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# A VALEDICTION FORBIDDING MOURNING.

by John Donne

AS virtuous men pass mildly away,  
And whisper to their souls to go,  
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,  
"Now his breath goes," and some say, "No."

So let us melt, and make no noise, 5

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 ; 10  
But trepidation of the spheres,  
Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
—Whose soul is sense—cannot admit  
Of absence, 'cause it doth remove 15

The thing which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,  
That ourselves know not what it is,  
Inter-assurèd of the mind,  
Care less, eyes, lips and hands to miss. 20

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

If they be two, they are two so 25

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

And though it in the centre sit,  
Yet, when the other far doth roam, 30  
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, 35  
And makes me end where I begun.

①

# A VALEDICTION OF WEEPING.

by John Donne

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 fall'st 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, 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 dissolvèd 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.

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Source:  
Donne, John. Poems of John Donne. vol I.  
E. K. Chambers, ed.  
London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896. 39-40.

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THE RELIC.  
by John Donne

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 mass-devotion doth command,  
Then he that digs us up will bring  
Us to the bishop or 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 loved well and faithfully,  
Yet knew not what we loved, nor why ;  
Difference of sex we never knew,  
No more than 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, injured 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.

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Source:

Donne, John. Poems of John Donne. vol I.  
E. K. Chambers, ed.  
London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1896. 66-67.

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George Herbert

EASTER-WINGS.

LORD, who createdst man in wealth and store,  
Though foolishly he lost the same,  
Decaying more and more,  
Till he became  
Most poor :

With thee  
O let me rise  
As larks, harmoniously,  
And sing this day thy victories :  
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne :  
And still with sicknesses and shame  
Thou didst so punish sinne,  
That I became  
Most thinne.

With thee  
Let me combine,  
And feel this day thy victorie,  
For, if I imp my wing on thine,  
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

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Source:

Herbert, George. The Poetical Works of George Herbert.  
New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1857. 49.



*To his Coy Mistress*

by Andrew Marvell

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day;  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood;  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires, and more slow.  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found,  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long preserv'd virginity,  
And your quaint honour turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust.  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may;  
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour,  
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.  
Let us roll all our strength, and all  
Our sweetness, up into one ball;  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life.  
Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

## The Verse

The measure is English heroic verse without rhyme, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin, rhyme being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame meter; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause therefore some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rhyme both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of it self, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight, which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings, a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect then of rhyme so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming.

### The Verse.

This somewhat aggressive note on the verse was added to a later issue (the fourth) of the first edition, in 1668, apparently in response to complaints that the poem, as the publisher said, "rhymes not."

1. *English heroic verse* is ten-syllable, iambic pentameter verse.
2. *a barbarous age*: The Middle Ages, after the fall of the Roman Empire and the disappearance of classical culture.
- 5-6. *famous modern poets*, such as Ariosto, Tasso, and Spenser, all of whom employed rhyme; *modern* means after the Middle Ages, in what we call the Renaissance.
11. *our best English tragedies* refers to Shakespeare principally, but also to Marlowe, Webster, and others.
- 13-14. *apt numbers* refers, probably, to the number of syllables in the line (ten, eleven for "feminine" lines, in which the line ends with an extra, unaccented syllable). *fit quantity of syllables* refers, perhaps, to the length of time a syllable is sounded or to whether the vowel is long or short. (The term *quantity* alludes to Greek and Latin *quantitative* meter, which is entirely different from Milton's verse. He may have used the term here chiefly to intimidate.) *the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another*, the most important part of this statement, refers to the use of enjambment to run one line into another without a pause, allowing the rhythms of the syntax to assert themselves on a longer scale than that of the individual line.
15. The *learned ancients* avoided alliteration and rhyme.

## Book One

### The Argument

This first book proposes first, in brief, the whole subject: Man's disobedience and the loss thereupon of Paradise wherein he was placed; then touches the prime cause of his fall, the serpent, or rather Satan in the serpent, who revolting from God and drawing to his side many legions of angels was by the command of God driven out of Heaven with all his crew into the great deep. Which action passed over, the poem hastes into the midst of things, presenting Satan with his angels now fallen into Hell—described here, not in the center (for Heaven and Earth may be supposed as yet not made, certainly not yet accursed) but in a place of utter darkness fitliest called chaos. Here, Satan with his angels lying on the burning lake, thunder-struck and astonished, after a certain space recovers, as from confusion, calls up him who next in order and dignity lay by him. They confer of their miserable fall. Satan awakens all his legions, who lay till then in the same manner confounded. They rise: their numbers, array of battle, their chief leaders named, according to the idols known afterwards in Canaan and the countries adjoining. To these Satan directs his speech, comforts them with hope yet of regaining Heaven, but tells them lastly of a new world and new kind of creature to be created, according to an ancient prophecy or report in Heaven. (For that angels were long before this visible Creation was the opinion of many ancient fathers.) To find out the truth of this prophecy, and what to determine thereon, he refers to a full council. What his associates thence attempt: Pandemonium, the palace of Satan, rises, suddenly built out of the deep. The infernal peers there sit in council.

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe  
With loss of Eden till one greater Man  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat  
Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top  
Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed,

### Book One

The Argument. From the Latin *argumentum*, a summary of the underlying subject matter of a poetical work, often placed before a play.

1. *Man's*: mankind's. *disobedience* has four syllables: 'dis-o-bee-jence.'
4. *Man*: Jesus.
5. *seat*: home, throne.
6. *Muse*: recalling the epic muse of Homer and Virgil, but here the Holy Ghost, God's creative power.
8. *shepherd*. Moses, who was first called by God (on Mount Oreb) while pasturing sheep. The account of Creation, in Genesis, was attributed to Moses.

In the beginning, how the heav'ns and earth  
 Rose out of chaos. Or if Sion hill  
 Delight thee more and Siloa's brook that flowed  
 Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
 Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song  
 That with no middle flight intends to soar  
 Above th' Aonian mount while it pursues  
 Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
 And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
 Before all temples th' upright heart and pure  
 Instruct me, for thou know'st, thou from the first  
 Wast present and with mighty wings outspread  
 Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast abyss  
 And mad'st it pregnant. What in me is dark  
 Illumine, what is low raise and support,  
 That to the heighth of this great argument  
 I may assert Eternal Providence  
 And justify the ways of God to men.

Say first, for Heav'n hides nothing from thy view,  
 Nor the deep tract of Hell, say first what cause  
 Moved our grand parents in that happy state,  
 Favored of Heav'n so highly, to fall off  
 From their Creator and transgress His will  
 For one restraint, lords of the world besides.  
 Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?  
 Th' infernal Serpent. He it was whose guile  
 Stirred up with envy and revenge deceived  
 The mother of mankind, what time his pride  
 Had cast him out from Heav'n with all his host  
 Of rebel angels, by whose aid aspiring  
 To set himself in glory 'bove his peers  
 He trusted to have equaled the Most High  
 If he opposed, and with ambitious aim

10. *Sion*: After mentioning the mountain associated with Moses' creation narrative in Genesis, the poet mentions Mount Zion, which is associated with the Psalms, attributed to King David, some of which are concerned with Creation (e.g., Psalm 104).

12. *oracle*: On Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, where God inspired the kings David and Solomon. Recalls the oracle of Apollo at Delphi, also on a mountain, and the stream where Apollo prophesied through his priestess.

17. *Spirit*: the Holy Ghost, the *Muse* of line 6, the inner experience of faith. *Spirit* is usually pronounced as one syllable: 'speart.'

18. *upright heart*: the temple of the Spirit. See Genesis 1:2.

24. *argument*: subject.

25. *Providence*: God's foresight and plan for history.

29. *grand parents*: Adam and Eve.

32. *one restraint*: the command not to eat the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

34. *Serpent*: In the Genesis account, the serpent tempts Eve to eat the fruit. In Christian tradition this serpent was identified with Satan. See Revelation 12:9 and 20:1-3.

Against the throne and monarchy of God  
 Raised impious war in Heav'n and battle proud  
 With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Pow'r  
 Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' ethereal sky  
 With hideous ruin and combustion down  
 To bottomless perdition, there to dwell  
 In adamantine chains and penal fire  
 Who durst defy th' Omnipotent to arms.  
 Nine times the space that measures day and night  
 To mortal men he with his horrid crew  
 Lay vanquished rolling in the fiery gulf  
 Confounded though immortal. But his doom  
 Reserved him to more wrath, for now the thought  
 Both of lost happiness and lasting pain  
 Torments him. Round he throws his baleful eyes  
 That witnessed huge affliction and dismay  
 Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate.  
 At once as far as angels' ken he views  
 The dismal situation waste and wild:  
 A dungeon horrible on all sides round  
 As one great furnace flamed yet from those flames  
 No light but rather darkness visible  
 Served only to discover sights of woe,  
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
 That comes to all but torture without end  
 Still urges and a fiery deluge fed  
 With ever-burning sulfur unconsumed.  
 Such place Eternal Justice had prepared  
 For those rebellious, here their pris'n ordained  
 In utter darkness and their portion set  
 As far removed from God and light of Heav'n  
 As from the center thrice to th' utmost pole.  
 O how unlike the place from whence they fell!

44. *Pow'r*: power, pronounced with one syllable: 'paar.'

45. *ethereal*: has three syllables: 'eth-ear-yal.'

46. *hideous* has two syllables: 'hid-jus.'

48. *adamantine*: made of the legendary hardest substance, *adamant*. The word is from a Homeric epithet of the king of the underworld, Hades (*Iliad* 9.158): *adamastos*, "untamable, incapable of being overpowered" (a "un" + *damnaō* "to overpower, subjugate, master").

50. *Nine times*: recalls the titans in Greek myth (Hesiod, *Theogony* 720 f.), who fell nine days to earth and nine more into the pit of Tartarus. Milton's rebel angels are not the devils of medieval myth but huge cosmic powers. See lines 197-200.

59. *ken*: sight. Possibly a verb ("can see"), probably a noun.

74. *center*: of the earth. *pole*: of the created universe, not of the earth. Milton's Hell is situated not in the interior of the earth but outside the created universe altogether, far off in Chaos. The distance referred to here would be many times the distance from the center of the earth to the upper pole of the cosmos.

There the companions of his fall o'erwhelmed  
 With floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire  
 He soon discerns. And weltring by his side  
 One next himself in pow'r and next in crime,  
 Long after known in Palestine and named  
 Beëlzebub. To whom th' Arch-Enemy,  
 And thence in Heav'n called *Satan*, with bold words  
 Breaking the horrid silence thus began:

If thou beest he (but O how fall'n! how changed  
 From him who in the happy realms of light  
 Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine  
 Myriads, though bright!), if he whom mutual league,  
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope  
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise  
 Joined with me once (now misery hath joined  
 In equal ruin), into what pit thou seest  
 From what heighth fall'n, so much the stronger proved  
 He with His thunder (and till then who knew  
 The force of those dire arms?), yet not for those  
 Nor what the potent Victor in His rage  
 Can else inflict do I repent or change,  
 Though changed in outward luster, that fixed mind  
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit  
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend  
 And to the fierce contention brought along  
 Innumerable force of spirits armed  
 That durst dislike His reign and, me preferring,  
 His utmost pow'r with adverse pow'r opposed  
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heav'n  
 And shook His throne. What though the field be lost?  
 All is not lost: th' unconquerable will  
 And study of revenge, immortal hate  
 And courage never to submit or yield—  
 And what is else not to be overcome?  
 That glory never shall His wrath or might  
 Extort from me: to bow and sue for grace  
 With suppliant knee and deify His pow'r  
 Who from the terror of this arm so late  
 Doubted His empire! That were low indeed,  
 That were an ignominy and shame beneath  
 This downfall, since by fate the strength of gods

81–82. *Arch Enemy* . . . *Satan*. *Satan*'s name is from the Hebrew word for "adversary."

84–94. *If . . . if . . . into . . . yet . . .* Milton makes *Satan*'s syntax deliberately obscure to show passion dominating over reason. *Satan* will later use such syntax to confuse Eve.

114. *Doubted*: feared the loss of. *Who* [God] is the subject of *Doubted*.

115. *ignominy* and *and* are elided to four syllables: 'ignomin'yand.'

And this empyreal substance cannot fail,  
 Since through experience of this great event,  
 In arms not worse, in foresight much advanced,  
 We may with more successful hope resolve  
 To wage by force or guile eternal war  
 Irreconcilable to our grand Foe  
 Who now triumphs and in th' excess of joy  
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heav'n.

So spake th' Apostate Angel though in pain,  
 Vaunting aloud but racked with deep despair.  
 And him thus answered soon his bold compeer:

O prince, O chief of many thronèd pow'rs  
 That led th' embattled seraphim to war  
 Under thy conduct and in dreadful deeds  
 Fearless endangered Heav'n's perpetual King  
 And put to proof His high supremacy  
 (Whether upheld by strength, or chance, or fate)  
 Too well I see and rue the dire event  
 That with sad overthrow and foul defeat  
 Hath lost us Heav'n and all this mighty host  
 In horrible destruction laid thus low  
 As far as gods and Heav'nly essences  
 Can perish. For the mind and spirit remains  
 Invincible and vigor soon returns  
 Though all our glory extinct and happy state  
 Here swallowed up in endless misery.  
 But what if He our conqueror (whom I now  
 Of force believe almighty since no less  
 Than such could have o'erpow'ed such force as ours)  
 Have left us this our spirit and strength entire  
 Strongly to suffer and support our pains  
 That we may so suffice His vengeful ire  
 Or do Him mightier service as His thralls  
 By right of war, whate'er His business be:  
 Here in the heart of Hell to work in fire  
 Or do His errands in the gloomy deep?  
 What can it then avail, though yet we feel  
 Strength undiminished or eternal being,  
 To undergo eternal punishment?  
 Whereto with speedy words th' Arch-Fiend replied:  
 Fall'n cherub, to be weak is mis'erable,

117. *empyreal substance*. The fiery, flexible material of which angels are made. (The Greek root *pyr* means "fire.") *fail*: perish.

131. *perpetual* has three syllables: 'per-pet-chal.'

141. *glory* and *extinct* are elided: 'glor-yextinct.'

146. *spirit* has one syllable.



Torn from Pelorus or the shattered side  
 Of thund'ring Etna whose combustile  
 And fueled entrails thence conceiving fire  
 Sublimed with mineral fury aid the winds 235  
 And leave a singèd bottom all involved  
 With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole  
 Of unblest feet. Him followed his next mate,  
 Both glorying to have 'scaped the Stygian flood  
 As gods and by their own recovered strength, 240  
 Not by the suff'rance of Supernal Pow'r.  
 Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,  
 Said then the lost archangel, this the seat  
 That we must change for Heav'n, this mournful gloom  
 For that celestial light? Be it so, since He 245  
 Who now is Sov'reign can dispose and bid  
 What shall be right. Farthest from Him is best  
 Whom reason hath equaled, force hath made supreme  
 Above His equals. Farewell happy fields  
 Where joy forever dwells! Hail horrors, hail 250  
 Infernal world! And thou, profoundest Hell,  
 Receive thy new possessor, one who brings  
 A mind not to be changed by place or time!  
 The mind is its own place and in itself 255  
 Can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.  
 What matter where, if I be still the same  
 And what I should be: all but less than He  
 Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least  
 We shall be free. Th' Almighty hath not built 260  
 Here for His envy, will not drive us hence.  
 Here we may reign secure, and in my choice  
 To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:  
 Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven!  
 But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,  
 Th' associates and copartners of our loss, 265  
 Lie thus astonished on th' oblivious pool  
 And call them not to share with us their part  
 In this unhappy mansion or once more

235. *sublimed*: vaporized.

240. *gods*: The devils will set themselves up as gods in the world after the Fall. Milton follows the Christian tradition that the gods of the Greeks and Romans were devils in disguise. See lines 1.364–75.

241. *suff'rance*: permission.

248–49. I.e., God, whom we have equaled with our reason, but whom mere force has raised above us.

262–63. "In heav'n they scorn'd to serve, so now in hell they reign" (Phineas Fletcher, *The Purple Island* 7.10).

266. *oblivious pool* suggests one of the rivers of Hell: Lethe, "forgetfulness."

With rallied arms to try what may be yet  
 Regained in Heaven or what more lost in Hell?  
 So Satan spake and him Beëlzebub 270  
 Thus answered: Leader of those armies bright  
 Which but th' Omnipotent none could have foiled,  
 If once they hear that voice (their liveliest pledge  
 Of hope in fears and dangers, heard so oft 275  
 In worst extremes and on the perilous edge  
 Of battle when it raged, in all assaults  
 Their surest signal) they will soon resume  
 New courage and revive though now they lie  
 Grov'ling and prostrate on yon lake of fire 280  
 As we erewhile, astounded and amazed—  
 No wonder, fall'n such a pernicious heighth!  
 He scarce had ceased when the superior fiend  
 Was moving toward the shore. His ponderous shield,  
 Ethereal temper, massy, large and round, 285  
 Behind him cast. The broad circumference  
 Hung on his shoulders like the moon whose orb  
 Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
 At evening from the top of Fesolè  
 Or in Valdarno to descry new lands, 290  
 Rivers or mountains in her spotty globe.  
 His spear (to equal which the tallest pine  
 Hewn on Norwegian hills to be the mast  
 Of some great admiral were but a wand)  
 He walked with to support uneasy steps 295  
 Over the burning marl (not like those steps  
 On Heaven's azure) and the torrid clime  
 Smote on him sore besides, vaulted with fire.  
 Nathless he so endured till on the beach  
 Of that inflamèd sea he stood and called 300  
 His legions, angel forms who lay entranced  
 Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks

285. *Ethereal temper*: The shield is made of empyreal (fiery) substance of Heaven and tempered in the cool *aether* just beneath the region of fire.

286. *Behind*: Greek soldiers slung their shields behind them when in retreat.

288. *Tuscan artist*: Galileo, who is called *Tuscan* because he lived in Tuscany, where the young Milton visited him, in *Fiesole*, which overlooks the valley of the Arno river, *Valdarno*. Galileo is called *artist* in the sense of an *artifex*, one who invents mechanical devices. To observe the heavens, Galileo and Lippershey greatly improved the telescope, formerly a naval instrument.

294. *admiral*: The principal ship of a fleet, having the tallest mast (for signaling). Such a mast would be a mere wand in comparison with Satan's spear.

302–11. Two similes in succession, a natural followed by a biblical: (1) The devils cover the surface of the fiery lake as thickly as fallen leaves cover brooks in the shadowy vale (hence the name *Vallombrosa*) of Tuscany, the region of Italy anciently known as *Etruria*, the home of the pre-Roman Etruscans. (2) The devils are strewn on the fiery lake as reedy plants, uprooted by violent winds brought by the constellation Orion, strew the coast of

Doing or suffering, but of this be sure:  
 To do aught good will never be our task  
 But ever to do ill our sole delight  
 As being the contrary to His high will  
 Whom we resist. If then His providence  
 Out of our evil seek to bring forth good  
 Our labor must be to pervert that end  
 And out of good still to find means of evil,  
 Which oftentimes may succeed so as perhaps  
 Shall grieve Him, if I fail not, and disturb  
 His inmost counsels from their destined aim.  
 But see! The angry victor hath recalled  
 His ministers of vengeance and pursuit  
 Back to the gates of Heav'n. The sulph'rous hail  
 Shot after us in storm o'erblown hath laid  
 The fiery surge that from the precipice  
 Of Heav'n received us falling. And the thunder,  
 Winged with red lightning and impetuous rage,  
 Perhaps hath spent his shafts and ceases now  
 To bellow through the vast and boundless deep.  
 Let us not slip th' occasion, whether scorn  
 Or satiate fury yield it from our Foe.  
 Seest thou yon dreary plain forlorn and wild,  
 The seat of desolation, void of light  
 Save what the glimmering of these livid flames  
 Casts pale and dreadful? Thither let us tend  
 From off the tossing of these fiery waves,  
 There rest (if any rest can harbor there)  
 And reassembling our afflicted pow'rs  
 Consult how we may henceforth most offend  
 Our enemy, our own loss how repair,  
 How overcome this dire calamity,  
 What reinforcement we may gain from hope,  
 If not what resolution from despair.

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate  
 With head uplift above the wave and eyes  
 That sparkling blazed. His other parts besides,  
 Prone on the flood, extended long and large,  
 Lay floating many a rood in bulk as huge  
 As whom the fables name of monstrous size:

161. *being* has one syllable.

167. *fail*: mistake. Imitating a similar expression in Latin.

171–74. The storm of thunder that pursues the rebel angels through Chaos shoots over them to form the lake into which they fall.

179. *satiate*: satisfied. Two syllables: 'say-shut.'

196. *rood*: a measure of distance, six to eight yards.

Titanian or Earth-born that warred on Jove,  
 Briareos or Typhon whom the den  
 By ancient Tarsus held or that sea-beast  
 Leviathan which God of all His works  
 Created hugest that swim th' ocean stream.  
 Him haply slumb'ring on the Norway foam  
 The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff  
 Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,  
 With fixèd anchor in his scaly rind  
 Moors by his side, under the lee, while Night  
 Invests the sea and wishèd morn delays.  
 So stretched out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay  
 Chained on the burning lake. Nor ever thence  
 Had ris'n or heaved his head but that the will  
 And high permission of all-ruling Heav'n  
 Left him at large to his own dark designs  
 That with reiterated crimes he might  
 Heap on himself damnation while he sought  
 Evil to others and enraged might see  
 How all his malice served but to bring forth  
 Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shown  
 On Man by him seduced, but on himself  
 Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance poured.  
 Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool  
 His mighty stature. On each hand the flames  
 Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires and, rolled  
 In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.  
 Then with expanded wings he steers his flight  
 Aloft incumbent on the dusky air  
 That felt unusual weight till on dry land  
 He lights—if it were land that ever burned  
 With solid as the lake with liquid fire,  
 And such appeared in hue. As when the force  
 Of subterranean wind transports a hill

198–202. Satan's monstrous size is compared to that of the titans and giants of classical mythology who warred against Jove and the Olympians, and to the biblical sea-monster Leviathan, which is "king over all the children of pride" (Job 41:34).

202. *hugest* should perhaps be pronounced as one syllable, *huge*, in which case the *the* before *ocean* should not be contracted.

203. The mention of Norway suggests Milton knew how plentiful whales were in northern latitudes.

204–8. *skiff*: a small sea-going rowboat carried on ships; used in whaling. *night-foundered*: separated from its ship, which has perhaps sunk (foundered). The sailors in the skiff are overcome by darkness. They fasten anchor to what they suppose to be an island but is in fact a whale. The whale dives, dragging them down with it—a symbol of the devil.

208. *invests*: covers, as with a robe.

230–37. Milton's appropriation of a ranting passage in Virgil: "Aetna thunders with horrifying ruin while hurling forth black clouds and balls of flame that lick the stars, vomiting from its depths, with a roar, its entrails of boulders and liquefied stone" (*Aeneid* 3.570–77).

In Vallombrosa where th' Etrurian shades  
 High overarched embow'r, or scattered sedge  
 Afloat when with fierce winds Orion armed  
 Hath vexed the Red Sea coast whose waves o'erthrew  
 Busiris and his Memphian chivalry  
 While with perfidious hatred they pursued  
 The sojourners of Goshen, who beheld  
 From the safe shore their floating carcasses  
 And broken chariot wheels. So thick bestrewn,  
 Abject and lost lay these, covering the flood,  
 Under amazement of their hideous change.  
 He called so loud that all the hollow deep  
 Of Hell resounded: Princes! Potentates!  
 Warriors! the flow'r of Heav'n once yours, now lost,  
 If such astonishment as this can seize  
 Eternal Spirits! Or have ye chos'n this place  
 After the toil of battle to repose  
 Your wearied virtue for the ease you find  
 To slumber here as in the vales of Heav'n?  
 Or in this abject posture have ye sworn  
 T' adore the Conqueror, who now beholds  
 Cherub and seraph rolling in the flood  
 With scattered arms and ensigns till anon  
 His swift pursuers from Heaven gates discern  
 Th' advantage and descending tread us down,  
 Thus drooping, or with linkèd thunderbolts  
 Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf?  
 Awake! Arise, or be for ever fall'n!

They heard and were abashed and up they sprung  
 Upon the wing, as when men wont to watch  
 On duty, sleeping found by whom they dread,  
 Rouse and bestir themselves ere well awake.  
 Nor did they not perceive the evil plight  
 In which they were or the fierce pains not feel,  
 Yet to their gen'ral's voice they soon obeyed  
 Innumerable. As when the potent rod  
 Of Amram's son in Egypt's evil day

the Red Sea. The Red Sea closed over the army of Pharaoh (*Busiris*) and his Egyptian cavalry (*Memphian chivalry*) when they were pursuing the Israelites, who were formerly encamped at *Goshen* and who now behold the destruction of their pursuers (Exodus 14: 21-31).

338. *Innumerable* has four syllables: 'in-núm-rable.' *potent rod*: Moses' staff, which has magical powers given by God. "And Moses stretched forth his rod over the land of Egypt . . . And the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt . . . they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened" (Exodus 10:13-15).

339. *Amram's son*: Moses (Exodus 6:20).

Waved round the coast upcalled a pitchy cloud  
 Of locusts warping on the eastern wind  
 That o'er the realm of impious Pharaoh hung  
 Like night and darkened all the land of Nile,  
 So numberless were those bad angels seen  
 Hovering on wing under the cope of Hell  
 'Twixt upper, nether, and surrounding fires  
 Till as a signal giv'n th' uplifted spear  
 Of their great sultan waving to direct  
 Their course in even balance down they light  
 On the firm brimstone and fill all the plain:  
 A multitude like which the populous north  
 Poured never from her frozen loins to pass  
 Rhene or the Danaw when her barbarous sons  
 Came like a deluge on the south and spread  
 Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands.  
 Forthwith from every squadron and each band  
 The heads and leaders thither haste where stood  
 Their great commander: godlike shapes and forms  
 Excelling human, princely dignities  
 And pow'rs that erst in Heaven sat on thrones,  
 Though of their names in Heav'nly records now  
 Be no memorial, blotted out and razed  
 By their rebellion from the books of life.  
 Nor had they yet among the sons of Eve  
 Got them new names, till wand'ring o'er the earth  
 Through God's high suff'rance, for the trial of Man,  
 By falsities and lies the greatest part  
 Of mankind they corrupted to forsake  
 God their Creator and th' invisible  
 Glory of Him that made them, to transform  
 Oft to the image of a brute adorned  
 With gay religions full of pomp and gold,  
 And devils to adore for deities!  
 Then were they known to men by various names  
 And various idols through the heathen world.  
 Say, Muse, their names then known, who first, who last,

342. *impious* has two syllables: 'imp-yus.'

351-55. The devils' landing on the solid ground of Hell is compared to the barbarian hordes that poured out of the north to destroy the Roman empire, crossing the Rhine and Danube rivers and not only invading Italy but descending through Spain into North Africa.

363. *books of life*: "Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous" (Psalms 69:28).

376. It is a convention of epic poetry to re-invoke the muse before any long, encyclopedic list. Homer does so before the catalog of Achæan (Greek) leaders, who lay siege to Troy: "Tell me now you muses who have your homes on Olympus, for you are goddesses, and

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## JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

## Lycidas

*In This Monody the Author Bewails a Learned Friend,<sup>1</sup> Unfortunatly Drowned in His Passage from Chester on the Irish Seas, 1637. And by Occasion Foretells the Ruin of Our Corrupted Clergy, Then in Their Height.*

Yet once more, O ye laurels<sup>2</sup> and once more  
Ye myrtles brown,<sup>3</sup> with ivy never sere,<sup>4</sup>  
I come to pluck your berries harsh and crude,<sup>5</sup>  
And with forced fingers rude,  
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.  
Bitter constraint, and sad occasion dear,  
Compels me to disturb your season due;  
For Lycidas is dead, dead ere his prime,  
Young Lycidas, and hath not left his peer.  
Who would not sing for Lycidas? He knew  
Himself to sing, and build the lofty rhyme.  
He must not float upon his watery bier<sup>3</sup>  
Unwept, and welter<sup>6</sup> to the parching wind,  
Without the meed<sup>6</sup> of some melodious tear.  
Begin then, sisters of the sacred well,  
That from beneath the seat of Jove doth spring,  
Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string.<sup>4</sup>  
Hence with denial vain, and coy excuse;  
So may some gentle Muse  
With lucky words favor my destined urn,<sup>5</sup>  
And as he passes turn,  
And bid fair peace be to my sable<sup>6</sup> shroud.  
For we were nursed upon the selfsame hill,  
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade, and rill.<sup>6</sup>  
Together both, ere the high lawns<sup>6</sup> appeared  
Under the opening evelids of the morn,  
We drove afield, and both together heard  
What time the gravly winds her sultry horn,<sup>6</sup>  
Battering<sup>6</sup> our flocks with the fresh dews of night,  
Off till the star that rose at evening bright<sup>7</sup>  
Toward Heaven's descent had sloped his westerling wheel.  
Meanwhile the rural ditties were not mute,  
Tempered to th' oaten flute,

1. Edward King, a young scholar, poet, and clergyman at Cambridge with Milton. This poem, which draws heavily upon pastoral traditions, was first published with some elegies by King's friends at Cambridge in 1638, after King's ship mysteriously foundered on a clear day in August 1637. Milton added this headnote when he published the elegy in his *1645 Poems*. "Monody" an elegy or dirge sung by a single voice.

2. Laurel, myrtle, and ivy were all traditional materials for poetic garlands.

3. A stand on which a corpse is carried to the

grave.

4. I.e., play your music. "Sisters of the sacred well": The Muses, nine Greek goddesses believed to be sources of inspiration for the arts and goddesses of song; the well sacred to them was Aganippe, at the foot of Mt. Helicon, where they danced about the altar of Iove.

5. I.e., place of burial.

6. I.e., the insect hum of midday, as the gravly blows ("winds") her horn in the "sultry" heat of day.

7. I.e., Represents the evening star.

Rough satyrs danced, and fauns with cloven heel<sup>8</sup>  
From the glad sound would not be absent long,  
And old Damoetas<sup>9</sup> loved to hear our song.  
But O the heavy change, now thou art gone,  
Now thou art gone, and never must return!  
Thee, shepherd,<sup>1</sup> thee the woods and desert caves,  
With wild thyme and the gadding<sup>2</sup> vine o'ergrown,  
And all their echoes mourn.

The willows and the hazel copses<sup>3</sup> green  
Shall now no more be seen,  
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays.  
As killing as the canker<sup>4</sup> to the rose,  
Or taint-worm to the weanling herds that graze,  
Or frost to flowers that their gay wardrobe wear,  
When first the white thorn blows;<sup>5</sup>

Such, Lycidas, thy loss to shepherd's ear.  
Where were ye, nymphs,<sup>3</sup> when the remorseless deep  
Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas?  
For neither were ye playing on the steep,  
Where your old Bards, the famous Druids lie,  
Nor on the shaggy top of Mona high,  
Nor yet where Deva spreads her wizard stream:<sup>4</sup>

Av me! I fondly<sup>6</sup> dream—  
Had ye been there—for what could that have done?  
What could the Muse<sup>5</sup> herself that Orpheus bore,  
The Muse herself, for her enchanting son  
Whom universal Nature did lament,  
When by the rout that made the hideous roar,  
His gory visage<sup>6</sup> down the stream was sent,  
Down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore?

Alas! What boots<sup>6</sup> it with incessant care  
To tend the homely slighted shepherd's trade,  
And strictly meditate<sup>6</sup> the thankless Muse?  
Were it not better done as others use,  
To sport with Amarillis<sup>7</sup> in the shade,  
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
(That last infirmity of noble mind)  
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;<sup>8</sup>  
But the fair guerdon<sup>9</sup> when we hope to find,  
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,

35 The half-goat, half-man woodland gods associated with lust and drinking (although the fauns were sometimes described as less wild than the satyrs).

4. I.e., Lycidas.

5. Mythological female spirits inhabiting a particular place, object, or natural phenomenon.

6. The "steep" is probably the mountain Kersey-Druidon in northern Wales, a Druid burial ground. Mona is the Isle of Anglesey. I'veat the river Dee, called "wizard" because its changes of

work.

7. I.e., fame is an incentive to virtue and hard

work.

8. The half-goat, half-man woodland gods associ-

ated with lust and drinking (although the fauns were sometimes described as less wild than the satyrs).

9. A conventional pastoral name, here perhaps referring to one of the tutors at Cambridge.

1. I.e., Lycidas.

2. Small thickets of trees.

3. Mythological female spirits inhabiting a particular place, object, or natural phenomenon.

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Comes the blind Fury<sup>3</sup> with th' abhorred shears,  
And slits the thin spun life. "But not the praise,"  
Phoebus<sup>1</sup> replied, and touched my trembling ears:  
"Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glittering foil<sup>2</sup>

Set off to th' world, nor in broad rumor lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;<sup>3</sup>  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed."<sup>4</sup>  
O fountain Arethuse,<sup>4</sup> and thou honored flood,  
Smooth-sliding Mincius, crowned with vocal reeds,  
That strain I heard was of a higher mood.

But now my oar<sup>5</sup> proceeds,  
And listens to the herald of the sea<sup>6</sup>  
That came in Neptune's plea.

He asked the waves, and asked the felon winds,  
"What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain?"<sup>7</sup>  
And questioned every gust of rugged wings  
That blows from off each beaked promontory;  
They knew not of his story.

And sage Hippotades<sup>7</sup> their answer brings,  
That not a blast was from his dungeon strayed,  
The air was calm, and on the level brine,<sup>8</sup>  
Sleek Panope<sup>9</sup> with all her sisters played.  
It was that fatal and perfidious bark<sup>1</sup>  
Built in th' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,  
That sunk so low that sacred head of thine.

Next Canus,<sup>2</sup> reverend sire, went footing slow,  
His mantle hairy, and his bonnet sedge,  
Inwrought with figures dim, and on the edge  
Like to that sanguine flower inscribed with woe.

"Ah! who hath reft," quoth he, "my dearest pledge?"<sup>10</sup>  
Last came and last did go  
The pilot of the Galilean lake;<sup>3</sup>  
Two massy keys he bore of metals twain<sup>11</sup>  
(The golden opes,<sup>12</sup> the iron shuts anain).<sup>13</sup>  
He shook his mitered locks, and stern bespake:

9. Atropos, the third of the three Fates, who cut the thread of a person's life after it had been spun and measured by her sisters.  
1. Phoebus Apollo, god of poetic inspiration, who plucked Virgil's ears as a warning against immoderate ambition (see Virgil's *Eclogues* 6.3-4).  
2. The setting for a gem, especially one that enhances the appearance of an interior or false stone.  
3. The most powerful of the classical gods.  
4. A fountain in Sicily, associated with the pastoral poems of Theocritus, a Greek poet of the third century B.C. The "Mincius" is a river in Italy described in one of Virgil's pastorals.  
5. Oaten pipe, song.  
6. The merman Triton, who came to plead his master Neptune's innocence of Laertes' death.  
7. Aeolus, son of Hippotades and god of the winds.  
8. I.e., the surface; "brine" = saltwater.  
9. One of the Nereids, daughters of Nereus, the Old Man of the Sea.  
1. I.e., the ship.  
2. The god of the river Cam, representing Cambridge University, personified as wearing an academic robe ("mantle") and "bonnet" with colors like the dark reeds ("sedge") on its banks, but relieved by the crimson "bancloth" ("sanguine flower"). Certain markings on the "bancloth"—created by Apollo from the blood of the youth Hyacinthus, whom he had killed by accident with a discus—are supposed to be the letters AIAI ("Alas, alas"), inscribed by Apollo.  
3. St. Peter, the Galilean fisherman, to whom Christ promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16.19). He wears the bishop's miter (line 11.2) as the first head of Christ's Church.

"How<sup>1</sup> well could I have spared for thee, young swain,  
Inow<sup>2</sup> of such as for their bellies' sake,  
Creep and intrude, and climb into the fold!  
Of other care they little reckoning make,  
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,  
And shove away the worthy bidden guest.  
Blind mouths! That scarce themselves know how to hold  
A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least  
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!  
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;<sup>3</sup>  
And when they list, their lean and flashy<sup>4</sup> songs  
Grate on their scrannel<sup>5</sup> pipes of wretched straw.  
The hungry sheep look up, and are not fed,  
But swolln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,  
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread.  
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw<sup>6</sup>  
Daily devours apace,<sup>7</sup> and nothing said,  
But that two-handed engine at the door<sup>8</sup>  
Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."<sup>9</sup>

Return, Alpheus,<sup>9</sup> the dread voice is past,  
That shrunk thy streams; return, Sicilian muse,  
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast  
Their bells and flowerets of a thousand hues.  
Ye valleys low where the mild whispers use,  
Of shades<sup>10</sup> and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,  
On whose fresh lap the swart star<sup>1</sup> sparsely looks,  
Throw hither all your quaint enameled eyes,  
That on the green turf suck the honeyed showers,  
And purple all the ground with vernal<sup>10</sup> flowers.  
Bring the tufted crow-toe, and pale jessamine,  
The tufted pink, and the pansy freaked<sup>11</sup> with jet,  
The glowing violet,  
The musk-rose, and the well attired woodbine,  
With cowslips wan<sup>12</sup> that hang the pensive head,  
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;  
Bid amaranthus<sup>3</sup> all his beauty shed,  
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,  
To strew the laureate hearse<sup>4</sup> where Lycid lies.  
For so to interpose a little ease,

Here begins the speech condemning the "corrupted clergy" and foretelling their ruin as described in the argument. Canus uses the common metaphor of the shepherd as the pastor (from *pastor*, the Latin for shepherd) and the sheep as the congregation.  
5 I.e., what does it matter to them?  
6 I.e., they have prospered.  
7 I.e., anti-Protestant forces, either Roman Catholic or Anglican; "privy" = furtive, sly.  
8 A satisfactory explanation of these two lines has yet to be made, although many have been attempted. Most have taken the "two-handed engine" as an instrument of retribution against those clergy who neglect their responsibilities such as the act of reformation, the two-handed

sword of the archangel Michael, the two houses of Parliament or death and damnation)  
9. A river god who fell in love with the nymph Arethusa. When she fled to Sicily, he pursued her by diving under the sea and emerging on the island. There she was turned into a fountain (see line 85), and their waters mingled.  
1. Sirius, the Dog Star, thought to have a swart or radiant influence, perhaps because this star is in the zenith in late summer, when vegetation often withers.  
2. Here begins a catalog of flowers, a traditional element of pastoral elegy. "Crow-toe" a name for various plants, either wild hyacinth or buttercups, "jessamine" = jasmine; fragrant white flowers.  
3. A legendary flower, supposed never to fade.

enough  
insipid meager  
quickly  
frequent shadows  
springtime early  
mottled  
pale  
bier

conjecture

155 Let our frail thoughts dally with false sunrise,<sup>2</sup>  
 As me! Whilst thee the shores and sounding seas  
 Wash far away, where'er thy bones are hurled;  
 Whether beyond the stormy Hebrides,<sup>3</sup>  
 160 Where thou perhaps under the wheeling tide  
 Visist the bottom of the monstrous world;  
 Or whether thou, to our moist vows<sup>4</sup> denied,  
 Sleep'st by the fable of Bellerus old,<sup>5</sup>  
 165 Where the great vision of the guarded mount  
 Looks toward Namancos and Bayona's hold;  
 Look homeward angel now, and melt with ruth:<sup>6</sup>  
 And, O ye dolphins, waff<sup>7</sup> the hapless youth.  
 Weep no more, woeful shepherds, weep no more,  
 170 For Lycidas your sorrow is not dead,  
 Sunk though he be beneath the watery floor,  
 So sinks the day-star<sup>8</sup> in the ocean bed,  
 And yet anon<sup>9</sup> repairs his drooping head,  
 And tricks<sup>10</sup> his beams, and with new-spangled ore,<sup>11</sup>  
 175 Flames in the forehead of the morning sky:  
 So Lycidas sunk low, but mounted high,  
 'Through the dear night of him that walked the waves,<sup>12</sup>  
 Where other groves, and other streams along,  
 With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,<sup>13</sup>  
 180 And hears the unexpressive<sup>14</sup> nuptial song,<sup>15</sup>  
 In the blest kingdoms meek of joy and love.  
 There entertain him all the saints above,  
 In solemn troops and sweet societies  
 That sing, and singing in their glory move,  
 And wipe the tears forever from his eyes.  
 Now, Lycidas, the shepherds weep no more;  
 Henceforth thou art the genius of the shore,<sup>16</sup>  
 185 In thy large recompense, and shalt be good  
 To all that wander in that perilous flood.  
 Thus sang the uncouth<sup>17</sup> swain to th' oaks and rills,  
 While the still morn went out with sandals gray;  
 He touched the tender stops of various quills,<sup>18</sup>  
 With eager thought warbling his Doric<sup>19</sup> lay:  
 190 And now the sun had stretched out all the hills,  
 And now was dropped into the western bay;  
 At last he rose, and twitched his mantle<sup>20</sup> blue:  
 Tomorrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.

1637

1645

cloak

unlettered

bathes  
inexpressible

dresses / gold

sun

pity  
transportOn the Morning of Christ's Nativity<sup>1</sup>

1

'This is the month, and this the happy morn,  
 Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King,  
 Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,  
 Our great redemption from above did bring:  
 5 For so the holy sages<sup>2</sup> once did sing,  
 That he our deadly forfeit<sup>3</sup> should release,  
 And with his Father work us a perpetual peace.

2

That glorious form, that light unsufferable,  
 And that far-beaming blaze of majesty,  
 10 Wherewith he wont<sup>4</sup> at Heaven's high council-table  
 To sit the midst of Trinal<sup>5</sup> Unity,  
 He laid aside, and, here with us to be,  
 Forsook the courts of everlasting day,  
 And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.<sup>6</sup>

3

15 Say, Heavenly Muse,<sup>7</sup> shall not thy sacred vein  
 Afford a present to the Infant God?  
 Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain,  
 To welcome him to this his new abode,  
 Now while the heaven, by the Sun's team untrod,<sup>8</sup>  
 20 Hath took no print of the approaching light,  
 And all the spangled host<sup>9</sup> keep watch in squadrons bright?

4

See how from far upon the eastern road  
 The star-led wizards<sup>10</sup> haste with odors sweet!  
 Oh run, prevent<sup>11</sup> them with thy humble ode,<sup>12</sup>  
 25 And lay it lowly at his blessed feet:  
 Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,  
 And join thy voice unto the angel choir.  
 From out his secret altar touched with hallowed fire.<sup>13</sup>

## The Hymn

1

It was the winter wild,  
 While the heaven-born child

30

1. Milton's poem portrays the triumphs of the infant Christ over pagan gods, a theme of interest to both Catholics and Protestants of the early seventeenth century. This is the first poem in Milton's first published volume of poetry (1645); we follow his corrected text of 1675.

2. I.e., the Hebrew prophets.  
 3. The penalty of death, occasioned by the sin of Adam.  
 4. I.e., a human body.

5. Perhaps a reference to Urania, the Muse of astronomy, later identified in Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost* with divine wisdom and treated by Milton as the source of creative inspiration. The Muses were nine Greek goddesses believed to be sources of inspiration for the arts.

6. A reference to Apollo, the pagan god of the sun, who drove the chariot of the sun behind mighty steeds (the "Sun's team")<sup>10</sup> across the sky.  
 7. The "wise men from the east" (Matthew 2:1), who brought gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense ("odors sweet").  
 8. A charmed kite, generally dignified or lofty in subject and style.

9. Cf. Isaiah 66:6, in which a seraph touches a prophet's lips with a burning coal from the altar.

4. The islands that lie west of Scotland's coast.

5. I.e., tearful prayers.

6. A legendary figure supposedly buried at Land's End in Cornwall. The "morn" of the next line is St. Michael's Mount at the tip of Land's End, "guarded" by the archangel Michael, who gazes southward toward Nemancos and the stronghold of Bayona in northwestern Spain.

7. Perhaps a reference to the pagan myth of Falcor, who became known as a protector of sailors after he drowned near Cornish and a temple was built on the spot where his body was supposed to

8. I.e., Christ (Matthew 14:26).

9. Perhaps a reference to the "marriage supper of the lamb" (i.e., Christ), as described by St. John in the Apocalypse (Revelations 19:9).

10. The local deity who protects navigators on the Irish Sea ("food").

11. The individual reeds in a set of panpipes.

12. Pastoral, because Donne was the dialect of the ancient Greek pastoral writers Theocritus, Bion, and Moschus.

**Edmund Spenser   *Amoretti***

1

HAPPY ye leaves when as those lily hands,  
    which hold my life in their dead doing might  
    shall handle you and hold in loves soft bands,  
    like captives trembling at the victor's sight.  
And happy lines, on which with starry light,  
    those laming eyes will deign sometimes to look  
    and read the sorrows of my dying spright,  
    written with tears in hearts close bleeding book.  
And happy rhymes bath'd in the sacred brook,  
    of Helicon whence she derived is,  
    when ye behold that Angels blessed look,  
    my soul's long lacked food, my heaven's bliss.  
Leaves, lines, and rhymes, seek her to please alone,  
    whom if ye please, I care for other none.

**Philip Sydney, *Astrophel and Stella***

1

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,  
That she dear she might take some pleasure of my pain  
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,  
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,  
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:  
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,  
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.  
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;  
Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows;  
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.  
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,  
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:  
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

The wisest scholar of the wight most wise  
By Phoebus' doom, with sugared sentence says  
That Virtue, if it once met with our eyes,  
Strange flames of love it in our souls would raise;  
But, for that man with pain this truth descries,  
While he each thing in sense's balance weighs,  
And so nor will nor can behold those skies  
Which inward sun to heroic mind displays,  
Virtue of late, with virtuous care to stir  
Love of herself, takes Stella's shape, that she  
To mortal eyes might sweetly shine in her.  
It is most true, for since I her did see,  
Virtue's great beauty in that face I prove,  
And find th'effect, for I do burn in love.