowes neere beside us,
Where we, sitting all forlorne,
Thus in scorne
Our proud spoylers 'gan deride us:

Come, sad captives, leave your moanes,
And your groanes
Under Syon's ruines bury;
Tune your harps, and sing us layes
In the praise
Of your God, and let's be merry.

Can, ah ! can we leave our moanes,
And our groanes
Under Syon's ruines bury ?
Can we in this land sing layes
In the praise
Of our God, and here be merry ?

No; deare Syon, if I yet
Do forget
Thine affliction miserable,
Let my nimble joynts become

Stiffe and numme,
To touch warbling harpe unable.

Let my tongue lose singing skill,
Let it still
To my parched roofe be glewed,
If in either harpe or voice
I rejoyce
Till thy joyes shall be renewed.

Lord, curse Edom's traiterous kinde
Beare in minde
In our ruines how they revell'd
Sack, kill, burne ! they cryed out still,
Sack, burne, kill!
Downe with all, let all be levell'd.

And thou Babel, when the tide
Of thy pride,
Now a flowing, growe to turning;
Victor now, shall then be thrall,
And shall fall
To as low an ebbe of mourning.

Happy he who shall thee waste,
As thou hast
Us, without all mercy, wasted,
And shall make thee taste and see
What poore wee
By thy meanes have seene and tasted.

Happy who thy tender barnes,
From the armes
Of their wailing mothers tearing,
'Gainst the walls shall dash their bones,
Ruthlesse stones
With their braines and blood besmearing.

John Donne

Pyramus And Thisbe

Two, by themselves, each other, love and fear,
Slain, cruel friends, by parting have join'd here.

John Donne

Raderus

Why this man gelded Martial I muse,
Except himself alone his tricks would use,
As Katherine, for the court's sake, put down stews.

John Donne

Ralphius

Compassion in the world again is bred ;
Ralphius is sick, the broker keeps his bed.

John Donne

Ressurrection

Moist with one drop of Thy blood, my dry soul
Shall—though she now be in extreme degree
Too stony hard, and yet too fleshly—be
Freed by that drop, from being starved, hard or foul,
And life by this death abled shall control
Death, whom Thy death slew ; nor shall to me
Fear of first or last death bring misery,
If in thy life-book my name thou enroll.
Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
But made that there, of which, and for which it was ;
Nor can by other means be glorified.
May then sin's sleep and death soon from me pass,
That waked from both, I again risen may
Salute the last and everlasting day.

John Donne

Resurrection, Imperfect

Sleep sleep old Sun, thou canst not have repast
As yet, the wound thou took'st on friday last;
Sleep then, and rest; The world may bearer thy stay,
A better Sun rose before thee to day,
Who, not content to'englighten all that dwell
On the earths face, as thou, enlightned hell,
And made the darker fires languish in that vale,
As, at thy presence here, our fires grow pale.
Whose body having walk'd on earth, and now
Hasting to Heaven, would, that he might allow
Himself unto all stations, and fill all,
For these three days become a mineral;
He was all gold when he lay down, but rose
All tincture, and doth not alone dispose
Leaden and iron wills to good, but is
Of power to make even sinful flesh like his.
Had one of those, whose credulous piety
Thought, that a Soul one might discern and see
Go from a body,'at this sepulcher been,
And, issuing from the sheet, this body seen,
He would have justly thought this body a soul,
If not of any man, yet of the whole.
Desunt cætera

John Donne

Satire I

Away thou fondling motley humorist,
Leave mee, and in this standing wooden chest,
Consorted with these few bookes, let me lye
In prison, and here be coffin'd, when I dye;
Here are Gods conduits, grave Divines; and here
Natures Secretary, the Philosopher;
And jolly Statesmen, which teach how to tie
The sinewes of a cities mistique bodie;
Here gathering Chroniclers, and by them stand
Giddie fantastique Poets of each land.
Shall I leave all this constant company,
And follow headlong, wild uncertaine thee?
First sweare by thy best love in earnest
(If thou which lov'st all, canst love any best)
Thou wilt not leave mee in the middle street
Though some more spruce companion thou dost meet,
Not though a Captaine do come in thy way
Bright parcell gilt, with forty dead mens pay,
Nor though a briske perfum'd piert Courtier
Deigne with a nod, thy courtesie to answer,
Nor come a velvet Justice with a long
Great traine of blew coats, twelve, or fourteen strong,
Wilt thou grin or fawne on him, or prepare
A speech to court his beautious sonne and heire.
For better or worse take mee, or leave mee:
To take, and leave mee is adultery.
Oh monstrous, superstitious puritan,
Of refin'd manners, yet ceremoniall man,
That when thou meet'st one, with enquiring eyes
Dost search, and like a needy broker prize
The silke, and gold he weares, and to that rate
So high or low, dost raise thy formall hat:
That wilt consort none, untill thou have knowne
What lands hee hath in hope, or of his owne,
As though all thy companions should make thee
Jointures, and marry thy deare company.
Why should'st thou (that dost not onely approve,
But in ranke itchie lust, desire, and love
The nakednesse and barenesse to enjoy,

Of thy plumpe muddy whore, or prostitute boy)
Hate vertue, though shee be naked, and bare?
At birth, and death, our bodies naked are;
And till our Soules be unapparrelled
Of bodies, they from blisse are banished.
Mans first blest state was naked, when by sinne
Hee lost that, yet hee'was cloath'd but in beasts skin,
And in this course attire, which I now weare,
With God, and with the Muses I conferre.
But since thou like a contrite penitent,
Charitably warn'd of thy sinnes, dost repent
These vanities, and giddinesses, loe
I shut my chamber doore, and 'Come, lets goe.'
But sooner may a cheape whore, that hath beene
Worne by as many severall men in sinne,
As are black feathers, or musk-colour hose,
Name her childs right true father, 'mongst all those:
Sooner may one gesse, who shall beare away
Th'Infant of London, Heire to'an India:
And sooner may a gulling weather-Spie
By drawing forth heavens Scheame tell certainly
What fashion'd hats, or ruffles, or suits next yeare
Our subtile-witted antique youths will weare;
Then thou, when thou depart'st from mee, canst show
Whither, why, when, or with whom thou wouldst go.
But how shall I be pardon'd my offence
That thus have sinn'd against my conscience?
Now we are in the street; He first of all
Improvidently proud, creepes to the wall,
And so imprison'd, and hem'd in by mee
Sells for a little state his libertie;
Yet though he cannot skip forth now to greet
Every fine silken painted foole we meet,
He them to him with amorous smiles allures,
And grins, smacks, shrugs, and such an itch endures,
As prentises, or schoole-boyes which doe know
Of some gay sport abroad, yet dare not goe.
And as filders stop low'st, at highest sound,
So to the most brave, stoops hee nigh'st the ground.
But to a grave man, he doth move no more
Then the wise politique horse would heretofore,
Or thou O Elephant or Ape wilt doe,

When any names the King of Spaine to you.
Now leaps he upright, jogs me, 'and cryes, 'Do'you see
Yonder well favour'd youth?' 'Which?' 'Oh, 'tis hee
That dances so divinely.' 'Oh,' said I,
'Stand still, must you dance here for company?'
Hee droopt, wee went, till one (which did excell
Th'Indians, in drinking his Tobacco well)
Met us; they talk'd; I whisper'd, 'Let us goe,
'T may be you smell him not, truely I doe.'
He heares not mee, but, on the other side
A many-colour'd Peacock having spide,
Leaves him and mee; I for my lost sheep stay;
He followes, overtakes, goes on the way,
Saying, 'Him whom I last left, all repute
For his device, in hansoming a sute,
To judge of lace, pinke, panes, print, cut and plight,
Of all the Court, to have the best conceit.'
'Our dull Comedians want him, let him goe;
But Oh, God strengthen thee, why stoop'st thou so?'
'Why? he hath travail'd.' 'Long?' 'No, but to me'
(Which understand none,) 'he doth seeme to be
Perfect French, and Italian.' I reply'd,
'So is the Poxe.' He answer'd not, but spy'd
More men of sort, of parts, and qualities;
At last his Love he in a windowe spies,
And like light dew exhal'd, he flings from mee
Violently ravish'd to his lechery.
Many were there, he could command no more;
He quarrell'd, fought, bled; and turn'd out of dore
Directly came to mee hanging the head,
And constantly a while must keepe his bed.

John Donne

Satire II

Sir; though (I thanke God for it) I do hate
Perfectly all this towne, yet there's one state
In all ill things so excellently best,
That hate, towards them, breeds pittie towards the rest.
Though Poetry indeed be such a sinne
As I thinke that brings dearths, and Spaniards in,
Though like the Pestilence and old fashion'd love,
Ridlingly it catch men; and doth remove
Never, till it be sterv'd out; yet their state
Is poore, disarm'd, like Papists, not worth hate.
One, (like a wretch, which at Barre judg'd as dead,
Yet prompts him which stands next, and cannot reade,
And saves his life) gives ideot actors meanes
(Starving himselfe) to live by 'his labor'd sceanes;
As in some Organ, Puppits dance above
And bellows pant below, which them do move.
One would move Love by rimes; but witchcrafts charms
Bring not now their old feares, nor their old harmes:
Rammes, and slings now are seely battery,
Pistolets are the best Artillerie.
And they who write to Lords, rewards to get,
Are they not like singers at doores for meat?
And they who write, because all write, have still
That excuse for writing, and for writing ill.
But hee is worst, who (beggarly) doth chaw
Others wits fruits, and in his ravenous maw
Rankly digested, doth those things out-spue,
As his owne things; 'and they are his owne, 'tis true,
For if one eate my meate, though it be knowne
The meate was mine, th'excrement is his owne.
But these do mee no harme, nor they which use
To out-doe Dildoes, and out-usure Jewes;
To 'out-drinke the sea, to 'out-sweare the Letanie;
Who with sinnes all kindes as familiar bee
As Confessors; and for whose sinfull sake
Schoolemen new tenements in hell must make:
Whose strange sinnes, Canonists could hardly tell
In which Commandements large receipt they dwell.
But these punish themselves; the insolence

Of Coscus onely breeds my just offence,
 Whom time (which rots all, and makes botches poxe,
 And plodding on, must make a calfe an oxe)
 Hath made a Lawyer, which was (alas) of late
 But a scarce Poet; jollier of this state,
 Then are new benefic'd ministers, he throwes
 Like nets, or lime-twigs, wheresoere he goes,
 His title'of Barrister, on every wench,
 And wooes in language of the Pleas, and Bench:
 'A motion, Lady.' 'Speake Coscus.' 'I'have beene
 In love, ever since tricesimo' of the Queene,
 Continuall claimes I'have made, injunctions got
 To stay my rivals suit, that hee should not
 Proceed.' 'Spare mee.' 'In Hillary terme I went,
 You said, If I returne next size in Lent,
 I should be in remitter of your grace;
 In th'interim my letters should take place
 Of affidavits--': words, words, which would teare
 The tender labyrinth of a soft maids eare,
 More, more, then ten Sclavonians scolding, more
 Then when winds in our ruin'd Abbeyes rore.
 When sicke with Poetrie,'and possest with muse
 Thou wast, and mad, I hop'd; but men which chuse
 Law practise for meere gaine, bold soule, repute
 Worse then imbrothel'd strumpets prostitute.
 Now like an owlelike watchman, hee must walke
 His hand still at a bill, now he must talke
 Idly, like prisoners, which whole months will sweare
 That onely suretiship hath brought them there,
 And to'every suitor lye in every thing,
 Like a Kings favorite, yea like a King;
 Like a wedge in a blocke, wring to the barre,
 Bearing like Asses, and more shameless farre
 Then carted whores, lye, to the grave Judge; for
 Bastardy'abounds not in Kings titles, nor
 Symonie'and Sodomy in Churchmens lives,
 As these things do in him; by these he thrives.
 Shortly ('as the sea) hee'will compasse all our land;
 From Scots, to Wight; from Mount, to Dover strand.
 And spying heires melting with luxurie,
 Satan will not joy at their sinnes, as hee.
 For as a thrifty wench scrapes kitching-stuffe,

And barrelling the droppings, and the snuffe,
Of wasting candles, which in thirty yeare
(Relique-like kept) perchance buyes wedding geare;
Peecemeale he gets lands, and spends as much time
Wringing each Acre, as men pulling prime.
In parchments then, large as his fields, hee drawes
Assurances, bigge, as gloss'd civill lawes,
So huge, that men (in our times forwardnesse)
Are Fathers of the Church for writing lesse.
These hee writes not; nor for these written payes,
Therefore spares no length; as in those first dayes
When Luther was profest, he did desire
Short Pater nosters, saying as a Fryer
Each day his beads, but having left those lawes,
Addes to Christs prayer, the Power and glory clause.
But when he sells or changes land, he'impaires
His writings, and (unwatch'd) leaves out, ses heires,
As slily'as any Commenter goes by
Hard words, or sense; or in Divinity
As controverters, in vouch'd texts, leave out
Shrewd words, which might against them cleare the doubt.
Where are those spred woods which cloth'd heretofore
Those bought lands? not built, not burnt within dore.
Where's th'old landlords troops, and almes? In great hals
Carthusian fasts, and fulsome Bachanalls
Equally'I hate; meanes blesse; in rich mens homes
I bid kill some beasts, but no Hecatombs,
None starve, none surfet so; But (Oh) we'allow
Good workes as good, but out of fashion now,
Like old rich wardrops; but my words none drawes
Within the vast reach of th'huge statute lawes.

John Donne

Satire Iii

Kind pity chokes my spleen; brave scorn forbids
Those tears to issue which swell my eyelids;
I must not laugh, nor weep sins and be wise;
Can railing, then, cure these worn maladies?
Is not our mistress, fair Religion,
As worthy of all our souls' devotion
As virtue was in the first blinded age?
Are not heaven's joys as valiant to assuage
Lusts, as earth's honour was to them? Alas,
As we do them in means, shall they surpass
Us in the end? and shall thy father's spirit
Meet blind philosophers in heaven, whose merit
Of strict life may be imputed faith, and hear
Thee, whom he taught so easy ways and near
To follow, damn'd? Oh, if thou dar'st, fear this;
This fear great courage and high valour is.
Dar'st thou aid mutinous Dutch, and dar'st thou lay
Thee in ships' wooden sepulchres, a prey
To leaders' rage, to storms, to shot, to dearth?
Dar'st thou dive seas, and dungeons of the earth?
Hast thou courageous fire to thaw the ice
Of frozen North discoveries? and thrice
Colder than salamanders, like divine
Children in th' oven, fires of Spain and the Line,
Whose countries limbecs to our bodies be,
Canst thou for gain bear? and must every he
Which cries not, 'Goddess,' to thy mistress, draw
Or eat thy poisonous words? Courage of straw!
O desperate coward, wilt thou seem bold, and
To thy foes and his, who made thee to stand
Sentinel in his world's garrison, thus yield,
And for forbidden wars leave th' appointed field?
Know thy foes: the foul devil, whom thou
Strivest to please, for hate, not love, would allow
Thee fain his whole realm to be quit; and as
The world's all parts wither away and pass,
So the world's self, thy other lov'd foe, is
In her decrepit wane, and thou loving this,
Dost love a wither'd and worn strumpet; last,

Flesh (itself's death) and joys which flesh can taste,
Thou lovest, and thy fair goodly soul, which doth
Give this flesh power to taste joy, thou dost loathe.
Seek true religion. O where? Mirreus,
Thinking her unhous'd here, and fled from us,
Seeks her at Rome; there, because he doth know
That she was there a thousand years ago,
He loves her rags so, as we here obey
The statecloth where the prince sate yesterday.
Crantz to such brave loves will not be enthral'd,
But loves her only, who at Geneva is call'd
Religion, plain, simple, sullen, young,
Contemptuous, yet unhandsome; as among
Lecherous humours, there is one that judges
No wenches wholesome, but coarse country drudges.
Graius stays still at home here, and because
Some preachers, vile ambitious bawds, and laws,
Still new like fashions, bid him think that she
Which dwells with us is only perfect, he
Embraceth her whom his godfathers will
Tender to him, being tender, as wards still
Take such wives as their guardians offer, or
Pay values. Careless Phrygius doth abhor
All, because all cannot be good, as one
Knowing some women whores, dares marry none.
Graccus loves all as one, and thinks that so
As women do in divers countries go
In divers habits, yet are still one kind,
So doth, so is Religion; and this blind-
ness too much light breeds; but unmoved, thou
Of force must one, and forc'd, but one allow,
And the right; ask thy father which is she,
Let him ask his; though truth and falsehood be
Near twins, yet truth a little elder is;
Be busy to seek her; believe me this,
He's not of none, nor worst, that seeks the best.
To adore, or scorn an image, or protest,
May all be bad; doubt wisely; in strange way
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleep, or run wrong, is. On a huge hill,
Cragged and steep, Truth stands, and he that will
Reach her, about must and about must go,

And what the hill's suddenness resists, win so.
Yet strive so that before age, death's twilight,
Thy soul rest, for none can work in that night.
To will implies delay, therefore now do;
Hard deeds, the body's pains; hard knowledge too
The mind's endeavours reach, and mysteries
Are like the sun, dazzling, yet plain to all eyes.
Keep the truth which thou hast found; men do not stand
In so ill case, that God hath with his hand
Sign'd kings' blank charters to kill whom they hate;
Nor are they vicars, but hangmen to fate.
Fool and wretch, wilt thou let thy soul be tied
To man's laws, by which she shall not be tried
At the last day? Oh, will it then boot thee
To say a Philip, or a Gregory,
A Harry, or a Martin, taught thee this?
Is not this excuse for mere contraries
Equally strong? Cannot both sides say so?
That thou mayest rightly obey power, her bounds know;
Those past, her nature and name is chang'd; to be
Then humble to her is idolatry.
As streams are, power is; those blest flowers that dwell
At the rough stream's calm head, thrive and do well,
But having left their roots, and themselves given
To the stream's tyrannous rage, alas, are driven
Through mills, and rocks, and woods, and at last, almost
Consum'd in going, in the sea are lost.
So perish souls, which more choose men's unjust
Power from God claim'd, than God himself to trust.

John Donne

Satire Iv

Well; I may now receive, and die. My sin
Indeed is great, but yet I have been in
A purgatory, such as fear'd hell is
A recreation and scant map of this.
My mind, neither with pride's itch, nor yet hath been
Poison'd with love to see, or to be seen.
I had no suit there, nor new suit to show,
Yet went to court; but as Glaze which did go
To'a mass in jest, catch'd, was fain to disburse
The hundred marks, which is the statute's curse,
Before he 'scap'd; so'it pleas'd my destiny
(Guilty of my sin of going) to think me
As prone to all ill, and of good as forget{-}
Full, as proud, as lustful, and as much in debt,
As vain, as witless, and as false as they
Which dwell in court, for once going that way.
Therefore I suffered this; towards me did run
A thing more strange, than on Nile's slime the sun
E'er bred, or all which into Noah's ark came;
A thing which would have pos'd Adam to name;
Stranger than seven antiquaries' studies,
Than Afric's monsters, Guiana's rarities;
Stranger than strangers; one, who for a Dane,
In the Danes' massacre had sure been slain,
If he had liv'd then; and without help dies,
When next the 'prentices 'gainst strangers rise;
One, whom the watch, at noon, lets scarce go by;
One, to whom the examining justice sure would cry,
"Sir, by your priesthood, tell me what you are."
His clothes were strange, though coarse; and black, though bare;
Sleeveless his jerkin was, and it had been
Velvet, but 'twas now (so much ground was seen)
Become tufftaffaty; and our children shall
See it plain rash awhile, then nought at all.
This thing hath travell'd, and, saith, speaks all tongues,
And only knoweth what to all states belongs.
Made of th' accents and best phrase of all these,
He speaks one language. If strange meats displease,
Art can deceive, or hunger force my taste,

But pedants' motley tongue, soldiers' bombast,
 Mountebanks' drug-tongue, nor the terms of law
 Are strong enough preparatives, to draw
 Me to bear this; yet I must be content
 With his tongue, in his tongue, call'd compliment;
 In which he can win widows, and pay scores,
 Make men speak treason, cozen subtlest whores,
 Out-flatter favourites, or outlie either
 Jovius, or Surlius, or both together.
 He names me, and comes to me; I whisper, "God!
 How have I sinn'd, that Thy wrath's furious rod,
 This fellow, chooseth me?" He saith, "Sir,
 I love your judgment; whom do you prefer,
 For the best linguist?" And I seelily
 Said, that I thought Calepine's dictionary.
 "Nay, but of men, most sweet Sir?" Beza then,
 Some Jesuits, and two reverend men
 Of our two Academies, I named. There
 He stopp'd me, and said; "Nay, your apostles were
 Good pretty linguists, and so Panurge was;
 Yet a poor gentleman all these may pass
 By travel." Then, as if he would have sold
 His tongue, he prais'd it, and such wonders told,
 That I was fain to say, "If you'had liv'd, sir,
 Time enough to have been interpreter
 To Babel's bricklayers, sure the tower had stood."
 He adds, "If of court life you knew the good,
 You would leave loneness." I said, "Not alone
 My loneness is; but Spartan's fashion,
 To teach by painting drunkards, doth not last
 Now; Aretine's pictures have made few chaste;
 No more can princes' courts, though there be few
 Better pictures of vice, teach me virtue."
 He, like to a high-stretch'd lute-string, squeak'd, "O sir,
 'Tis sweet to talk of kings." "At Westminster,"
 Said I, "the man that keeps the abbey tombs,
 And for his price doth with whoever comes
 Of all our Harrys and our Edwards talk,
 From king to king, and all their kin can walk.
 Your ears shall hear nought, but kings; your eyes meet
 Kings only; the way to it is King street."
 He smack'd and cried, "He's base, mechanic, coarse,

So are all your Englishmen in their discourse.
 Are not your Frenchmen neat?" "Mine? As you see,
 I have but one Frenchman, look--he follows me."
 "Certes they are neatly cloth'd. I of this mind am,
 Your only wearing is your grogram."
 "Not so, sir, I have more." Under this pitch
 He would not fly; I chaff'd him; but as itch
 Scratch'd into smart, and as blunt iron ground
 Into an edge, hurts worse; so I (fool) found
 Crossing hurt me. To fit my sullenness,
 He to another key his style doth dress,
 And asks, "What news?" I tell him of new plays.
 He takes my hand, and as a still which stays
 A sembrief, 'twixt each drop, he niggardly,
 As loth to enrich me, so tells many a lie,
 More than ten Holinsheds, or Halls, or Stows,
 Of trivial household trash, he knows. He knows
 When the Queen frown'd, or smil'd, and he knows what
 A subtle statesman may gather of that;
 He knows who loves; whom; and who by poison
 Hastes to an office's reversion;
 He knows who'hath sold his land, and now doth beg
 A licence, old iron, boots, shoes, and egg{-}
 Shells to transport; shortly boys shall not play
 At span-counter, or blow-point, but shall pay
 Toll to some courtier; and wiser than all us,
 He knows what lady is not painted. Thus
 He with home meats tries me. I belch, spew, spit,
 Look pale and sickly, like a patient, yet
 He thrusts on more; and as if he'd undertook
 To say Gallo-Belgicus without book,
 Speaks of all states, and deeds, that have been since
 The Spaniards came, to the loss of Amiens.
 Like a big wife, at sight of loathed meat,
 Ready to travail, so I sigh and sweat
 To hear this Macaron talk. In vain; for yet,
 Either my humour, or his own to fit,
 He, like a privileg'd spy, whom nothing can
 Discredit, libels now 'gainst each great man.
 He names a price for every office paid;
 He saith, our wars thrive ill, because delay'd;
 That offices are entail'd, and that there are

Perpetuities of them, lasting as far
As the last day; and that great officers
Do with the pirates share, and Dunkirkers.

...

Toughly and stubbornly I bear this cross; but the' hour
Of mercy now was come; he tries to bring
Me to pay a fine to 'scape his torturing,
And says, "Sir, can you spare me"--I said, "Willingly";
"Nay, sir, can you spare me a crown"? Thankfully I
Gave it, as ransom; but as fiddlers, still,
Though they be paid to be gone, yet needs will
Thrust one more jig upon you; so did he
With his long complimentary thanks vex me.
But he is gone, thanks to his needy want,
And the prerogative of my crown; scant
His thanks were ended, when I (which did see
All the court fill'd with more strange things than he)
Ran from thence with such, or more haste than one
Who fears more actions doth make from prison.

John Donne

Satire V

Thou shalt not laugh in this leafe, Muse, nor they
Whom any pity warmes; He which did lay
Rules to make Courtiers, (hee being understood
May make good Courtiers, but who Courtiers good?)
Frees from the sting of jests all who'in extreme
Are wrech'd or wicked: of these two a theame
Charity and liberty give me. What is hee
Who Officers rage, and Suiters misery
Can write, and jest? If all things be in all,
As I thinke, since all, which were, are, and shall
Bee, be made of the same elements:
Each thing, each thing implyes or represents.
Then man is a world; in which, Officers
Are the vast ravishing seas; and Suiters,
Springs; now full, now shallow, now drye; which, to
That which drownes them, run: These selfe reasons do
Prove the world a man, in which, officers
Are the devouring stomacke, and Suiters
Th'excrements, which they voyd. All men are dust;
How much worse are Suiters, who to mens lust
Are made preyes? O worse then dust, or wormes meat,
For they do'eate you now, whose selves wormes shall eate.
They are the mills which grinde you, yet you are
The winde which drives them; and a wastfull warre
Is fought against you, and you fight it; they
Adulterate lawe, and you prepare their way
Like wittals; th'issue your owne ruine is.
Greatest and fairest Empresse, know you this?
Alas, no more then Thames calme head doth know
Whose meades her armes drowne, or whose corne o'rflow:
You Sir, whose righteousnes she loves, whom I
By having leave to serve, am most richly
For service paid, authoriz'd, now beginne
To know and weed out this enormous sinne.
O Age of rusty iron! some better wit
Call it some worse name, if ought equall it;
Th'iron Age _that_ was, when justice was sold; now
Injustice is sold dearer farre. Allow
All demands, fees, and duties; gamsters, anon

The mony which you sweat, and sweare for, is gon
 Into'other hands: So controverted lands
 Scape, like Angelica, the strivers hands.
 If Law be in the Judges heart, and hee
 Have no heart to resist letter, or fee,
 Where wilt thou'appeale? Powre of the Courts below
 Flow from the first maine head, and these can throw
 Thee, if they sucke thee in, to misery,
 To fetters, halters; But if th'injury
 Steele thee to dare complaine, Alas, thou go'st
 Against the stream, when upwards: when thou'art most
 Heavy'and most faint; and in these labours they,
 'Gainst whom thou should'st complaine, will in the way
 Become great seas, o'r which, when thou shalt bee
 Forc'd to make golden bridges, thou shalt see
 That all thy gold was drown'd in them before;
 All things follow their like, only who have may'have more.
 Judges are Gods; he who made and said them so,
 Meant not that men should be forc'd to them to goe,
 By meanes of Angels; When supplications
 We send to God, to Dominations,
 Powers, Cherubins, and all heavens Courts, if wee
 Should pay fees as here, daily bread would be
 Scarce to Kings; so 'tis. Would it not anger
 A Stoicke, a coward, yea a Martyr,
 To see a Pursivant come in, and call
 All his cloathes, Copes; Bookes, Primers; and all
 His Plate, Challices; and mistake them away,
 And aske a fee for comming? Oh, ne'r may
 Faire lawes white reverend name be strumpeted,
 To warrant thefts: she is established
 Recorder to Destiny, on earth, and shee
 Speakes Fates words, and but tells us who must bee
 Rich, who poore, who in chaires, who in jayles:
 Shee is all faire, but yet hath foule long nailes,
 With which she scracheth Suiters; In bodies
 Of men, so'in law, nailes are th'extremities,
 So Officers stretch to more then Law can doe,
 As our nailes reach what no else part comes to.
 Why bar'st thou to yon Officer? Foole, Hath hee
 Got those goods, for which erst men bar'd to thee?
 Foole, twice, thrice, thou'hast bought wrong,'and now hungerly

Beg'st right; But that dole comes not till these dye.
Thou'had'st much, and lawes Urim and Thummim trie
Thou wouldst for more; and for all hast paper
Enough to cloath all the great Carricks Pepper.
Sell that, and by that thou much more shalt leese,
Then Haman, when he sold his Antiquities.

John Donne

Self-Love

He that cannot choose but love,
And strives against it still,
Never shall my fancy move,
For he loves 'gainst his will;
Nor he which is all his own,
And can at pleasure choose,
When I am caught he can be gone,
And when he list refuse.
Nor he that loves none but fair,
For such by all are sought;
Nor he that can for foul ones care,
For his judgement then is nought;
Nor he that hath wit, for he
Will make me his jest or slave;
Nor a fool, for when others...,
He can neither....;
Nor he that still his Mistress pays,
For she is thrall'd therefore;
Nor he that pays not, for he says
Within She's worth no more.
Is there then no kind of men
Whom I may freely prove?
I will vent that humour then
In mine own self-love.

John Donne

Song

Sweetest love, I do not go,
For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for me;
But since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best
To use myself in jest
Thus by feign'd deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
And yet is here today;
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way:
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power,
That if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
Nor a lost hour recall!
But come bad chance,
And we join to't it our strength,
And we teach it art and length,
Itself o'er us to'advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind,
But sigh'st my soul away;
When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
My life's blood doth decay.
It cannot be
That thou lov'st me, as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,
That art the best of me.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethink me any ill;
Destiny may take thy part,

And may thy fears fulfil;
But think that we
Are but turn'd aside to sleep;
They who one another keep
Alive, ne'er parted be.

John Donne

Song: Go And Catch A Falling Star

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
Teach me to hear mermaids singing,
Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
 Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
 Till age snow white hairs on thee,
Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me,
All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear,
 No where
Lives a woman true, and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know,
 Such a pilgrimage were sweet;
Yet do not, I would not go,
 Though at next door we might meet;
Though she were true, when you met her,
And last, till you write your letter,
 Yet she
 Will be
False, ere I come, to two, or three.

John Donne

Sonnet Cycle For Lady Magdalen

Her of your name, whose fair inheritance
Bethina was, and jointure Magdalo:
An active faith so highly did advance,
That she once knew, more than the Church did know,
The Resurrection; so much good there is
Deliver'd of her, that some Fathers be
Loth to believe one Woman could do this;
But think these Magdalens were two or three.
Increase their number, Lady, and their fame:
To their Devotion, add your Innocence;
Take so much of th'example, as of the name;
The latter half; and in some recompence
That they did harbour Christ himself, a Guest,
Harbour these Hymns, to his dear name addrest.

1. La Corona

Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise,
Weav'd in my low devout melancholie,
Thou which of good, hast, yea art treasury,
All changing unchang'd Antient of dayes;
But doe not, with vile crowne of fraile bayes,
Reward my muses white sincerity,
But what thy thorny crowne gain'd, that give mee,
The ends of Glory, which doth flower alwayes;
The ends crowne our workes, but thou crown'st our ends,
For, at our end begins our endlesse rest;
The first last end, now zealously possest,
With a strong sober thirst, my soule attends.
'Tis time that heart and voice be lifted high,
Salvation to all that will is nigh.

2. Annunciation

Salvation to all that will is nigh;
That All, which alwayes is All every where,
Which cannot die, yet cannot chuse but die,
Loe, faithfull Virgin, yeelds himselfe to lye
In prison in thy wombe; and though he there

Can take no sinne, nor thou give, yet he'll weare
Taken from thence, flesh, which deaths force may trie.
Ere by the spheares time was created, thou
Wast in his minde, who is thy Sonne, and Brother;
Whom thou conceiv'st, conceiv'd; yea thou art now
Thy Makers maker, and thy Fathers mother;
Thou'hast light in darke; and shutst in little roome,
Immensity cloystered in thy deare wombe.

3. Nativitie

Immensity cloystered in thy deare wombe,
Now leaves his welbelov'd imprisonment,
There he hath made himselfe to his intent
Weake enough, now into our world to come;
But Oh, for thee, for him, hath th'Inne no roome?
Yet lay him in this stall, and from the Orient,
Starres, and wisemen will travell to prevent
Th'effect of Herods jealous generall doome.
Seest thou, my Soule, with thy faiths eyes, how he
Which fills all place, yet none hold him, doth lye?
Was not his pity towrds thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pittied by thee?
Kisse him, and with him into Egypt goe,
With his kinde mother, who partakes thy woe.

4. Temple

With his kinde mother who partakes thy woe,
Joseph turne backe; see where your child doth sit,
Blowing, yea blowing out those sparks of wit,
Which himselfe on the Doctors did bestow;
The Word but lately could not speake, and loe
It sodenly speakes wonders, whence comes it,
That all which was, and all which should be writ,
A shallow seeming child, should deeply know?
His Godhead was not soule to his manhood,
Nor had time mellowed him to this ripenesse,
But as for one which hath a long taske, 'tis good,
With the Sunne to beginne his businesse,
He in his ages morning thus began
By miracles exceeding power of man.

5. Crucifying

By miracles exceeding power of man,
Hee faith in some, envie in some begat,
For, what weake spirits admire, ambitious, hate;
In both affections many to him ran,
But Oh! the worst are most, they will and can,
Alas, and do, unto the immaculate,
Whose creature Fate is, now prescribe a Fate,
Measuring selfe-lives infinity to a span,
Nay to an inch. Loe, where condemned hee
Beares his owne crosse, with paine, yet by and by
When it beares him, he must beare more and die.
Now thou art lifted up, draw mee to thee,
And at thy death giving such liberall dole,
Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.

6. Resurrection

Moyst, with one drop of thy blood, my dry soule.
Shall (though she now be in extreme degree
Too stony hard, and yet to fleshly,) bee
Freed by that drop, from being starv'd, hard or foule,
And life, by this death abled, shall controule
Death, whom thy death slue; nor shall to mee
Feare of first or last death, bring miserie,
If in thy little booke my name thou enroule,
Flesh in that long sleep is not putrified,
But made that there, of which and for which 'twas;
Nor can by other meanes be glorified.
May then sinnes sleep, and deaths soone from me passe,
That wak't from both, I againe risen may
Salute the last, and everlasting day.

7. Ascention

Salute the last, and everlasting day,
Joy at the uprising of this Sunne, and Sonne,
Yee whose just teares, or tribulation
Have purely washt, or burnt your drossie clay;
Behold the Highest, parting hence away,

Lightens the darke clouds, which hee treads upon,
Nor doth hee by ascending, show alone,
But first hee, and hee first enters the way.
O strong Ramme, which hast batter'd heaven for mee,
Mild Lambe, which with thy blood, hast mark'd the path;
Bright Torch, which shin'st that I the way may see
Oh, with thy owne blood quench thy owne just wrath,
And if thy holy Spirit, my Muse did raise,
Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise.

John Donne

Sweetest Love, I Do Not Go

Sweetest love, I do not go,
For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
A fitter love for me;
But since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best
To use myself in jest
Thus by feign'd deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
And yet is here today;
He hath no desire nor sense,
Nor half so short a way:
Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power,
That if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
Nor a lost hour recall!
But come bad chance,
And we join to't our strength,
And we teach it art and length,
Itself o'er us to'advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind,
But sigh'st my soul away;
When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
My life's blood doth decay.
It cannot be
That thou lov'st me, as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,
That art the best of me.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethink me any ill;
Destiny may take thy part,

And may thy fears fulfil;
But think that we
Are but turn'd aside to sleep;
They who one another keep
Alive, ne'er parted be.

John Donne

Temple

With His kind mother, who partakes thy woe,
Joseph, turn back ; see where your child doth sit,
Blowing, yea blowing out those sparks of wit,
Which Himself on the doctors did bestow.
The Word but lately could not speak, and lo !
It suddenly speaks wonders ; whence comes it,
That all which was, and all which should be writ,
A shallow seeming child should deeply know ?
His Godhead was not soul to His manhood,
Nor had time mellow'd Him to this ripeness ;
But as for one which hath a long task, 'tis good,
With the sun to begin His business,
He in His age's morning thus began,
By miracles exceeding power of man.

John Donne

The Anniversary

ALL kings, and all their favourites,
All glory of honours, beauties, wits,
The sun it self, which makes time, as they pass,
Is elder by a year now than it was
When thou and I first one another saw.
All other things to their destruction draw,
Only our love hath no decay ;
This no to-morrow hath, nor yesterday ;
Running it never runs from us away,
But truly keeps his first, last, everlasting day.

Two graves must hide thine and my corse ;
If one might, death were no divorce.
Alas ! as well as other princes, we
—Who prince enough in one another be—
Must leave at last in death these eyes and ears,
Oft fed with true oaths, and with sweet salt tears ;
But souls where nothing dwells but love
—All other thoughts being inmates—then shall prove
This or a love increased there above,
When bodies to their graves, souls from their graves remove.

And then we shall be thoroughly blest ;
But now no more than all the rest.
Here upon earth we're kings, and none but we
Can be such kings, nor of such subjects be.
Who is so safe as we? where none can do
Treason to us, except one of us two.
True and false fears let us refrain,
Let us love nobly, and live, and add again
Years and years unto years, till we attain
To write threescore ; this is the second of our reign.

John Donne

The Annunciation And Passion

TAMELY, frail body, abstain to-day ; to-day
My soul eats twice, Christ hither and away.
She sees Him man, so like God made in this,
That of them both a circle emblem is,
Whose first and last concur ; this doubtful day
Of feast or fast, Christ came, and went away ;
She sees Him nothing, twice at once, who's all ;
She sees a cedar plant itself, and fall ;
Her Maker put to making, and the head
Of life at once not yet alive, yet dead ;
She sees at once the Virgin Mother stay
Reclused at home, public at Golgotha ;
Sad and rejoiced she's seen at once, and seen
At almost fifty, and at scarce fifteen ;
At once a son is promised her, and gone ;
Gabriell gives Christ to her, He her to John ;
Not fully a mother, she's in orbity ;
At once receiver and the legacy.
All this, and all between, this day hath shown,
Th' abridgement of Christ's story, which makes one—
As in plain maps, the furthest west is east—
Of th' angels Ave, and Consummatum est.
How well the Church, God's Court of Faculties,
Deals, in sometimes, and seldom joining these.
As by the self-fix'd Pole we never do
Direct our course, but the next star thereto,
Which shows where th'other is, and which we say
—Because it strays not far—doth never stray,
So God by His Church, nearest to him, we know,
And stand firm, if we by her motion go.
His Spirit, as His fiery pillar, doth
Lead, and His Church, as cloud ; to one end both.
This Church by letting those days join, hath shown
Death and conception in mankind is one ;
Or 'twas in Him the same humility,
That He would be a man, and leave to be ;
Or as creation He hath made, as God,
With the last judgment but one period,
His imitating spouse would join in one

Manhood's extremes ; He shall come, He is gone ;
Or as though one blood drop, which thence did fall,
Accepted, would have served, He yet shed all,
So though the least of His pains, deeds, or words,
Would busy a life, she all this day affords.
This treasure then, in gross, my soul, uplay,
And in my life retail it every day.

John Donne

The Apparition

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead
 And that thou think'st thee free
From all solicitation from me,
Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,
And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see;
Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,
And he, whose thou art then, being tir'd before,
Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think
 Thou call'st for more,
And in false sleep will from thee shrink;
And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou
Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie
 A verier ghost than I.
What I will say, I will not tell thee now,
Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,
I'had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,
Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

John Donne

The Bait

Come live with me, and be my love,
And we will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and crystal brooks,
With silken lines, and silver hooks.

There will the river whispering run
Warm'd by thy eyes, more than the sun;
And there the 'enamour'd fish will stay,
Begging themselves they may betray.

When thou wilt swim in that live bath,
Each fish, which every channel hath,
Will amorously to thee swim,
Gladder to catch thee, than thou him.

If thou, to be so seen, be'st loth,
By sun or moon, thou dark'nest both,
And if myself have leave to see,
I need not their light having thee.

Let others freeze with angling reeds,
And cut their legs with shells and weeds,
Or treacherously poor fish beset,
With strangling snare, or windowy net.

Let coarse bold hands from slimy nest
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest;
Or curious traitors, sleeve-silk flies,
Bewitch poor fishes' wand'ring eyes.

For thee, thou need'st no such deceit,
For thou thyself art thine own bait:
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas, is wiser far than I.

John Donne

The Blossom

LITTLE think'st thou, poor flower,
Whom I've watch'd six or seven days,
And seen thy birth, and seen what every hour
Gave to thy growth, thee to this height to raise,
And now dost laugh and triumph on this bough,
Little think'st thou,
That it will freeze anon, and that I shall
To-morrow find thee fallen, or not at all.

Little think'st thou, poor heart,
That labourest yet to nestle thee,
And think'st by hovering here to get a part
In a forbidden or forbidding tree,
And hopest her stiffness by long siege to bow,
Little think'st thou
That thou to-morrow, ere the sun doth wake,
Must with the sun and me a journey take.

But thou, which lovest to be
Subtle to plague thyself, wilt say,
Alas ! if you must go, what's that to me?
Here lies my business, and here I will stay
You go to friends, whose love and means present
Various content
To your eyes, ears, and taste, and every part ;
If then your body go, what need your heart?

Well then, stay here ; but know,
When thou hast stay'd and done thy most,
A naked thinking heart, that makes no show,
Is to a woman but a kind of ghost.
How shall she know my heart ; or having none,
Know thee for one?
Practice may make her know some other part ;
But take my word, she doth not know a heart.

Meet me in London, then,
Twenty days hence, and thou shalt see
Me fresher and more fat, by being with men,

Than if I had stay'd still with her and thee.
For God's sake, if you can, be you so too ;
I will give you
There to another friend, whom we shall find
As glad to have my body as my mind.

John Donne

The Broken Heart

He is stark mad, who ever says,
That he hath been in love an hour,
Yet not that love so soon decays,
But that it can ten in less space devour;
Who will believe me, if I swear
That I have had the plague a year ?
Who would not laugh at me, if I should say,
I saw a flask of powder burn a day ?

Ah, what trifle is a heart,
If once into Love's hands it come!
All other griefs allow a part
To other griefs, and ask themselves but some,
They come to us, but us Love draws,
He swallows us, and never chaws:
By him, as by chain-shot, whole ranks do die,
He is the tyrant pike, our hearts the fry.

If `twere not so, what did become
Of my heart, when I first saw thee ?
I brought a heart into the room,
But from the room, I carried non with me;
If it had gone to thee, I know
Mine would have taught thy heart to show
More pity unto me: but Love, alas,
At one first blow did shiver it as glass.

Yet nothing can to nothing fall,
Nor any place be empty quite,
Therefore I think my breast hath all
Those pieces still, though they be not unite;
And now as broken glasses show
A hundred lesser faces, so
My rags of heart can like, wish, and adore,
But after one such love, can love no more.

John Donne

The Calm

Our storm is past, and that storm's tyrannous rage,
A stupid calm, but nothing it, doth 'suage.
The fable is inverted, and far more
A block afflicts, now, than a stork before.
Storms chafe, and soon wear out themselves, or us;
In calms, Heaven laughs to see us languish thus.
As steady'as I can wish that my thoughts were,
Smooth as thy mistress' glass, or what shines there,
The sea is now; and, as the isles which we
Seek, when we can move, our ships rooted be.
As water did in storms, now pitch runs out;
As lead, when a fir'd church becomes one spout.
And all our beauty, and our trim, decays,
Like courts removing, or like ended plays.
The fighting-place now seamen's rags supply;
And all the tackling is a frippery.
No use of lanthorns; and in one place lay
Feathers and dust, to-day and yesterday.
Earth's hollownesses, which the world's lungs are,
Have no more wind than the upper vault of air.
We can nor lost friends nor sought foes recover,
But meteor-like, save that we move not, hover.
Only the calenture together draws
Dear friends, which meet dead in great fishes' jaws;
And on the hatches, as on altars, lies
Each one, his own priest, and own sacrifice.
Who live, that miracle do multiply,
Where walkers in hot ovens do not die.
If in despite of these we swim, that hath
No more refreshing than our brimstone bath;
But from the sea into the ship we turn,
Like parboil'd wretches, on the coals to burn.
Like Bajazet encag'd, the shepherds' scoff,
Or like slack-sinew'd Samson, his hair off,
Languish our ships. Now as a myriad
Of ants durst th' emperor's lov'd snake invade,
The crawling gallies, sea-gaols, finny chips,
Might brave our pinnaces, now bed-rid ships.
Whether a rotten state, and hope of gain,

Or to disuse me from the queasy pain
Of being belov'd and loving, or the thirst
Of honour, or fair death, out-push'd me first,
I lose my end; for here, as well as I,
A desperate may live, and a coward die.
Stag, dog, and all which from or towards flies,
Is paid with life or prey, or doing dies.
Fate grudges us all, and doth subtly lay
A scourge, 'gainst which we all forget to pray.
He that at sea prays for more wind, as well
Under the poles may beg cold, heat in hell.
What are we then? How little more, alas,
Is man now, than before he was? He was
Nothing; for us, we are for nothing fit;
Chance, or ourselves, still disproportion it.
We have no power, no will, no sense; I lie,
I should not then thus feel this misery.

John Donne

The Canonization

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
My five grey hairs, or ruin'd fortune flout,
With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
Take you a course, get you a place,
Observe his Honour, or his Grace,
Or the King's real, or his stamped face
Contemplate, what you will, approve,
So you will let me love.

Alas, alas, who's injur'd by my love?
What merchant's ships have my sighs drown'd?
Who says my tears have overflow'd his ground?
When did my colds a forward spring remove?
When did the heats which my veins fill
Add one more to the plaguy bill?
Soldiers find wars, and lawyers find out still
Litigious men, which quarrels move,
Though she and I do love.

Call us what you will, we are made such by love;
Call her one, me another fly,
We are tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find th' eagle and the dove.
The phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us; we two being one, are it.
So, to one neutral thing both sexes fit,
We die and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.

We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse;
And if no piece of chronicle we prove,
We'll build in sonnets pretty rooms;
As well a well-wrought urn becomes
The greatest ashes, as half-acre tombs,
And by these hymns all shall approve
Us canoniz'd for love;

And thus invoke us: "You, whom reverend love
Made one another's hermitage;
You, to whom love was peace, that now is rage;
Who did the whole world's soul contract, and drove
Into the glasses of your eyes
(So made such mirrors, and such spies,
That they did all to you epitomize)
Countries, towns, courts: beg from above
A pattern of your love!"

John Donne

The Computation

For the first twenty years since yesterday
 I scarce believed thou couldst be gone away;
For forty more I fed on favors past,
 And forty on hopes that thou wouldst they might last.
 Tears drowned one hundred, and sighs blew out two,
A thousand, I did neither think nor do,
Or not divide, all being one thought of you,
Or in a thousand more forgot that too.
Yet call not this long life, but think that I
 Am, by being dead, immortal. Can ghosts die?

John Donne

The Curse

Whoever guesses, thinks, or dreams, he knows
Who is my mistress, wither by this curse ;
Him, only for his purse
May some dull whore to love dispose,
And then yield unto all that are his foes ;
May he be scorn'd by one, whom all else scorn,
Forswear to others, what to her he hath sworn,
With fear of missing, shame of getting, torn.

Madness his sorrow, gout his cramps, may he
Make, by but thinking who hath made him such ;
And may he feel no touch
Of conscience, but of fame, and be
Anguish'd, not that 'twas sin, but that 'twas she ;
Or may he for her virtue reverence
One that hates him only for impotence,
And equal traitors be she and his sense.

May he dream treason, and believe that he
Meant to perform it, and confesses, and die,
And no record tell why ;
His sons, which none of his may be,
Inherit nothing but his infamy ;
Or may he so long parasites have fed,
That he would fain be theirs whom he hath bred,
And at the last be circumcised for bread.

The venom of all stepdames, gamesters' gall,
What tyrants and their subjects interwish,
What plants, mine, beasts, fowl, fish,
Can contribute, all ill, which all
Prophets or poets spake, and all which shall
Be annex'd in schedules unto this by me,
Fall on that man ; For if it be a she
Nature beforehand hath out-cursèd me.

John Donne

The Damp

When I am dead, and doctors know not why,
And my friends' curiosity
Will have me cut up to survey each part,—
When they shall find your picture in my heart,
You think a sudden damp of love
Will through all their senses move,
And work on them as me, and so prefer
Your murder to the name of massacre.

Poor victories! But if you dare be brave,
And pleasure in your conquest have,
First kill th' enormous giant, your Disdain,
And let th' enchantress Honour next be slain,
And like a Goth and Vandal rise,
Deface records and histories
Of your own arts and triumphs over men,
And, without such advantage, kill me then.

For I could muster up as well as you
My giants, and my witches too,
Which are vast Constancy and Secretness;
But these I neither look for nor profess.
Kill me as woman, let me die
As a mere man; do you but try
Your passive valour, and you shall find then,
Naked you have odds enough of any man.

John Donne

The Dissolution

She's dead; and all which die
To their first elements resolve;
And we were mutual elements to us,
And made of one another.
My body then doth hers involve,
And those things whereof I consist hereby
In me abundant grow, and burdenous,
And nourish not, but smother.
My fire of passion, sighs of air,
Water of tears, and earthly sad despair,
Which my materials be,
But near worn out by love's security,
She, to my loss, doth by her death repair,
And I might live long wretched so
But that my fire doth with my fuel grow.
Now as those Active Kings
Whose foreign conquest treasure brings,
Receive more, and spend more, and soonest break:
This (which I am amazed that I can speak)
This death hath with my store
My use increased.
And so my soul more earnestly released
Will outstrip hers; as bullets flown before
A latter bullet may o'ertake, the powder being more.

John Donne

The Dream

Dear love, for nothing less than thee
Would I have broke this happy dream;
It was a theme
For reason, much too strong for phantasy:
Therefore thou waked'st me wisely; yet
My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st it.
Thou art so truth that thoughts of thee suffice
To make dreams truths, and fables histories.
Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it best
Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest.

As lightning or a taper's light,
Thine eyes, and not thy noise, waked me;
Yet I thought thee
(For thou lov'st truth) an angel at first sight;
But when I saw thou saw'st my heart,
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an angels art,
When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when
Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,
I must confess it could not choose but be
Prophane to think thee anything but thee.

Comming and staying showed thee thee,
But rising makes me doubt, that now
Thou art not thou.
That Love is weak, where fear's as strong as he;
'Tis not all spirit pure and brave
If mixture it of Fear, Shame, Honour, have.
Perchance as torches, which must ready be,
Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with me,
Thou cam'st to kindle, go'st to come; Then I
Will dream that hope again, but else would die.

John Donne

The Ecstasy

Where, like a pillow on a bed
A pregnant bank swell'd up to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.
Our hands were firmly cemented
With a fast balm, which thence did spring;
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string;
So to'intergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one,
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.
As 'twixt two equal armies fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
Our souls (which to advance their state
Were gone out) hung 'twixt her and me.
And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.
If any, so by love refin'd
That he soul's language understood,
And by good love were grown all mind,
Within convenient distance stood,
He (though he knew not which soul spake,
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take
And part far purer than he came.
This ecstasy doth unperplex,
We said, and tell us what we love;
We see by this it was not sex,
We see we saw not what did move;
But as all several souls contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love these mix'd souls doth mix again
And makes both one, each this and that.
A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size,
(All which before was poor and scant)

Redoubles still, and multiplies.
When love with one another so
Interinanimates two souls,
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controls.
We then, who are this new soul, know
Of what we are compos'd and made,
For th' atomies of which we grow
Are souls. whom no change can invade.
But oh alas, so long, so far,
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They're ours, though they're not we; we are
The intelligences, they the spheres.
We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their senses' force to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay.
On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the air;
So soul into the soul may flow,
Though it to body first repair.
As our blood labors to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot which makes us man,
So must pure lovers' souls descend
T' affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.
To'our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.
And if some lover, such as we,
Have heard this dialogue of one,
Let him still mark us, he shall see
Small change, when we're to bodies gone.

John Donne

The Expiration

So, so, break off this last lamenting kiss,
Which sucks two souls, and vapors both away,
Turn thou ghost that way, and let me turn this,
And let our selves benight our happiest day,
We ask none leave to love; nor will we owe
Any, so cheap a death, as saying, Go;
Go; and if that word have not quite kil'd thee,
Ease me with death, by bidding me go too.
Oh, if it have, let my word work on me,
And a just office on a murderer do.
Except it be too late, to kill me so,
Being double dead, going, and bidding, go.

John Donne

The Flea

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deny'st me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be;
Thou knowest that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead.
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered, swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea, more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, we are met
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that self murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and sayest that thou
Find'st not thyself, nor me, the weaker now.
'Tis true, then learn how false fears be;
Just so much honor, when thou yieldst to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

John Donne

The Funerall

Who ever comes to shroud me, do not harme
Nor question much
That subtile wreath of haire, which crowns my arme;
The mystery, the signe you must not touch,
For'tis my outward Soule,
Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
Will leave this to controule,
And keep these limbes, her Provinces, from dissolution.
For if the sinewie thread my braine lets fall
Through every part,
Can tye those parts, and make mee one of all;
These haire which upward grew, and strength and art
Have from a better braine,
Can better do'it; Except she meant that I
By this should know my pain,
As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd to die.

What ere shee meant by'it, bury it with me,
For since I am
Loves martyr, it might breed idolatrie,
If into others hands these Reliques came;
As'twas humility
To afford to it all that a Soule can doe,
So,'tis some bravery,
That since you would save none of mee, I bury some of you.

John Donne

The Harbinger

to the Progresse.

Two soules moue here, and mine (a third) must moue
Paces of admiration, and of loue;
Thy soule (Deare Virgin) whose this tribute is,
Mou'd from this mortall sphere to liuely blisse,
And yet moues still, and still aspires to see
The worlds last day, thy glories full degree:
Like as those starres which thou ore-lookest farre,
Are in their place, and yet still moued are
No soule (whiles with the luggage of this clay
It clogged is) can follow thee halfe way;
Or see thy flight; which doth our thoughts outgoe
So fast, that now the lightning moues but slow:
But now thou art as high in heauen flowne
As heau'ns from vs; what soule besides thine owne
Can tell thy ioyes, or say he can relate
Thy glorious Iornals in that blessed state?
I enuie thee (Rich soule) I enuy thee,
Although I cannot yet thy glory see:
And thou (Great spirit) which her's follow'd hast
So fast, as none can follow thine so fast;
So farre as none can follow thine so farre,
(And if this flesh did not the passage barre
Had'st caught her) let me wonder at thy flight
Which long agone had'st lost the vulgar sight
And now mak'st proud the better eyes, that they
Can see thee les'ned in thine aery way;
So while thou mak'st her soule by progresse knowne
Thou mak'st a noble progresse of thine owne.
From this worlds carcasse hauing mounted hie
To that pure life of Immortalitie;
Since thine aspiring thoughts themselues so raise
That more may not beseeme a creatures praise,
Yet still thou vow'st her more; and euery yeare
Mak'st a new Progresse, while thou wandrest here;
Still vpward mount; and let thy makers praise
Honor thy Laura, and adorne thy laies.
And since thy Mus[es] head in heauen shrouds

Oh let her neuer stoope below the clouds:
And if those glorious sainted soules may know
Or what we doe, or what we sing below,
Those acts, those songs shall still content them best
Which praise those awfull powers that make them blest.

John Donne

The Indifferent

I can love both fair and brown;
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays;
Her who loves loneness best, and her who masks and plays;
Her whom the country form'd, and whom the town;
Her who believes, and her who tries;
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork, and never cries.
I can love her, and her, and you, and you;
I can love any, so she be not true.

Will no other vice content you?
Will it not serve your turn to do as did your mothers?
Or have you all old vices spent and now would find out others?
Or doth a fear that men are true torment you?
O we are not, be not you so;
Let me--and do you--twenty know;
Rob me, but bind me not, and let me go.
Must I, who came to travel thorough you,
Grow your fix'd subject, because you are true?

Venus heard me sigh this song;
And by love's sweetest part, variety, she swore,
She heard not this till now, and that it should be so no more.
She went, examin'd, and return'd ere long,
And said, 'Alas! some two or three
Poor heretics in love there be,
Which think to stablish dangerous constancy.
But I told them, 'Since you will be true,
You shall be true to them who'are false to you.'

John Donne

The Legacy

When I died last, and, Dear, I die
As often as from thee I go,
Though it be but an hour ago,
And Lovers' hours be full eternity,
I can remember yet, that I
Something did say, and something did bestow;
Though I be dead, which sent me, I should be
Mine own executor and legacy.

I heard me say, "Tell her anon,
That myself, that is you, not I,
Did kill me," and when I felt me die,
I bid me send my heart, when I was gone,
But alas could there find none,
When I had ripp'd me, and search'd where hearts should lie;
It kill'd me again, that I who still was true,
In life, in my last will should cozen you.

Yet I found something like a heart,
But colors it, and corners had,
It was not good, it was not bad,
It was intire to none, and few had part.
As good as could be made by art
It seem'd, and therefore for our losses sad,
I meant to send this heart in stead of mine,
But oh, no man could hold it, for 'twas thine.

John Donne

The Message

Send home my long stray'd eyes to me,
Which O too long have dwelt on thee,
Yet since there they have learn'd such ill,
Such forc'd fashions,
And false passions,
That they be
Made by thee
Fit for no good sight, keep them still.

Send home my worthless heart again,
Which no unworthy thought could stain,
Which if't be taught by thine
To make jestings
Of protestings,
And cross both
Word and oath,
Keep it, for then 'tis none of mine.

Yet send me back my heart and eyes,
That I may know, and see thy lies,
And may laugh and joy, when thou
Art in anguish
And dost languish
For some one
That will non,
Or prove as false as thou art now.

John Donne

The Paradox

No Lover saith, I love, nor any other
Can judge a perfect Lover;
Hee thinkes that else none can, nor will agree
That any loves but hee;
I cannot say I'lov'd. for who can say
Hee was kill'd yesterday?
Lover withh excesse of heat, more yong than old,
Death kills with too much cold;
Wee dye but once, and who lov'd last did die,
Hee that saith twice, doth lye:
For though hee seeme to move, and stirre a while,
It doth the sense beguile.
Such life is like the light which bideth yet
When the lights life is set,
Or like the heat, which fire in solid matter
Leave behinde, two houres after.
Once I lov's and dy'd; and am now become
Mine Epitaph and Tombe.
Here dead men speake their last, and so do I;
Love-slaine, loe, here I lye.

John Donne

The Primrose

Upon this Primrose hill,
Where, if Heav'n would distil
A shower of rain, each several drop might go
To his own primrose, and grow manna so;
And where their form and their infinity
Make a terrestrial Galaxy,
As the small stars do in the sky:
I walk to find a true Love; and I see
That 'tis not a mere woman that is she,
But must or more or less than woman be.

Yet know I not which flower
I wish; a six, or four;
For should my true-Love less than woman be
She were scarce any thing; and then, should she
Be more than woman she would get above
All thought of sex, and think to move
My heart to study her, and not to love;
Both these were monsters; since there must reside
Falsehood in woman, I could more abide
She were by art than Nature falsified.

Live primrose then, and thrive
With thy true number five;
And woman, whom this flower doth represent,
With this mysterious number be content;
Ten is the farthest number; if half ten
Belong unto each woman, then
Each woman may take half us men;
Or if this will not serve their turn, since all
Numbers are odd or even, and they fall
First into this, five, woman may take us all.

John Donne

The Prohibition

Take heed of loving me,
At least remember, I forbade it thee;
Not that I shall repair my unthrifty waste
Of breath and blood, upon thy sighs, and tears,
By being to thee then what to me thou wast;
But, so great joy, our life at once outwears,
Then, lest thy love, by my death, frustrate be,
If thou love me, take heed of loving me.

Take heed of hating me,
Or too much triumph in the victory.
Not that I shall be mine own officer,
And hate with hate again retaliate;
But thou wilt lose the style of conqueror,
If I, thy conquest, perish by thy hate.
Then, lest my being nothing lessen thee,
If thou hate me, take heed of hating me.

Yet, love and hate me too,
So, these extremes shall neither`s office do;
Love me, that I may die the gentler way;
Hate me, because thy love`s too great for me;
Or let these two, themselves, not me decay;
So shall I live thy stage, not triumph be;
Lest thou thy love and hate and me undo,
To let me live, Oh love and hate me too.

John Donne

The Relic

When my grave is broke up again
Some second guest to entertain,
(For graves have learn'd that woman head,
To be to more than one a bed)
And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
Will he not let'us alone,
And think that there a loving couple lies,
Who thought that this device might be some way
To make their souls, at the last busy day,
Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?

If this fall in a time, or land,
Where mis-devotion doth command,
Then he, that digs us up, will bring
Us to the bishop, and the king,
To make us relics; then
Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I
A something else thereby;
All women shall adore us, and some men;
And since at such time miracles are sought,
I would have that age by this paper taught
What miracles we harmless lovers wrought.

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,
Yet knew not what we lov'd, nor why;
Difference of sex no more we knew
Than our guardian angels do;
Coming and going, we
Perchance might kiss, but not between those meals;
Our hands ne'er touch'd the seals
Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free;
These miracles we did, but now alas,
All measure, and all language, I should pass,
Should I tell what a miracle she was.

John Donne

The Soule

Thee, eye of heaven, this great soule envies not;
By thy male force is all wee have begot;
In the first East thou now begins to shine;
Suck'st early balme, and island spices there;
And wilt anon, in thy loose-rein'd careere
At Tagus, Po, Sene, Thames, and Danon dine,
And see at night thy Westerne land of Myne :
Yet hast thou not more nations seene than shee,
That before thee one day beganne to bee,
And, thy fraill light being quenched, shall long, long outlive thee.

John Donne

The Sun Rising

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windows, and through curtains, call on
us?
 Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
 Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,
 Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
 Call country ants to harvest offices,
 Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of
time.

 Thy beams, so reverend and strong
 Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:
 If her eyes have not blinded thine,
 Look, and tomorrow late, tell me
 Whether both the 'Indias of spice and mine
 Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear: 'All here in one bed lay.'

 She's all states, and all princes I,
 Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,
All honour's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
 Thou, sun, art half as happy'as we,
 In that the world's contracted thus;
 Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
 To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere.

John Donne

The Token

Send me some token, that my hope may live,
Or that my easeless thoughts may sleep and rest;
Send me some honey to make sweet my hive,
That in my passions I may hope the best.
I beg no riband wrought with thine own hands,
To knit our loves in the fantastic strain
Of new-touched youth; nor ring to show the stands
Of our affection, that as that's round and plain,
So should our loves meet in simplicity;
No, nor the corals which thy wrist enfold,
Laced up together in congruity,
To show our thoughts should rest in the same hold;
No, nor thy picture, though most gracious,
And most desired, because best like the best;
Nor witty lines, which are most copious,
Within the writings which thou hast addressed.

Send me nor this, nor that, to increase my store,
But swear thou think'st 'I love thee,' and no more.

John Donne

The Triple Fool

I am two fools, I know—
For loving, and for saying so
In whining poetry;
But where's that wiseman that would not be I,
If she would not deny?
Then, as th' earths inward narrow crooked lanes
Do purge sea waters fretful salt away,
I thought, if I could draw my pains
Through rhymes vexation, I should them allay.
Grief brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,
For he tames it that fetters it in verse.

But when I have done so,
Some man, his art and voice to show,
Doth set and sing my pain,
And, by delighting many, frees again
Grief, which verse did restrain.
To Love and Grief tribute of verse belongs,
But not of such as pleases when 'tis read;
Both are increased by such songs,
For both their triumphs so are published;
And I, which was two fooles, do so grow three;
Who are a little wise, the best fools be.

John Donne

The Undertaking

I have done one braver thing
Than all the Worthies did,
And yet a braver thence doth spring,
Which is, to keep that hid.

It were but madness now t'impart
The skill of specular stone,
When he which can have learn'd the art
To cut it, can find none.

So, if I now should utter this,
Others (because no more
Such stuff to work upon, there is,)
Would love but as before.

But he who loveliness within
Hath found, all outward loathes,
For he who colour loves, and skin,
Loves but their oldest clothes.

If, as I have, you also do
Virtue attir'd in woman see,
And dare love that, and say so too,
And forget the He and She;

And if this love, though placed so,
From profane men you hide,
Which will no faith on this bestow,
Or, if they do, deride:

Then you have done a braver thing
Than all the Worthies did;
And a braver thence will spring,
Which is, to keep that hid.

John Donne

The Will

Before I sigh my last gasp, let me breathe,
Great Love, some legacies ; I here bequeath
Mine eyes to Argus, if mine eyes can see ;
If they be blind, then, Love, I give them thee ;
My tongue to Fame ; to ambassadors mine ears ;
To women, or the sea, my tears ;
Thou, Love, hast taught me heretofore
By making me serve her who had twenty more,
That I should give to none, but such as had too much before.

My constancy I to the planets give ;
My truth to them who at the court do live ;
My ingenuity and openness,
To Jesuits ; to buffoons my pensiveness ;
My silence to any, who abroad hath been ;
My money to a Capuchin :
Thou, Love, taught'st me, by appointing me
To love there, where no love received can be,
Only to give to such as have an incapacity.

My faith I give to Roman Catholics ;
All my good works unto the Schismatics
Of Amsterdam ; my best civility
And courtship to an University ;
My modesty I give to soldiers bare ;
My patience let gamesters share :
Thou, Love, taught'st me, by making me
Love her that holds my love disparity,
Only to give to those that count my gifts indignity.

I give my reputation to those
Which were my friends ; mine industry to foes ;
To schoolmen I bequeath my doubtfulness ;
My sickness to physicians, or excess ;
To nature all that I in rhyme have writ ;
And to my company my wit :
Thou, Love, by making me adore
Her, who begot this love in me before,
Taught'st me to make, as though I gave, when I do but restore.

To him for whom the passing-bell next tolls,
I give my physic books ; my written rolls
Of moral counsels I to Bedlam give ;
My brazen medals unto them which live
In want of bread ; to them which pass among
All foreigners, mine English tongue :
Though, Love, by making me love one
Who thinks her friendship a fit portion
For younger lovers, dost my gifts thus disproportion.

Therefore I'll give no more, but I'll undo
The world by dying, because love dies too.
Then all your beauties will be no more worth
Than gold in mines, where none doth draw it forth ;
And all your graces no more use shall have,
Than a sun-dial in a grave :
Thou, Love, taught'st me by making me
Love her who doth neglect both me and thee,
To invent, and practise this one way, to annihilate all three.

John Donne

To George Herbert,

SENT HIM WITH ONE OF MY SEALS OF THE
ANCHOR AND CHRIST.

QUI prius assuetus serpentum fasce tabellas
Signare, hæc nostræ symbola parva domus,
Adscitus domui Domini, patrioque relicto
Stemmata, nanciscor stemmata jure nova.
Hinc mihi Crux primo quæ fronti impressa lavacro,
Finibus extensis, anchora facta patet.
Anchoræ in effigiem Crux tandem desinit ipsam,
Anchora fit tandem Crux tolerata diu.
Hoc tamen ut fiat, Christo vegetatur ab ipso
Crux, et ab affixo est Anchora facta Jesu.
Nec natalitiis penitus serpentibus orbor,
Non ita dat Deus, ut auferat ante data.
Qua sapiens, dos est, qua terram lambit et ambit,
Pestis, at in nostra sit medicina Cruce
Serpens fixa Cruci si sit natura, Crucique
A fixo nobis gratia tota fluat.
Omnia cum Crux sint, Crux Anchora fixa, sigillum
Non tam dicendum hoc, quam catechismus erit.
Mitto, nec exigua, exigua sub imagine, dona,
Pignora amicitiae, et munera vota preces.
Plura tibi accumulet sanctus cognominis, Ille
Regia qui flavo dona sigillat equo.

John Donne

To His Mistress Going To Bed

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defy,
Until I labour, I in labour lie.

The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,
Is tired with standing though they never fight.
Off with that girdle, like heaven's zone glistening,
But a far fairer world encompassing.

Unpin that spangled breastplate which you wear,
That th' eyes of busy fools may be stopped there.

Unlace yourself, for that harmonious chime
Tells me from you, that now 'tis your bed time.

Off with that happy busk, which I envy,
That still can be, and still can stand so nigh.
Your gown going off, such beauteous state reveals,
As when from flowery meads th' hill's shadow steals.

Off with that wiry coronet and show
The hairy diadem which on you doth grow;
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
In this love's hallowed temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes heaven's angels used to be
Received by men; thou angel bring'st with thee
A heaven like Mahomet's paradise; and though
Ill spirits walk in white, we easily know
By this these angels from an evil sprite,
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.

License my roving hands, and let them go
Before, behind, between, above, below.

O my America, my new found land,
My kingdom, safeliest when with one man manned,
My mine of precious stones, my empery,
How blessed am I in this discovering thee!
To enter in these bonds, is to be free;
Then where my hand is set, my seal shall be.

Full nakedness, all joys are due to thee
As souls unbodied, bodies unclothed must be,
To taste whole joys. Gems which you women use
Are like Atlanta's balls, cast in men's views,
That when a fool's eye lighteth on a gem,
His earthly soul may covet theirs, not them.
Like pictures, or like books' gay coverings made

For laymen, are all women thus arrayed;
Themselves are mystic books, which only we
Whom their imputed grace will dignify
Must see revealed. Then since I may know,
As liberally, as to a midwife, show
Thyself: cast all, yea, this white linen hence,
Here is no penance, much less innocence.
To teach thee, I am naked first, why then
What needst thou have more covering than a man.

John Donne

To Mr. I. P.

BLEST are your north parts, for all this long time
My sun is with you ; cold and dark's our clime ;
Heaven's sun, which stay'd so long from us this year,
Stay'd in your north, I think, for she was there ;
And hither by kind nature drawn from thence,
Here rages, chafes, and threatens pestilence.
Yet I, as long as she from hence doth stay,
Think this no south, no summer, nor no day.
With thee my kind and unkind heart is run ;
There sacrifice it to that beauteous sun.
So may thy pastures with their flowery feasts,
As suddenly as lard, fat thy lean beasts ;
So may thy woods oft poll'd, yet ever wear
A green, and—when thee list—a golden hair ;
So may all thy sheep bring forth twins ; and so
In chase and race may thy horse all out-go ;
So may thy love and courage ne'er be cold ;
Thy son ne'er ward ; thy loved wife ne'er seem old.
But mayst thou wish great things, and them attain,
As thou tell'st her, and none but her, my pain.

John Donne

To Mr. Rowland Woodward

LIKE one who in her third widowhood doth profess
Herself a nun, tied to retiredness,
So affects my Muse, now, a chaste fallowness.

Since she to few, yet to too many hath shown,
How love-song weeds and satiric thorns are grown,
Where seeds of better arts were early sown ;

Though to use and love poetry, to me,
Betroth'd to no one art, be no adultery ;
Omissions of good, ill, as ill deeds be.

For though to us it seems but light and thin,
Yet in those faithful scales, where God throws in
Men's works, vanity weighs as much as sin.

If our souls have stain'd their first white, yet we
May clothe them with faith, and dear honesty,
Which God imputes as native purity.

There is no virtue but religion.
Wise, valiant, sober, just, are names which none
Want, which want not vice-covering discretion.

Seek we then ourselves in ourselves ; for as
Men force the sun with much more force to pass,
By gathering his beams with a crystal glass,

So we—if we into ourselves will turn,
Blowing our spark of virtue—may out-burn
The straw which doth about our hearts sojourn.

You know physicians, when they would infuse
Into any oil the souls of simples, use
Places, where they may lie still warm, to choose.

So works retiredness in us. To roam
Giddily and be everywhere, but at home,
Such freedom doth a banishment become.

We are but farmers of ourselves, yet may,
If we can stock ourselves, and thrive, uplay
Much, much dear treasure for the great rent day.

Manure thyself then, to thyself be improved ;
And with vain outward things be no more moved,
But to know that I love thee and would be loved.

John Donne

To Mr. Samuel Brooke

O THOU which to search out the secret parts
Of the India, or rather Paradise
Of knowledge, hast with courage and advice
Lately launch'd into the vast sea of arts ;
Disdain not in thy constant travelling
To do as other voyagers, and make
Some turns into less creeks, and wisely take
Fresh water at the Heliconian spring.
I sing not, siren-like, to tempt, for I
Am harsh ; nor as those schismatics with you,
Which draw all wits of good hope to their crew ;
But seeing in you bright sparks of poetry,
I, though I brought no fuel, had desire
With these articulate blasts to blow the fire.

John Donne

To Mr. Tilman After He Had Taken Orders

THOU, whose diviner soul hath caused thee now
To put thy hand unto the holy plough,
Making lay-scornings of the ministry
Not an impediment, but victory ;
What bring'st thou home with thee ? how is thy mind
Affected since the vintage ? Dost thou find
New thoughts and stirrings in thee ? and, as steel
Touch'd with a loadstone, dost new motions feel ?
Or, as a ship after much pain and care
For iron and cloth brings home rich Indian ware,
Hast thou thus traffick'd, but with far more gain
Of noble goods, and with less time and pain ?
Thou art the same materials, as before,
Only the stamp is changèd, but no more.
And as new crowned kings alter the face,
But not the money's substance, so hath grace
Changed only God's old image by creation,
To Christ's new stamp, at this thy coronation ;
Or, as we paint angels with wings, because
They bear God's message and proclaim His laws,
Since thou must do the like and so must move,
Art thou new feather'd with celestial love ?
Dear, tell me where thy purchase lies, and show
What thy advantage is above, below.
But if thy gainings do surmount expression,
Why doth the foolish world scorn that profession,
Whose joys pass speech ? Why do they think unfit
That gentry should join families with it ?
As if their day were only to be spent
In dressing, mistressing and compliment.
Alas ! poor joys, but poorer men, whose trust
Seems richly placèd in sublimèd dust,
—For such are clothes and beauty, which though gay,
Are, at the best, but of sublimèd clay—
Let then the world thy calling disrespect,
But go thou on, and pity their neglect.
What function is so noble, as to be
Ambassador to God, and destiny ?
To open life ? to give kingdoms to more

Than kings give dignities? to keep heaven's door ?
Mary's prerogative was to bear Christ, so
'Tis preachers' to convey Him, for they do,
As angels out of clouds, from pulpits speak ;
And bless the poor beneath, the lame, the weak.
If then th' astronomers, whereas they spy
A new-found star, their optics magnify,
How brave are those, who with their engine can
Bring man to heaven, and heaven again to man ?
These are thy titles and pre-eminences,
In whom must meet God's graces, men's offences ;
And so the heavens which beget all things here,
And the earth, our mother, which these things doth bear ;
Both these in thee, are in thy calling knit
And make thee now a blest hermaphrodite.

John Donne

To Mr.I.L.

OF that short roll of friends writ in my heart,
Which with thy name begins, since their depart,
Whether in th' English provinces they be,
Or drink of Po, Sequane, or Danuby,
There's none that sometime greets us not, and yet
Your Trent is Lethe ; that past, us you forget.
You do not duties of societies,
If from th' embrace of a loved wife you rise,
View your fat beasts, stretch'd barns, and labour'd fields,
Eat, play, ride, take all joys which all day yields,
And then again to your embracements go.
Some hours on us your friends, and some bestow
Upon your Muse, else both we shall repent ;
I that my love, she that her gifts on you are spent.

John Donne

To Mr.T.W.

PREGNANT again with th' old twins, Hope and Fear,
Oft have I asked for thee, both how and where
Thou wert ; and what my hopes of letters were ;

As in our streets sly beggars narrowly
Watch motions of the giver's hand or eye,
And evermore conceive some hope thereby.

And now thy alms is given, thy letter's read,
The body risen again, the which was dead,
And thy poor starveling bountifully fed.

After this banquet my soul doth say grace,
And praise thee for 't, and zealously embrace
Thy love, though I think thy love in this case
To be as gluttons, which say 'midst their meat,
They love that best of which they most do eat.

John Donne

To Sir Henry Goodyere

WHO makes the last a pattern for next year,
Turns no new leaf, but still the same things reads ;
Seen things he sees again, heard things doth hear,
And makes his life but like a pair of beads.

A palace, when 'tis that which it should be,
Leaves growing, and stands such, or else decays ;
But he which dwells there is not so ; for he
Strives to surge upward, and his fortune raise.

So had your body her morning, hath her noon,
And shall not better ; her next change is night ;
But her fair, larger guest, to whom sun and moon
Are sparks, and short-lived, claims another right.

The noble soul by age grows lustier ;
Her appetite and her digestion mend.
We must not starve, nor hope to pamper her
With women's milk, and pap, unto the end.

Provide you manlier diet. You have seen
All libraries, which are schools, camps, and courts ;
But ask your garners if you have not been
In harvest too indulgent to your sports.

Would you redeem it ? then yourself transplant
Awhile from hence. Perchance outlandish ground
Bears no more wit than ours ; but yet more scant
Are those diversions there, which here abound.

To be a stranger hath that benefit,
We can beginnings, but not habits choke.
Go—whither ? hence. You get, if you forget ;
New faults, till they prescribe to us, are smoke.

Our soul, whose country's heaven, and God her Father,
Into this world, corruption's sink, is sent ;
Yet so much in her travel she doth gather,
That she returns home wiser than she went.

It pays you well, if it teach you to spare,
And make you ashamed to make your hawks' praise yours,
Which when herself she lessens in the air,
You then first say, that high enough she towers.

However, keep the lively taste you hold
Of God ; love Him as now, but fear Him more ;
And in your afternoons think what you told
And promised Him, at morning prayer before.

Let falsehood like a discord anger you,
Else not be froward. But why do I touch
Things of which none is in your practice new ?
And fables, or fruit-trenchers teach as much.

But thus I make you keep your promise, sir,
Riding I had you, though you still stay'd there ;
And in these thoughts, although you never stir,
You came with me to Mitcham, and are here.

John Donne

To Sir Henry Wotton

SIR, more than kisses, letters mingle souls,
For thus, friends absent speak. This ease controls
The tediousness of my life ; but for these
I could ideate nothing which could please ;
But I should wither in one day, and pass
To a bottle of hay, that am a lock of grass.
Life is a voyage, and in our lives' ways
Countries, courts, towns are rocks, or remoras ;
They break or stop all ships, yet our state's such,
That though than pitch they stain worse, we must touch.
If in the furnace of the raging line,
Or under th' adverse icy pole thou pine,
Thou know'st two temperate regions, girded in,
Dwell there ; but O, what refuge canst thou win
Parch'd in the court, and in the country frozen ?
Shall cities built of both extremes be chosen ?
Can dung or garlic be perfume ? Or can
A scorpion or torpedo cure a man ?
Cities are worst of all three ; of all three ?
O knotty riddle ! ; each is worst equally.
Cities are sepulchres ; they who dwell there
Are carcasses, as if no such there were.
And courts are theatres, where some men play
Princes, some slaves, all to one end, of one clay.
The country is a desert, where the good,
Gain'd, inhabits not, born, is not understood.
There men become beasts, and prone to more evils ;
In cities blocks, and in a lewd court devils.
As in the first chaos, confusedly,
Each element's qualities were in th' other three,
So pride, lust, covetise, being several
To these three places, yet all are in all,
And mingled thus, their issue is incestuous.
Falsehood is denizen'd ; virtue is barbarous.
Let no man say there, " Virtue's flinty wall
Shall lock vice in me, I'll do none, but know all."
Men are sponges, which, to pour out, receive ;
Who know false play, rather than lose, deceive.
For in best understandings sin began,

Angels sinn'd first, then devils, and then man.
Only perchance beasts sin not ; wretched we
Are beasts in all but white integrity.
I think if men, which in these place live,
Durst look in themselves, and themselves retrieve,
They would like strangers greet themselves, seeing then
Utopian youth grown old Italian.
Be then thine own home, and in thyself dwell ;
Inn anywhere ; continuance maketh hell.
And seeing the snail, which everywhere doth roam,
Carrying his own house still, still is at home ;
Follow—for he is easy paced—this snail,
Be thine own palace, or the world's thy gaol.
And in the world's sea do not like cork sleep
Upon the water's face ; nor in the deep
Sink like a lead without a line ; but as
Fishes glide, leaving no print where they pass,
Nor making sound ; so closely thy course go,
Let men dispute, whether thou breathe or no.
Only in this be no Galenist—to make
Courts' hot ambitions wholesome, do not take
A dram of country's dullness ; do not add
Correctives, but, as chemics, purge the bad.
But, sir, I advise not you, I rather do
Say o'er those lessons, which I learn'd of you ;
Whom, free from Germany's schisms, and lightness
Of France, and fair Italy's faithlessness,
Having from these suck'd all they had of worth,
And brought home that faith which you carried forth,
I thoroughly love ; but if myself I've won
To know my rules, I have, and you have DONNE.

John Donne

To Sir Henry Wotton At His Going Ambassador To Venice

AFTER those reverend papers, whose soul is
Our good and great king's loved hand and fear'd name ;
By which to you he derives much of his,
And, how he may, makes you almost the same,

A taper of his torch, a copy writ
From his original, and a fair beam
Of the same warm and dazzling sun, though it
Must in another sphere his virtue stream ;

After those learned papers which your hand
Hath stored with notes of use and pleasures too,
From which rich treasury you may command
Fit matter whether you will write or do ;

After those loving papers where friends send,
With glad grief to your sea-ward steps, farewell,
Which thicken on you now, as prayers ascend
To heaven in troops, at a good man's passing-bell ;

Admit this honest paper, and allow
It such an audience as yourself would ask ;
What you must say at Venice, this means now,
And hath for nature, what you have for task.

To swear much love, not to be changed before
Honour, alone will to your fortune fit ;
Nor shall I then honour your fortune, more
Than I have done your honour, wanting it.

But 'tis an easier load, though both oppress,
To want, than govern greatness, for we are
In that, our own and only business,
In this, we must for others' vices care.

'Tis therefore well your spirits now are placed
In their last furnace, in activity ;

Which fits them—schools and courts and wars o'erpast—
To touch and test in any best degree.

For me—if there be such a thing as I—
Fortune—if there be such a thing as she—
Spies that I bear so well her tyranny,
That she thinks nothing else so fit for me.

But, though she part us, to hear my oft prayers
For your increase, God is as near me here ;
And to send you what I shall beg, His stairs
In length and ease are alike everywhere.

John Donne

To Sir Henry Wotton II

HERE'S no more news than virtue ; I may as well
Tell you Calais, or Saint Michael's tales, as tell
That vice doth here habitually dwell.

Yet as, to get stomachs, we walk up and down,
And toil to sweeten rest ; so, may God frown,
If, but to loathe both, I haunt court or town.

For, here, no one's from th' extremity
Of vice by any other reason free,
But that the next to him still 's worse than he.

In this world's warfare, they whom rugged Fate
(God's commissary) doth so thoroughly hate,
As in the court's squadron to marshal their state ;

if they stand arm'd with silly honesty,
With wishes, prayers, and neat integrity,
Like Indians 'gainst Spanish hosts they be.

Suspicious boldness to this place belongs,
And to have as many ears as all have tongues ;
Tender to know, tough to acknowledge wrongs.

Believe me, sir, in my youth's giddiest days,
When to be like the court was a play's praise,
Plays were not so like courts, as courts like plays.

Then let us at these mimic antics jest,
Whose deepest projects and egregious gests
Are but dull morals of a game at chests.

But now 'tis incongruity to smile,
Therefore I end ; and bid farewell awhile ;
“ At court,”—though “ from court” were the better style.

John Donne

To The Countess Of Bedford I

MADAM—

Reason is our soul's left hand, faith her right ;
By these we reach divinity, that's you ;
Their loves, who have the blessing of your light,
Grew from their reason ; mine from fair faith grew.
But as, although a squint left-handedness
Be ungracious, yet we cannot want that hand ;
So would I—not to increase, but to express
My faith—as I believe, so understand.

Therefore I study you first in your saints,
Those friends whom your election glorifies ;
Then in your deeds, accesses and restraints,
And what you read, and what yourself devise.

But soon the reasons why you're loved by all,
Grow infinite, and so pass reason's reach ;
Then back again to implicit faith I fall,
And rest on that the Catholic voice doth teach—

That you are good ; and not one heretic
Denies it ; if he did, yet you are so ;
For rocks, which high to sense deep-rooted stick,
Waves wash, not undermine, nor overthrow.

In everything there naturally grows
A balsamum to keep it fresh and new,
If 'twere not inured by extrinsic blows ;
Your birth and beauty are this balm in you.

But you, of learning, and religion,
And virtue, and such ingredients, have made
A mithridate, whose operation
Keeps off, or cures, what can be done or said.

Yet this is not your physic, but your food,
A diet fit for you ; for you are here
The first good angel, since the world's frame stood,
That ever did in woman's shape appear.

Since you are then God's masterpiece, and so
His factor for our loves, do as you do ;
Make your return home gracious, and bestow
This life on that ; so make one life of two.
For, so God help me, I would not miss you there,
For all the good which you can do me here.

John Donne

To The Countess Of Bedford Ii

TO have written then, when you writ, seem'd to me
Worst of spiritual vices, simony ;
And not to have written then seems little less
Than worst of civil vices, thanklessness.
In this, my debt I seem'd loth to confess ;
In that, I seem'd to shun beholdingness.
But 'tis not so ; nothings, as I am, may
Pay all they have, and yet have all to pay.
Such borrow in their payments, and owe more
By having leave to write so, than before.
Yet, since rich mines in barren grounds are shown,
May not I yield (not gold but) coal or stone ?
Temples were not demolish'd, though profane ;
Here Peter Jove's ; there Paul hath Dian's fane.
So whether my hymns you admit or choose,
In me you've hallowed a pagan muse,
And denizen'd a stranger, who, mistaught
By blamers of the times they marr'd, hath sought
Virtues in corners, which now bravely do
Shine in the world's best part, or all it—you.
I have been told, that virtue in courtiers' hearts
Suffers an ostracism, and departs.
Profit, ease, fitness, plenty, bid it go ;
But whither, only knowing you, I know.
Your, or you virtue, two vast uses serves ;
It ransoms one sex, and one court preserves.
There's nothing but your worth, which being true
Is known to any other, not to you.
And you can never know it ; to admit
No knowledge of your worth, is some of it.
But since to you your praises discords be,
Stoop others' ills to meditate with me.
O ! to confess we know not what we should,
Is half excuse, we know not what we would.
Lightness depresseth us, emptiness fills ;
We sweat and faint, yet still go down the hills.
As new philosophy arrests the sun,
And bids the passive earth about it run,
So we have dull'd our mind ; it hath no ends ;

Only the body's busy, and pretends.
 As dead low earth eclipses and controls
 The quick high moon, so doth the body souls.
 In none but us are such mix'd engines found,
 As hands of double office ; for the ground
 We till with them, and them to heaven we raise.
 Who prayerless labours, or, without this, prays,
 Doth but one half, that's none ; He which said,
 " Plough
 And look not back," to look up doth allow.
 Good seed degenerates, and oft obeys
 The soil's disease, and into cockle strays.
 Let the mind's thoughts be but transplanted so
 Into the body, and bastardly they grow.
 What hate could hurt our bodies like our love ?
 We, but no foreign tyrants, could remove
 These not engraved, but inborn dignities,
 Caskets of souls, temples and palaces ;
 For bodies shall from death redeemed be,
 Souls but preserved, born naturally free.
 As men to our prisons now, souls to us are sent,
 Which learn vice there, and come in innocent.
 First seeds of every creature are in us ;
 Whate'er the world hath bad, or precious,
 Man's body can produce ; hence hath it been
 That stones, worms, frogs, and snakes in man are seen.
 But whoe'er saw, though nature can work so,
 That pearl, or gold, or corn in man did grow ?
 We've added to the world Virginia, and sent
 Two new stars lately to the firmament.
 Why grudge we us (not heaven) the dignity
 To increase with ours those fair souls' company ?
 But I must end this letter ; though it do
 Stand on two truths, neither is true to you.
 Virtue has some perverseness, for she will
 Neither believe her good, nor others' ill.
 Even in you, virtue's best paradise,
 Virtue hath some, but wise degrees of vice.
 Too many virtues, or too much of one,
 Begets in you unjust suspicion ;
 And ignorance of vice makes virtue less,
 Quenching compassion of our wretchedness.

But these are riddles ; some aspersion
Of vice becomes well some complexion.
Statesmen purge vice with vice, and may corrode
The bad with bad, a spider with a toad.
For so, ill thralls not them, but they tame ill,
And make her do much good against her will.
But in your commonwealth or world in you,
Vice hath no office or good work to do.
Take then no vicious purge, but be content
With cordial virtue, your known nourishment.

John Donne

To The Earl Of Doncaster

SEE, sir, how, as the sun's hot masculine flame
Begets strange creatures on Nile's dirty slime,
In me your fatherly yet lusty rhyme
—For these songs are their fruits—have wrought the same.
But though th' engend'ring force from which they came
Be strong enough, and Nature doth admit
Seven to be born at once ; I send as yet
But six ; they say the seventh hath still some maim.
I choose your judgment, which the same degree
Doth with her sister, your invention, hold,
As fire these drossy rhymes to purify,
Or as elixir, to change them to gold.
You are that alchemist, which always had
Wit, whose one spark could make good things of bad.

John Donne

To The Lady Magdalen Herbert, Of St. Mary Magdalen

HER of your name, whose fair inheritance
Bethina was, and jointure Magdalo,
An active faith so highly did advance,
That she once knew, more than the Church did know,
The Resurrection ; so much good there is
Deliver'd of her, that some Fathers be
Loth to believe one woman could do this ;
But think these Magdalens were two or three.
Increase their number, Lady, and their fame ;
To their devotion add your innocence ;
Take so much of th' example as of the name,
The latter half ; and in some recompense,
That they did harbour Christ Himself, a guest,
Harbour these hymns, to His dear Name address'd.

John Donne

To The Praise Of The Dead And The Anatomy

WELL dy'de the World, that we might liue to see
This World of wit, in his Anatomee:
No euill wants his good: so wilder heyres;
Bedew their Fathers Toombs, with forced teares,
Whose state requites their losse: whiles thus we gaine
Well may we walke in black[e], but not complaine.
Yet how can I consent the world is dead
While this Muse liues? which in his spirits stead
Seemes to informe a world: and bids it bee,
In spight of losse, or fraile mortalitee?
And thou the subject of this wel-borne thought,
Thrise noble Maid; couldst not haue found nor sought
A fitter time to yeeld to thy sad Fate,
Then whiles this spirit liues; that can relate
Thy worth so well to our last Nephews Eyne,
That they shall wonder both at his, and thine:
Admired match! where striues in mutuall grace
The cunning Pencill, and the comely face:
A taske, which thy faire goodnesse made too much
For the bold pride of vulgar pens to tuch;
Enough is vs to praise them that praise thee,
And say that but enough those prayses bee,
Which had'st thou liu'd, had hid their fearefull head
From th'angry checkings of thy modestred:
Death bars reward & shame: when enuy's gone,
And gaine; 'tis safe to giue the dead their owne.
As then the wise Egyptians wont to lay
More on their Tombes, then houses: these of clay,
But those of brasse, or marbele were; so wee
Giue more vnto thy Ghost, then vnto thee.
Yet what wee giue to thee, thou gauest to vs,
And maiest but thanke thy selfe, for being thus:
Yet what thou gau'st, and wert, O happy maid,
Thy grace profest all due, were 'tis repayd.
So these high songs that to thee suited bine,
Serue but to sound thy makers praise, in thine,
Which thy deare soule as sweetly sings to him
Amid the Quire of Saints and Seraphim,
As any Angels tongue can sing of thee;

The subjects differ, then the skill agree:
For as by infant-yeares men iudge of age,
Thy early loue, thy vertues, did presage
What hie part thou bear'st in those best songs
Where to no burden, nor no end belongs.
Sing on thou Virgin soule, whose losseful gaine
Thy loue-sicke Parents haue bewail'd in vaine;
Neuer may thy Name be in our songs forgot.
Till we shall sing thy ditty, and thy note.

John Donne

Translated Out Of Gazaeus,

GOD grant thee thine own wish, and grant thee mine,
Thou who dost, best friend, in best things outshine ;
May thy soul, ever cheerful, ne'er know cares,
Nor thy life, ever lively, know grey hairs,
Nor thy hand, ever open, know base holds,
Nor thy purse, ever plump, know pleats, or folds,
Nor thy tongue, ever true, know a false thing,
Nor thy words, ever mild, know quarrelling,
Nor thy works, ever equal, know disguise,
Nor thy fame, ever pure, know contumelies,
Nor thy prayers know low objects, still divine ;
God grant thee thine own wish, and grant thee mine.

John Donne

Twickenham Garden

BLASTED with sighs, and surrounded with tears,
Hither I come to seek the spring,
And at mine eyes, and at mine ears,
Receive such balms as else cure every thing.
But O ! self-traitor, I do bring
The spider Love, which transubstantiates all,
And can convert manna to gall ;
And that this place may thoroughly be thought
True paradise, I have the serpent brought.

'Twere wholesomer for me that winter did
Benight the glory of this place,
And that a grave frost did forbid
These trees to laugh and mock me to my face ;
But that I may not this disgrace
Endure, nor yet leave loving, Love, let me
Some senseless piece of this place be ;
Make me a mandrake, so I may grow here,
Or a stone fountain weeping out my year.

Hither with crystal phials, lovers, come,
And take my tears, which are love's wine,
And try your mistress' tears at home,
For all are false, that taste not just like mine.
Alas ! hearts do not in eyes shine,
Nor can you more judge women's thoughts by tears,
Than by her shadow what she wears.
O perverse sex, where none is true but she,
Who's therefore true, because her truth kills me.

John Donne

Upon The Translation Of The Psalms By Sir Philip Sidney And The Countess Of Pembroke, His Sister

ETERNAL God—for whom who ever dare
Seek new expressions, do the circle square,
And thrust into straight corners of poor wit
Thee, who art cornerless and infinite—
I would but bless Thy name, not name Thee now
—And Thy gifts are as infinite as Thou—
Fix we our praises therefore on this one,
That, as thy blessed Spirit fell upon
These Psalms' first author in a cloven tongue
—For 'twas a double power by which he sung
The highest matter in the noblest form—
So thou hast cleft that Spirit, to perform
That work again, and shed it here, upon
Two, by their bloods, and by Thy Spirit one ;
A brother and a sister, made by Thee
The organ, where Thou art the harmony.
Two that make one John Baptist's holy voice,
And who that Psalm, 'Now let the Isles rejoice,'
Have both translated, and applied it too,
Both told us what, and taught us how to do.
They show us islanders our Joy, our King ;
They tell us why, and teach us how to sing.
Make all this all three choirs, heaven, earth, and spheres ;
The first, Heaven, hath a song, but no man hears ;
The spheres have music, but they have no tongue,
Their harmony is rather danced than sung ;
But our third choir, to which the first gives ear
—For Angels learn by what the Church does here—
This choir hath all. The organist is he
Who hath tuned God and man, the organ we ;
The songs are these, which heaven's high holy Muse
Whisper'd to David, David to the Jews ;
And David's successors in holy zeal,
In forms of joy and art do re-reveal
To us so sweetly and sincerely too,
That I must not rejoice as I would do,
When I behold that these Psalms are become

So well attired abroad, so ill at home,
So well in chambers, in Thy Church so ill,
As I can scarce call that reform'd until
This be reform'd ; would a whole state present
A lesser gift than some one man hath sent ?
And shall our Church unto our Spouse and King
More hoarse, more harsh than any other, sing ?
For that we pray, we praise Thy name for this,
Which, by this Moses and this Miriam, is
Already done ; and as those Psalms we call,
—Though some have other authors—David's all,
So though some have, some may some Psalms translate,
We Thy Sidneian psalms shall celebrate,
And, till we come th' extemporal song to sing
—Learn'd the first hour that we see the King,
Who hath translated those translators—may
These their sweet learned labours all the way
Be as our tuning, that when hence we part,
We may fall in with them, and sing our part !

John Donne

Valediction To His Book

I'LL tell thee now (dear love) what thou shalt do
To anger destiny, as she doth us ;
How I shall stay, though she eloin me thus,
And how posterity shall know it too ;
How thine may out-endure
Sibyl's glory, and obscure
Her who from Pindar could allure,
And her, through whose help Lucan is not lame,
And her, whose book (they say) Homer did find, and name.

Study our manuscripts, those myriads
Of letters, which have past 'twixt thee and me ;
Thence write our annals, and in them will be
To all whom love's subliming fire invades,
Rule and example found ;
There the faith of any ground
No schismatic will dare to wound,
That sees, how Love this grace to us affords,
To make, to keep, to use, to be these his records.

This book, as long-lived as the elements,
Or as the world's form, this all-gravèd tome
In cypher writ, or new made idiom ;
We for Love's clergy only are instruments ;
When this book is made thus,
Should again the ravenous
Vandals and Goths invade us,
Learning were safe ; in this our universe,
Schools might learn sciences, spheres music, angels verse.

Here Love's divines—since all divinity
Is love or wonder—may find all they seek,
Whether abstract spiritual love they like,
Their souls exhaled with what they do not see ;
Or, loth so to amuse
Faith's infirmity, they choose
Something which they may see and use ;
For, though mind be the heaven, where love doth sit,
Beauty a convenient type may be to figure it.

Here more than in their books may lawyers find,
Both by what titles mistresses are ours,
And how prerogative these states devours,
Transferr'd from Love himself, to womankind ;
Who, though from heart and eyes,
They exact great subsidies,
Forsake him who on them relies ;
And for the cause, honour, or conscience give ;
Chimeras vain as they or their prerogative.

Here statesmen—or of them, they which can read—
May of their occupation find the grounds ;
Love, and their art, alike it deadly wounds,
If to consider what 'tis, one proceed.
In both they do excel
Who the present govern well,
Whose weakness none doth, or dares tell ;
In this thy book, such will there something see,
As in the Bible some can find out alchemy.

Thus vent thy thoughts ; abroad I'll study thee,
As he removes far off, that great heights takes ;
How great love is, presence best trial makes,
But absence tries how long this love will be ;
To take a latitude
Sun, or stars, are fitliest view'd
At their brightest, but to conclude
Of longitudes, what other way have we,
But to mark when and where the dark eclipses be?

John Donne

Witchcraft By A Picture

I fix mine eye on thine, and there
Pity my picture burning in thine eye;
My picture drowned in a transparent tear,
When I look lower I espy.
Hadst thou the wicked skill
By pictures made and mard, to kill,
How many ways mightst thou perform thy will?

But now I have drunk thy sweet salt tears,
And though thou pour more I'll depart;
My picture vanished, vanish fears
That I can be endamaged by that art;
Though thou retain of me
One picture more, yet that will be,
Being in thine own heart, from all malice free.

John Donne

