

Classic Poetry Series

John Donne

- poems -

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John Donne (1572-1631)

John Donne was born in London into an old Roman Catholic family at a time when anti-Catholic feeling in England was near its height. He was educated at home by Catholic tutors. He attended both Oxford and Cambridge Universities, as well as Lincoln's Inn as a trainee lawyer, he never took any academic degrees and never practised law. In 1593 his younger brother Henry died in prison after being arrested for harbouring a priest. Somewhere around this time Donne renounced his faith. He read enormously in divinity, medicine, law and the classics and wrote to display his learning and wit. In 1598 he was appointed private secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton and sat in Elizabeth's last parliament. In 1601 he secretly married seventeen-year-old Ann More, Lady Egerton's niece. Sir George More had Donne imprisoned for a brief period and dismissed from his post. The next fourteen years were marked by his attempts to live down his shame, and to try to make a living to support his growing family, but depending largely on the charity of friends and his wife's relations.

On the suggestion of James I who approved of the anti-Catholic sentiments of *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), Donne took orders in 1615. In due course he was appointed Reader in Divinity at Lincoln's Inn and was deemed a great preacher. His wife died in 1617 aged thirty-three after giving birth to their twelfth child. In 1618 he went as chaplain to the Earl of Doncaster in his embassy to the German princes. His 'Hymn to Christ at the Author's Last Going into Germany', written before the journey, is full of the apprehension of death. In 1621 he was made Dean of St Paul's. His private devotions were published in 1624 and he continued to write sacred poetry almost up to his death. Towards the end of his life he became obsessed with death and preached what was called his own funeral sermon just a few weeks before he died.

The influence of his poetic style was widely felt in the sixteenth century. He tangibly influenced Andrew Marvell, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and others, and is deemed the greatest of what John Dryden and Samuel Johnson called the 'metaphysical poets'.

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 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 persever.
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.

John Donne

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 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 Nocturnal Upon St. Lucy's Day

Being the Shortest Day

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,
Lucies, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;
The worlds whole sap is sunke:
The generall balme th' hydroptique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunk,
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seem to laugh,
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:
For I am every dead thing,
In whom love wrought new Alchimie.
For his art did expresse
A quintessence even from nothingnesse,
From dull privations, and leane emptinesse:
He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot
Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have;
I, by loves limbecke, am the grave
Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood
Have wee two wept, and so
Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two Chaosses, when we did show
Care to ought else; and often absences
Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;
Were I a man, that I were one,
I needs must know; I should preferre,
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 Sunne renew.
You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne
At this time to the Goat is runne
To fetch new lust, and give it you,
Enjoy your summer all;
Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,
Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this
Bothe the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

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 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

Aire And Angles

Twice or thrice had I lov'd thee,
Before I knew thy face or name;
So in a voice, so in a shapeless flame
Angels affect us oft, and worshipp'd 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,
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That it assume thy body, I allow,
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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;
 Ev'ry 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 angels' 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 determin'd)
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 propagat 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 shipwrack'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 deprav'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

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

Break of Day (another of the same)

'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.

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Such wrong as when a married man doth woo.

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

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

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 picture be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow;
And soonest our best men with thee do go--
Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!
Thou'rt 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

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

Death, be not proud (Holy Sonnet 10)

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou are 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

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 beautiful 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 Marmoset.
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 tyrann 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 Lymbecks 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 fearful 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 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, safeliest 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 unurged; 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;
Ricbly 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 breathed 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 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: 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 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, 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

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, 1613. Riding Westward

Let mans 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 motions, lose their owne
And being by others hurried every day,
Scarce in a yeare their natural! forme obey:
Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
For their first mover, and are whirld by it.
Hence is's, that I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my Soules forme bends 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 ['almost be glad, I do not see
That spectacle of too much weight for meet
Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye;
What a death were it then to see God dye?
It made his owne Lieutenant Nature shrinke,
It made his footstool crack, and the Sunne winke.
Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
And tune all spheares at once, peirc'd with those holes?
Could I behold that endlesse height which is
Zenith to us, and to'our Antipodes,
Humbled below us? or that blood which is
The seat of all our Soules, if not of his,
Make curt of dust, or that flesh which was worne
By God, for his apparel!, rag'd, and tome?
If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was Gods 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 unto my memory,
For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards mee,
O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree;
I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O thinke mee worth shine anger, punish mee,
Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
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

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: Tho Has Made Me

Tho has 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
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John Donne

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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 III: O Might Those Sighs And Tears Return Again

O might those sighs and tears return again
Into my breast and eyes, which I have spent,
That I might in this holy discontent
Mourn with some fruit, as I have mourned in vain;
In mine Idolatry what showers of rain
Mine eyes did waste! what griefs my heart did rent!
That sufferance was my sin; now I repent;
'Cause I did suffer I must suffer pain.
Th' hydropic drunkard, and night-scouting thief,
The itchy lecher, and self-tickling proud
Have the remembrance of past joys for relief
Of coming ills. To (poor) me is allowed
No ease; for long, yet vehement grief hath been
Th' effect and cause, the punishment and sin.

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

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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 IX: If Poysonous Mineralls

If poysonous mineralls, and if that tree,
Whose fruit threw death on else immortall us,
If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
Cannot be damn'd; Alas; why should I bee?
Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,
Make sinnes, else equall, in mee more heinous?
And mercy being easie, and glorious
To God; in his sterne wrath, why threatens hee?
But who am I , that dare dispute with thee
O God? Oh! of thine onely worthy blood,
And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,
And drowne in it my sinnes black memorie;
That thou remember them, some claime as debt,
I thinke 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 VI: This Is My Play's Last Scene, Here Heavens Appoint

This is my play's last scene, here heavens appoint
My pilgrimage's last mile; and my race
Idly, yet quickly run, hath this last pace,
My span's last inch, my minute's latest point,
And gluttonous death, will instantly unjoint
My body and soul, and I shall sleep a space;
But my ever-waking part shall see that face,
Whose fear already shakes my every joint:
Then, as my soul, t' heaven her first seat, takes flight,
And earth-born body in the earth shall dwell,
So fall my sins that all may have their right
(To where they're bred, and would press me) to hell.
Impute me righteous, thus purged of evil,
For thus I leave the world, the flesh, the devil.

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 feigne 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 immediately,
How shall my mindes white truth by them be try'd?
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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 ?
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And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

John Donne

Holy Sonnet X:Death be not proud

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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 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 XIV: Batter My Heart, Three-Personed God

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 even 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 XV: Wilt Thou Love God

Wilt thou love God, as he thee? then digest,
My Soule, this wholesome 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,
Cohaire 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?
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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,

pmdv3 n='33-11'> 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

Hymn 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
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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

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 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

Loves' 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 intreat 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.

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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

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

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 friends' 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

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

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 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 enthrall'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 grogaram."
 "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

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

Song: Go and catch a falling star

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Get with child a mandrake root,
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And find
What wind
Serves to advance an honest mind.
If thou be'est 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 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

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 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

That Time and Absence proves Rather helps than hurts to loves

ABSENCE, hear thou my protestation
Against thy strength,
Distance and length:
Do what thou canst for alteration,
For hearts of truest mettle
Absence doth join and Time doth settle.

Who loves a mistress of such quality,
His mind hath found
Affection's ground
Beyond time, place, and all mortality.
To hearts that cannot vary
Absence is present, Time doth tarry.

My senses want their outward motion
Which now within
Reason doth win,
Redoubled by her secret notion:
Like rich men that take pleasure
In hiding more than handling treasure.

By Absence this good means I gain,
That I can catch her
Where none can watch her,
In some close corner of my brain:
There I embrace and kiss her,
And so enjoy her and none miss her.

John Donne

The Apparation

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 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 Baite

Come live with mee, and bee my love,
And wee will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and christall brookes,
With silken lines, and silver hookes.

There will the river whispering runne
Warm'd by thy eyes, more than the Sunne.
And there the'inamor'd fish will stay,
Begging themselves they may betray.

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

If thou, to be so seene, beest loath,
By Sunne, or Moone, thou darknest both,
And if my selfe have leave to see,
I need not their light, having thee.

Let others freeze with angling reeds,
And cut their legges, with shells and weeds,
Or treacherously poore fish beset,
With strangling snare, or windowie net:

Let coarse bold hands, from slimy nest
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest,
Or curious traitors, sleevesilke flies
Bewitch poore fishes wandring eyes.

For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
For thou thy selfe art thine owne bait;
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas, is wiser farre than I.

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 Cannonization

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're tapers too, and at our own cost die,
And we in us find the 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 Canonization

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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 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 Funeral

Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm
Nor question much
That subtle wreath of hair, which crowns my arm;
The mystery, the sign, you must not touch,
For 'tis my outward soul,
Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,
Will leave this to control
And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.
For if the sinewy thread my brain lets fall
Through every part
Can tie those parts, and make me one of all,
Those hairs which upward grew, and strength and art
Have from a better brain,
Can better do't; except she meant that I
By this should know my pain,
As prisoners then are manacled, when they're condemn'd to die.

Whate'er she meant by't, bury it with me,
For since I am
Love's martyr, it might breed idolatry,
If into other hands these relics came;
As 'twas humility
To afford to it all that a soul can do,
So, 'tis some bravery,
That since you would have none of me, I bury some of you.

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 hairees 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 good-Morrow

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we lov'd? Were we not wean'd till then,
But suck'd 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 desir'd, 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 sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one 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 mix'd equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

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 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

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

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

Woman's Constancy

Now thou hast loved me one whole day,
Tomorrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say?
Wilt thou then antedate some new-made vow?
Or say that now
We are not just those persons which we were?
Or, that oaths made in reverential fear
Of love, and his wrath, any may forswear?
Or, as true deaths, true marriages untie,
So lovers' contracts, images of those,
Bind but till sleep, death's image, them unloose?
Or your own end to justify,
For having purposed change, and falsehood, you
Can have no way but falsehood to be true?
Vain lunatic, against these 'scapes I could
Dispute, and conquer, if I would,
Which I abstain to do,
For by tomorrow, I may think so too.

John Donne