

A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

BY [JOHN DONNE](#) (1611)

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 refined,
That our selves 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 fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the other do.

And though it in the center 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.

The Flea

BY [JOHN DONNE](#)

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st 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, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w'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 say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

Elegy XIX: To His Mistress Going to Bed

John Donne (1633)

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 tir'd with standing though he never fight.
Off with that girdle, like heaven's Zone glistering,
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 shew
The hairy Diadem which on you doth grow:
Now off with those shoes, and then safely tread
In this love's hallow'd temple, this soft bed.
In such white robes, heaven's Angels used to be
Received by men; Thou Angel bringst 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.
Licence 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 mann'd,

My Mine of precious stones, My Empirie,

How blest 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 uncloth'd 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 lay-men, are all women thus array'd;

Themselves are mystic books, which only we

(Whom their imputed grace will dignify)

Must see reveal'd. Then since that I may know;

As liberally, as to a Midwife, shew

Thy self: cast all, yea, this white linen hence,

There is no penance due to innocence.

To teach thee, I am naked first; why then

What needst thou have more covering than a man.

Death, be not proud

BY [JOHN DONNE](#)

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.

Paradise

George Herbert (1633)

I Bless thee, Lord, because I GROW
Among thy trees, which in a ROW
To thee both fruit and order OW.

What open force, or hidden CHARM
Can blast my fruit, or bring me HARM,
While the inclosure is thine ARM.

Inclose me still for fear I START.
Be to me rather sharp and TART,
Then let me want thy hand and ART.

When thou dost greater judgments SPARE,
And with thy knife but prune and PARE,
Ev'n fruitfull trees more fruitful ARE.

Such sharpness shows the sweetest FRIEND:
Such cuttings rather heal then REND:
And such beginnings touch their END.

Upon a Fit of Sickness, Anno 1632

By: Anne Bradstreet

Twice ten years old not fully told
since nature gave me breath,
My race is run, my thread spun,
lo, here is fatal death.
All men must die, and so must I;
this cannot be revoked.
For Adam's sake this word God spake
when he so high provoked.
Yet live I shall, this life's but small,
in place of highest bliss,
Where I shall have all I can crave,
no life is like to this.
For what's this but care and strife
since first we came from womb?
Our strength doth waste, our time doth haste,
and then we go to th' tomb.
O bubble blast, how long can'st last?
that always art a breaking,
No sooner blown, but dead and gone,
ev'n as a word that's speaking.
O whilst I live this grace me give,
I doing good may be,
Then death's arrest I shall count best,
because it's Thy decree;
Bestow much cost there's nothing lost,
to make salvation sure,
O great's the gain, though got with pain,
comes by profession pure.
The race is run, the field is won,

the victory's mine I see;
Forever known, thou envious foe,
the foil belongs to thee.

Amoretti XXX: My Love is like to ice, and I to fire

BY EDMUND SPENSER

My Love is like to ice, and I to fire:
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told,
That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,
And ice, which is congeal'd with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

The World

BY [HENRY VAUGHAN](#)

I saw Eternity the other night,
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
 All calm, as it was bright;
And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years,
 Driv'n by the spheres
Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world
 And all her train were hurl'd.
The doting lover in his quaintest strain
 Did there complain;
Near him, his lute, his fancy, and his flights,
 Wit's sour delights,
With gloves, and knots, the silly snares of pleasure,
 Yet his dear treasure
All scatter'd lay, while he his eyes did pour
 Upon a flow'r.

The darksome statesman hung with weights and woe,
Like a thick midnight-fog mov'd there so slow,
 He did not stay, nor go;
Condemning thoughts (like sad eclipses) scowl
 Upon his soul,
And clouds of crying witnesses without
 Pursued him with one shout.
Yet digg'd the mole, and lest his ways be found,
 Work'd under ground,
Where he did clutch his prey; but one did see
 That policy;
Churches and altars fed him; perjuries
 Were gnats and flies;
It rain'd about him blood and tears, but he
 Drank them as free.

The fearful miser on a heap of rust
Sate pining all his life there, did scarce trust
 His own hands with the dust,
Yet would not place one piece above, but lives
 In fear of thieves;

Thousands there were as frantic as himself,
And hugg'd each one his pelf;
The downright epicure plac'd heav'n in sense,
And scorn'd pretence,
While others, slipp'd into a wide excess,
Said little less;
The weaker sort slight, trivial wares enslave,
Who think them brave;
And poor despised Truth sate counting by
Their victory.

Yet some, who all this while did weep and sing,
And sing, and weep, soar'd up into the ring;
But most would use no wing.
O fools (said I) thus to prefer dark night
Before true light,
To live in grots and caves, and hate the day
Because it shews the way,
The way, which from this dead and dark abode
Leads up to God,
A way where you might tread the sun, and be
More bright than he.
But as I did their madness so discuss
One whisper'd thus,
"This ring the Bridegroom did for none provide,
But for his bride."