

Philip Sidney

Astrophil and Stella

The text of each poem with a line by
line paraphrase,
and occasional explanatory notes



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1

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

Loving, and wishing to show my love in verse,
So that Stella might find pleasure in my pain,
So that pleasure might make her read, and reading make
her know me,
And knowledge might win pity for me, and pity might
obtain grace,
I looked for fitting words to depict the darkest face of
sadness,
Studying clever creations in order to entertain her mind,
Often turning others' pages to see if, from them,
Fresh and fruitful ideas would flow into my brain.
But words came out lamely, lacking the support of
Imagination:
Imagination, nature's child, fled the blows of Study, her
stepmother:
And the writings ('feet') of others seemed only alien things
in the way.
So while pregnant with the desire to speak, helpless with
the birth pangs,
Biting at my pen which disobeyed me, beating myself in
anger,
My Muse said to me 'Fool, look in your heart and write.'

2

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbed shot
Love gave the wound, which while I breathe will bleed;
But known worth did in mine of time proceed,
Till by degrees it had full conquest got:
I saw and liked, I liked but loved not;
I lov'd, but straight did not what Love decreed.
At length to love's decrees I, forc'd, agreed,
Yet with repining at so partial lot.
Now even that footstep of lost liberty
Is gone, and now like slave-born Muscovite
I call it praise to suffer tyranny;
And now employ the remnant of my wit
To make myself believe that all is well,
While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.

Love gave the wound, which will bleed as long as I
breathe,
But not at the first sight of her, nor with a chance shot,
Rather her established worth tunnelled away for a time,
Until, little by little, it achieved a complete conquest.
I saw her and liked her: I liked her but did not love her yet:
Then I loved her but did not immediately obey Love's
demands:
At length under duress I agreed to Love's commands,
Though complaining about the unfairness of my fate.
Now even that step on the ladder of lost freedom
Is vanished, and like a Muscovite born to love slavery,
I call undergoing tyranny something worthy of praise:
And now I make use of what is left of my intelligence
To convince myself that everything is well,
While with sensitive art I depict my self in hell.

Note: The Muscovites were under the rule of Ivan the
Terrible at this time.

3

Let dainty wits cry on the Sisters nine,
That bravely mask'd, their fancies may be told:
Or, Pindar's apes, flaunt they in phrases fine,
Enam'ling with pied flowers their thoughts of gold.
Or else let them in statelier glory shine,
Ennobling new found tropes with problems old,
Or with strange similes enrich each line,
Of herbs or beasts which Inde or Afric' hold.
For me in sooth, no Muse but one I know:
Phrases and problems from my reach do grow,
And strange things cost too dear for my poor sprites.
How then? Even thus: in Stella's face I read
What love and beauty be, then all my deed
But copying is, what in her Nature writes.

Let affected intellects invoke the nine Muses,
So that their works may be written with theatrical
flourishes:
Or imitators of the poet Pindar flaunt themselves in fine
phrases,
Over-refining their gilded thoughts with embellishments;
Or let them shine out in a higher style,
Making newly coined metaphors nobler with ancient
matters:
Or enrich each line with strange similes,
Or with herbs or beasts which are found in Africa or India.
In fact I only know one Muse (*Stella*)
And phrases and ancient matters are out of my reach,
And foreign things cost too much for my poor spirits.
What to do then? Why this: I read in Stella's face
What love and beauty are: then all I need to do
Is to copy what Nature has written in her.

Note: Sydney lists four modes of elaboration: invocation of the Muses, imitation of Pindar (518-c446BC) and the Greeks, rhetorical and logical tropes, and the use of exotic similes.

Virtue, alas, now let me take some rest.
Thou set'st a bate between my will and wit.
If vain love have my simple soul oppress'd,
Leave what thou likest not, deal not thou with it.
Thy scepter use in some old Cato's breast;
Churches or schools are for thy seat more fit.
I do confess, pardon a fault confess'd,
My mouth too tender is for thy hard bit.
But if that needs thou wilt usurping be,
The little reason that is left in me,
And still th'effect of thy persuasions prove:
I swear, my heart such one shall show to thee
That shrines in flesh so true a deity,
That Virtue, thou thyself shalt be in love.

Virtue let me have some rest.

You cause a conflict between my will and my intellect:
If hopeless love has oppressed my unsophisticated soul,
Leave me alone since you dislike it, and have no dealings
with me.

Use your power on some severe old man like Cato the
Censor:

Churches or schools are more suited for your occupation.
I confess, and please pardon the fault since I confess it,
That my mouth is too tender to receive your hard bit.
But if you really have to take control of
The little bit of reason that is left to me,
And go on to prove the results of your persuasiveness:
I swear that my heart will show you someone
Who enshrines so true a deity in her flesh
That even you, Virtue, will be in love with her.

Note: Cato the Censor, the elder Cato (234-149BC) a
Roman noted for his severity.

5

It is most true, that eyes are form'd to serve
The inward light; and that the heavenly part
Ought to be king, from whose rules who do swerve,
Rebels to Nature, strive for their own smart.
It is most true, what we call Cupid's dart,
An image is, which for ourselves we carve:
And, fools, adore in temple of our heart,
Till that good God make Church and churchman starve.
True, that true beauty virtue is indeed,
Whereof this beauty can be but a shade,
Which elements with mortal mixture breed:
True, that on earth we are but pilgrims made,
And should in soul up to our country move:
True, and yet true that I must Stella love.

It is true that our eyes are created to serve
The inner light of the soul, and that the heavenly part
Of us ought to be king, and those who deviate from its rules
Are rebels against Nature, and their efforts harm
themselves.

It is true that what we call Cupid's arrow
Is a symbolic image that we carve out for ourselves,
And foolishly give adoration to in our hearts as if in a
temple,
Until that false god puts Church and churchmen out of
work.

It is true that Virtue is indeed true beauty,
Of which earthly beauty can only be a shadow
Made from a mortal mixture of the elements:
It is true that we are only created to be pilgrims on earth,
And should, within our souls, travel upwards to our true
country:

All this is true, and yet it is also true that I must love Stella.

Note: Plato's theory is that mortal beauty is a shadow of
ideal virtue, the elements combining and then dissolving
again in death.

6

Some lovers speak when they their Muses entertain,
Of hopes begot by fear, of wot not what desires:
Of force of heav'nly beams, infusing hellish pain:
Of living deaths, dear wounds, fair storms, and freezing
fires.

Some one his song in Jove, and Jove's strange tales attires,
Broidered with bulls and swans, powdered with golden
rain;

Another humbler wit to shepherd's pipe retires,
Yet hiding royal blood full oft in rural vein.

To some a sweetest plaint a sweetest style affords,
While tears pour out his ink, and sighs breathe out his
words:

His paper pale despair, and pain his pen doth move.
I can speak what I feel, and feel as much as they,
But think that all the map of my state I display,
When trembling voice brings forth that I do Stella love.

Some lovers, when inspired by their Muses,
Speak about hopes created by fear, and of who-knows-what
desires,

Of the power of heavenly rays infusing hellish pain,
Of living deaths, dear wounds, fair storms, and freezing
fires:

One of them dresses his poems with Jupiter and Jupiter's
strange tales,
Embroidering them with bulls and swans, sprinkling golden
rain:

Another humbler poet writes about pastoral shepherd's
flutes,

But often hiding royal attitudes in the rural similes and
metaphors:

To some poets a sweet sadness allows their sweetest style,
While they use tears for ink, and breathe out their words in
sighs,

And pale despair is their paper, and pain moves their pen.

I can speak what I feel, and feel as much as they do,

But I think that I show everything I can of my state of mind
When my trembling voice utters its love for Stella.

Note: Petrarch used the oxymoron heavily e.g. freezing
fires. The other references are perhaps to Ronsard and the
Pléiades, the Virgilian school of pastoral poetry, and
Dante's *dolce stil nuovo*, the sweet new style of Dante,
Cavalcante, and others. For Jupiter, and Europa, Leda and
Danae whom he raped while disguised as a bull, swan, and
shower of gold respectively see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
VI:103-114.

When Nature made her chief work, Stella's eyes,
In colour black why wrapp'd she beams so bright?
Would she in beamy black, like painter wise,
Frame daintiest lustre, mix'd of shades and light?
Or did she else that sober hue devise,
In object best to knit and strength our sight,
Lest if no veil those brave gleams did disguise,
They sun-like should more dazzle than delight?
Or would she her miraculous power show,
That whereas black seems Beauty's contrary,
She even in black doth make all beauties flow?
Both so and thus, she minding Love should be
Placed ever there, gave him this mourning weed,
To honour all their deaths, who for her bleed.

Why did Nature wrap Stella's eyes, those bright rays
That are Nature's main work, in black colouring?
Did Nature wish, like a skilled painter using chiaroscuro
technique,
To create the finest lustre by mixing shadows and light?
Or did Nature create that sombre shade of colour
In order to knit together and strengthen our powers of
vision,
In case Stella's sun-like eyes should dazzle more than they
delight
By being free of any protective veil?
Or did Nature wish to show her miraculous powers
By making all beauties appear with a black colouring
Even though black is not regarded as being beautiful?
No, it is as follows: Nature remembering that Love should
always be
Placed in Stella's eyes, gave Love's clothes this mournful
colour,
To honour the deaths of all those who bleed to death for her
sake.

Note: Stella, Penelope Devereux, had dark eyes and fair
hair.

8

Love, born in Greece, of late fled from his native place,
Forc'd by a tedious proof, that Turkish harden'd heart
Is no fit mark to pierce with his fine pointed dart,
And pleas'd with our soft peace, stayed here his flying race.
But finding these north climes do coldly him embrace,
Not used to frozen clips, he strave to find some part
Where with most ease and warmth he might employ his art:
At length he perch'd himself in Stella's joyful face,
Whose fair skin, beamy eyes, like morning sun on snow,
Deceiv'd the quaking boy, who thought from so pure light
Effects of lively heat must needs in nature grow.
But she most fair, most cold, made him thence take his
flight
To my close heart, where while some firebrands he did lay,
He burnt un'wares his wings, and cannot fly away.

Love (Eros-Cupid) who was born in ancient Greece, has
lately fled

From his native country, forced to do so by tedious
evidence

That hard Turkish hearts are no fit target for his arrows:

And pleased with England's soft peace he stopped here.

But finding these northern regions grip him coldly,

And not used to frozen embraces, he tried to find some
place

Where he could carry out his role with most warmth and
ease.

After a while he settled on Stella's joyful face,

Her fair skin and bright eyes, like morning sun on snow,

Deceiving the shivering boy, who thought that from such a
pure light

The effects of lively heat must necessarily follow.

But Stella, most beautiful, but most cold, made him flee
that place

To my secret heart, where he burnt his wings without
realising it,

As he laid some logs for a fire: and now he cannot fly
away.

Note: Greece was part of the Turkish Ottoman Empire,
noted for cruelty. Cyprus, Aphrodite's island, was taken by
the Turks in 1573.

Queen Virtue's court, which some call Stella's face,
Prepar'd by Nature's choicest furniture,
Hath his front built of alabaster pure;
Gold in the covering of that stately place.
The door by which sometimes comes forth her Grace
Red porphyry is, which lock of pearl makes sure,
Whose porches rich (which name of cheeks endure)
Marble mix'd red and white do interlace.
The windows now through which this heav'nly guest
Looks o'er the world, and can find nothing such,
Which dare claim from those lights the name of best,
Of touch they are that without touch doth touch,
Which Cupid's self from Beauty's mine did draw:
Of touch they are, and poor I am their straw.

Some call Stella's face the Court of Queen Virtue,
And being made with Nature's main materials
Its frontage (her face and forehead) is built of pure
alabaster:

Gold (her hair) is the covering of that stately place:
The door (her mouth) out of which her grace sometimes
comes

Is red porphyry, which pearl locks (her teeth) make secure,
Whose rich porches (which are called her cheeks)
Are interlaced with red and white marble:

The windows (her eyes) through which this heavenly guest
Looks at the world, and can find nothing that can lay claim
To being the best when compared with them, are made of
touchstone

(Jasper, used to prove gold alloys) that without touching the
heart, do touch its emotions, and which Cupid himself
brought from his mines:

They are of touchwood/paper and I am the poor straw they
set light to.

10

Reason, in faith thou art well serv'd, that still
Wouldst brabbling be with sense and love in me:
I rather wish'd thee climb the Muses' hill,
Or reach the fruit of Nature's choicest tree,
Or seek heav'n's course, or heav'n's inside to see:
Why shouldst thou toil our thorny soil to till?
Leave sense, and those which sense's objects be:
Deal thou with powers of thoughts, leave love to will.
But thou wouldst needs fight both with love and sense,
With sword of wit, giving wounds of dispraise,
Till downright blows did foil thy cunning fence:
For soon as they strake thee with Stella's rays,
Reason thou kneel'dst, and offeredst straight to prove
By reason good, good reason her to love.

Reason you are truly making a mistake if you still
Wish to quibble within me about love and sensation.
I would rather desire you to climb Parnassus, the Muse's
hill,
Or reach for the fruit of the most excellent tree in Nature,
Or search out the intent of Heaven, or try to see its inner
form.
Why should you labour to cultivate my thorny soil?
Leave sensation, and the objects of the senses:
Deal with the power of thought, leave love to the power of
the will.
But you seemed to wish to fight against love and sensation,
Giving wounds of disparagement with the sword of wit,
Until real blows foiled your cunning defences:
Since as soon as you were struck by the rays from Stella's
eyes,
You knelt down, Reason, and straight away offered to
prove
That loving her was reasonable by using good rational
argument.

11

In truth, oh Love, with what a boyish kind
Thou doest proceed in thy most serious ways:
That when the heav'n to thee his best displays,
Yet of that best thou leav'st the best behind.
For like a child that some fair book doth find,
With gilded leaves or coloured vellum plays,
Or at the most on some fine picture stays,
But never heeds the fruit of writer's mind:
So when thou saw'st in Nature's cabinet
Stella, thou straight look'st babies in her eyes,
In her cheek's pit thou didst thy pitfold set:
And in her breast bo-peep or couching lies,
Playing and shining in each outward part:
But, fool, seek'st not to get into her heart.

O Love, truly, in what a boyish manner
You carry out your most serious tasks,
So that when Heaven shows you his best offering
You nevertheless leave that best behind.
Since you are like a child who finds a lovely book,
That plays with the gilded pages or the coloured parchment,
Or at best stays looking at some fine picture inside it,
But pays no attention to the result of the writer's work:
So when you saw Stella in Nature's display cabinet
You straight away played childish games in her eyes,
Set your traps for birds in her cheeks' hollows,
And made her breast play at hiding and revealing,
Playing and shining in each outer part of her:
But like a fool you did not try to reach her heart.

Cupid, because thou shin'st in Stella's eyes,
That from her locks, thy day-nets, none 'scapes free,
That those lips swell, so full of thee they be,
That her sweet breath makes oft thy flames to rise,
That in her breast thy pap well sugared lies,
That her Grace gracious makes thy wrongs, that she
What words so ere she speak persuades for thee,
That her clear voice lifts thy fame to the skies:
Thou countest Stella thine, like those whose powers
Having got up a breach by fighting well,
Cry, "Victory, this fair day all is ours."
Oh no, her heart is such a citadel,
So fortified with wit, stored with disdain,
That to win it, is all the skill and pain.

Cupid, because you shine in Stella's eyes,
And no one escapes the effect of her long hair, your net for
birds,
And her lips are swollen, being so full of you (Love)
That her sweet breathing often makes your flames rise,
And your pap, well-sugared, resides in her breasts,
And her grace makes your wrongs gracious, in that she
Takes your part with whatever words she utters,
And her clear voice raises your fame to the skies:
Because of all that you think Stella belongs to you, like
those men
Who having created a breach in the enemy line by fighting
well
Prematurely call out that the victory is theirs.
On no, her heart is such a fortress
Defended by wit, filled with disdain,
That all the true skill and trouble is in winning her heart
itself.

Phoebus was judge between Jove, Mars, and Love,
Of those three gods, whose arms the fairest were:
Jove's golden shield did eagle sables bear,
Whose talons held young Ganymede above:
But in vert field Mars bare a golden spear,
Which through a bleeding heart his point did shove:
Each had his crest; Mars carried Venus' glove,
Jove in his helm the thunderbolt did rear.
Cupid them smiles, for on his crest there lies
Stella's fair hair, her face he makes his shield,
Where roses gules are borne in silver field.
Phoebus drew wide the curtains of the skies
To blaze these last, and sware devoutly then,
The first, thus match'd, were scanty gentlemen.

Phoebus the sun-god was the judge between Jupiter, Mars
and Love,
As to whose was the best coat of arms, among the three of
them:
Jupiter's golden shield carried the device of a black eagle,
Its talons holding young Ganymede (whom he abducted)
aloft:
But Mars carried the device of a golden spear on a green
background,
Whose point was shown piercing a bleeding heart:
Each had his helmet decoration: Mars carried Venus's
glove,
Jupiter had a thunderbolt depicted on his helmet.
Cupid smiled then, because his crest was Stella's fair hair,
And he depicted her face on his shield,
Where red roses are shown on a silver field (like the
Devereux arms).
Phoebus the sun-god drew the curtains of the skies, the
clouds,
To describe these arms in heraldic terms, and then swore
devoutly
That compared with these the first two were hardly those of
gentlemen.

Note: Mythologically Jupiter in the form of an eagle
abducted Ganymede, and Mars had a notorious affair with
Venus (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X:155-161 and IV:167-189).
The Devereux coat of arms was *argent, a fesse, gules in
chief three torteaux*, three red discs on a silver background.

Alas, have I not pain enough, my friend,
Upon whose breast a fiercer gripe doth tire,
Than did on him who first stole down the fire,
While Love on me doth all his quiver spend,
But with your rhubarb words you must contend,
To grieve me worse, in saying that desire
Doth plunge my well-form'd soul even in the mire
Of sinful thoughts, which do in ruin end?
If that be sin which doth the manners frame,
Well stayed with truth in word and faith of deed,
Ready of wit and fearing nought but shame:
If that be sin which in fix'd hearts doth breed
A loathing of all loose unchastity,
Then love is sin, and let me sinful be.

Alas, do I not have enough pain, my friend,
(I, at whose breast a fiercer vulture tears
Than at Prometheus's, who first stole fire,
While love spends all the arrows of his quiver on me),
Without you striving to grieve me more
With your purgative rhubarb words, by saying that desire
Plunges my well-formed soul now in the mire
Of sinful thoughts, which end in ruin?
If that is sin which develops good manners,
Well balanced with truth in words and faith in deeds,
Ready-witted and fearing nothing but shame:
If that is sin which in true fixed hearts breeds
A loathing of all loose un-chastity:
Then love is sin, and let me be sinful.

You that do search for every purling spring,
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows,
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your poesy wring;
You that do dictionary's method bring
Into your rimes, running in rattling rows;
You that poor Petrarch's long-deceased woes,
With new-born sighs and denizen'd wit do sing,
You take wrong ways: those far-fet helps be such
As do bewray a want of inward touch:
And sure at length stol'n goods do come to light.
But if (both for your love and skill) your name
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of Fame,
Stella behold, and then begin to endite.

You who search for every rippling stream
Which flows from the ribs of old Mount Parnassus,
And gather every flower, not the sweetest one perhaps,
Which grows near there, into your poetry:
You who bring dictionary compilation methods
Into your rhymes, alliterating by 'running them in rattling
rows':
You who sing long dead Petrarch's woes
With new sighs and naturalised (once-foreign) wit:
You take wrong ways, those far-fetched aids are such
As expose a want of inner touch:
And surely at last stolen goods do come to light.
But if you seek (both for your love and skill)
To nurse your name at the fullest breasts of Fame,
Gaze on Stella, and then begin descriptively to write.

Note: The sonnets of Petrarch's Canzoniere were heavily imitated all over Europe.

16

In nature apt to like when I did see
Beauties, which were of many carats fine,
My boiling sprites did thither soon incline,
And, Love, I thought that I was full of thee:
But finding not those restless flames in me,
Which others said did make their souls to pine,
I thought those babes of some pin's hurt did whine,
By my love judging what love's pain might be.
But while I thus with this young lion played,
Mine eyes (shall I say curst or blest?) beheld
Stella; now she is nam'd, need more be said?
In her sight I a lesson new have spell'd,
I now have learn'd Love right, and learn'd even so,
As who by being poisoned doth poison know.

Tending, by nature, to like those beauties, whom I saw,
Who were of many carats in value,
My fiery spirits soon inclined towards them,
And, Love, I thought that I was full of you:
But finding that there was not the restless flame in me
That others said made their souls pine,
I thought they were babies whining at the scratch of a pin,
Judging by my own pain what Love's pain might be.
But while I was playing like this with the lion cub,
My eyes (shall I say cursed or blessed?) beheld
Stella: now she is named, need any more be said?
In her sight I have spelled out a new lesson:
I now have learned love correctly, and learned like
One who knows poison by being poisoned.

Note: The story of the lion cub that destroyed the flocks of its protector was used by Aeschylus regarding Helen of Troy.

His mother dear Cupid offended late,
Because that Mars grown slacker in her love,
With pricking shot he did not throughly more
To keep the pace of their first loving state.
The boy refus'd for fear of Mars's hate,
Who threaten'd stripes, if he his wrath did prove:
But she in chafe him from her lap did shove,
Brake bow, brake shafts, while Cupid weeping sate:
Till that his grandame Nature pitying it
Of Stella's brows make him two better bows,
And in her eyes of arrows infinite.
Oh how for joy he leaps, oh how he crows,
And straight therewith like wags new got to play,
Falls to shrewd turns, and I was in his way.

Cupid's mother, Venus, lately offended him,
Because he did not thoroughly wound Mars,
Whose love of her had grown slack, with his pricking
arrows,
In order to keep up the intensity of their first loving state.
The boy refused for fear of Mars's hatred,
Who threatened him with blows if he provoked his anger:
But she in vexation shoved him from her lap,
Broke his bow, broke his arrows, while Cupid sat weeping,
Till his Grandmother Nature pitying it,
Made him two better bows from Stella's eyebrows,
And in her eyes made infinite arrows.
O how he leaps for joy, how he crows,
And straight away sets about cunning use of them,
Like a mischievous scamp at play, and I was in his way.

With what sharp checks I in myself am shent,
When into Reason's audit I do go:
And by just counts myself a bankrupt know
Of all the goods, which heav'n to me hath lent:
Unable quite to pay even Nature's rent,
Which unto it by birthright I do owe:
And, which is worse, no good excuse can show,
But that my wealth I have most idly spent.
My youth doth waste, my knowledge brings forth toys,
My wit doth strive those passions to defend,
Which for reward spoil it with vain annoys.
I see my course to lose myself doth bend:
I see and yet no greater sorrow take,
Than that I lose no more for Stella's sake.

With what sharp rebukes I am shamed in myself
When I enter into Reason's audit,
And by careful counting know myself to be bankrupt
Of all those goods, which heaven has lent me,
Unable even to be quit by paying Nature's rent,
(By dying) which I owe her by birthright;
And, what is worse, not able to show a good excuse
Except that I have spent my wealth most idly.
My youth wastes away, my knowledge produces toys,
My wit strives to defend those passions
The reward of which is to spoil my wit with vain anxieties.
I see that my course points towards my losing myself:
I see, and yet take from that no greater sorrow
Than that I do not lose even more for Stella's sake.

On Cupid's bow how are my heartstrings bent,
That see my wrack, and yet embrace the same?
When most I glory, then I feel most shame:
I willing run, yet while I run, repent.
My best wits still their own disgrace invent:
My very ink turns straight to Stella's name;
And yet my words, as them my pen doth frame,
Avisе themselves that they are vainly spent.
For though she pass all things, yet what is all
That unto me, who fare like him that both
Looks to the skies and in a ditch doth fall?
Oh let me prop my mind, yet in his growth,
And not in Nature, for best fruits unfit:
"Scholar," saith Love, "bend hitherward your wit."

How my heartstrings are strung on Cupid's bow,
I, who see my ruin, and yet embrace it!
When I most glory, then I feel most shame:
I run to her willingly, yet, while I run, repent:
My best thoughts still invent their own disgrace:
My very ink turns straight towards Stella's name,
And yet my words, as my pen frames them,
Are aware that they are spent in vain:
For though she surpasses all things, yet what is all
That to me, who fare like him (Thales, the philosopher)
Who both looks at the sky, and falls into the ditch?
O let me support my mind, yet in its growth,
And not by nature unfit to produce the best fruits:
'Scholar,' says Love, 'turn your wit towards me.'

Note: The story of the philosopher falling into a ditch,
while gazing at the stars, is commonly told of Thales
(Plato: Theatetus, 174a)

Fly, fly, my friends, I have my death wound; fly!
See there that boy, that murd'ring boy I say,
Who like a thief, hid in dark bush doth lie,
Till bloody bullet get him wrongful prey.
So tyrant he no fitter place could spy,
Nor so fair level in so secret stay,
As that sweet black which veils the heav'nly eye:
There himself with his shot he close doth lay.
Poor passenger, pass now thereby I did,
And stayed pleas'd with the prospect of the place,
While that black hue from me the bad guest hid:
But straight I saw motions of lightning grace,
And then descried the glist'ring of his dart:
But ere I could fly hence, it pierc'd my heart.

Fly, fly, my friends, I have my death-wound, fly;
See that boy there, that murdering boy, I say,
Who like a thief lies hidden in a dark bush,
Till a bloody bullet wins him a wrongful victim:
He is so tyrannical he could see no better place,
Nor aim so successfully, in a concealment as secret
As that sweet black which veils the heavenly eye:
There he lies closely hidden with his shot.
I, a poor passer-by, did pass by there just now,
And stayed, pleased with the look of the place,
While that black colour hid the bad guest from me;
But I straightaway saw motions of lightning grace,
And then made out the gleaming of his arrow:
But before I could flee from there, it pierced my heart.

Your words, my friend, (right healthful caustics) blame
My young mind marr'd, whom Love doth windlass so,
That mine own writings like bad servants show
My wits, quick in vain thoughts, in virtue lame;
That Plato I read for nought, but if he tame
Such doltish gyres; that to my birth I owe
Nobler desires, lest else that friendly foe,
Great Expectation, were a train of shame.
For since mad March great promise made of me,
If now the May of my years much decline,
What can be hoped my harvest time will be?
Sure you say well, "Your wisdom's golden mine,
Dig deep with learning's spade." Now tell me this,
Hath this world aught so fair as Stella is?

Your words my friend (truly health-giving corrosives)
blame
My young spoilt mind, I, whom Love ensnares so
That my own writings show my thoughts to be bad
servants,
Quick at vain thoughts, lame in virtuous ones:
That I read Plato uselessly unless he tames
My coltish moods: that I owe towards my high birth
Nobler desires, or else that friendly foe,
Great Expectation, will wear a train of shame.
For since mad March showed me to have great promise,
If now the May of my years declines greatly from it,
What can it be hoped that my harvest time will show?
Truly you say well: 'Dig deep your wisdom's golden mine
With learning's spade,' now tell me this,
Has this world anything as lovely as Stella is?

Note: Plato likened Reason to a charioteer of the passions.

In highest way of heav'n the Sun did ride,
Progressing then from fair twins' golden place:
Having no scarf of clouds before his face,
But shining forth of heat in his chief pride;
When some fair ladies by hard promise tied,
On horseback met him in his furious race,
Yet each prepar'd with fan's well-shading grace
From that foe's wounds their tender skins to hide.
Stella alone with face unarmed march'd.
Either to do like him which open shone,
Or careless of the wealth because her own:
Yet were the hid and meaner beauties parch'd,
Her daintiest bare went free; the cause was this,
The Sun, which others burn'd, did her but kiss.

In the highest part of heaven the sun did ride,
Progressing from Gemini's, the fair twin's, golden place:
Having no scarf of clouds in front of his face,
But shining out hotly in his full pride:
When some fair ladies, tied by a firm promise,
Met him on horseback in his furious race,
Yet each one prepared, with the well-shading grace of a
fan,
To hide their tender skins from that enemy's wounds.
Only Stella went with unarmed face,
Either to be like him, shining openly,
Or careless of that wealth because it was her own:
Yet the lesser beauties, who were hidden, were parched,
While her daintiest bare face went unharmed: the cause was
that
The sun, which burned the others, only kissed her.

The curious wits seeing dull pensiveness
Bewray itself in my long settled eyes,
Whence those same fumes of melancholy rise,
With idle pains, and missing aim, do guess.
Some that know how my spring I did address,
Deem that my Muse some fruit of knowledge plies:
Others, because the Prince my service tries,
Think that I think state errors to redress.
But harder judges judge ambition's rage,
Scourge of itself, still climbing slipp'ry place,
Holds my young brain captiv'd in golden cage.
Oh Fools, or over-wise, alas the race
Of all my thoughts hath neither stop nor start,
But only Stella's eyes and Stella's heart.

Curious wits, seeing dull pensiveness
Reveal itself in my eyes, long fixed in thought,
From which the fumes of melancholy rise,
Guess about me, with idle efforts and false aim.
Some, who know what efforts I made in my youth,
Think that my Muse is producing some fruit of knowledge:
Others, because the Queen tries out my services,
Speculate that I think about redressing errors of State:
But more severe judges judge that it is a rage of ambition,
Its own scourge, still climbing for slippery status,
That holds my young brain captive in a golden cage.
O fools, or excessively wise, alas, the course
Of all my thoughts has neither end nor beginning
Except in Stella's eyes and Stella's heart.

Rich fools there be, whose base and filthy heart
Lies hatching still the goods wherein they flow:
And damning their own selves to Tantal's smart,
Wealth breeding want, more blest more wretched grow.
Yet to those fools heav'n such wit doth impart
As what their hands do hold, their heads do know,
And knowing love, and loving, lay apart,
As sacred things, far from all danger's show.
But that rich fool who by blind Fortune's lot
The richest gem of love and life enjoys,
And can with foul abuse such beauties blot;
Let him, depriv'd of sweet but unfelt joys,
(Exil'd for aye from those high treasures, which
He knows not) grow in only folly rich.

There are rich fools, misers, whose base and filthy hearts
Lie there concealing under hatches the goods they flow
with:

Who, condemning themselves to the torments of Tantalus,
Wealth breeding poverty, grow more wretched with more
riches.

Yet heaven gives those fools such shrewdness
That at least their heads know what their hands hold,
And knowing, love it, and loving set it apart
As sacred, far away from all risk of danger.

But that rich fool (Lord Rich) who by blind fortune's
chance

Enjoys the richest gem of love and life (Stella: Penelope
Devereux),

And who can blot such beauty with foul abuse:

Let him, deprived of her sweet but unappreciated joys,
(Exiled for ever from those high treasures which he
Does not understand) grow rich only in folly.

Note: Penelope Devereux, Essex's sister, and Sidney's
Stella, married Lord Rich.

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

The wisest pupil (Plato) of the wisest man (Socrates),
Proclaimed such by the Delphic Oracle, says, in sugared
sentence,
That virtue, if it were once seen by our eyes,
Would cause strange flames of love in our souls.
But because Man perceives this truth with pain
If he weighs everything in the senses' balance,
and so will not and cannot behold those skies
That reveal the inner sun to the heroic mind,
So Virtue, lately, taking virtuous care to promote
Love of itself, takes Stella's shape, so that it
Might, in her, shine sweetly to mortal eyes.
It is certainly true, for, since I saw her,
Virtue's great beauty I affirm is in that face,
And I discover its effect, since I burn with love.

Note: Plato said that if we could see virtue's true form we
would love it (Apology, 21) but see also Cicero (De
Officiis, 1,15).

Though dusty wits dare scorn astrology,
And fools can think those lamps of purest light
Whose numbers, ways, greatness, eternity,
Promising wonders, wonder do invite,
To have for no cause birthright in the sky,
But for to spangle the black weeds of night:
Or for some brawl, which in that chamber high,
They should still dance to please a gazer's sight;
For me, I do Nature un-idle know,
And know great causes, great effects procure:
And know those bodies high reign on the low.
And if these rules did fail, proof makes me sure,
Who oft fore-judge my after-following race,
By only those two stars in Stella's face.

Though earthbound wits dare to scorn astrology,
And fools may think that those lamps of purest light (the
stars),
(Whose numbers, ways, greatness, eternity,
Promise wonderful things, so inviting wonder)
Have birthright in the sky for no purpose
Except to spangle the black dress of night;
Or for some dance, which in that high chamber,
They should still go on treading to please a gazer's sight:
As for me I know that Nature is not idle,
And know that great causes result in great effects,
And know that those higher bodies reign over lower ones.
And if these laws were to fail, this proof satisfies me,
That I often prophesy my future course,
From just those two stars in Stella's face.

Because I oft in dark abstracted guise
Seem most alone in greatest company,
With dearth of words, or answers quite awry,
To them that would make speech of speech arise,
They deem, and of their doom the rumour flies,
That poison foul of bubbling pride doth lie
So in my swelling breast that only I
Fawn on myself, and others do despise:
Yet pride I think doth not my soul possess,
Which looks too oft in his unflatt'ring glass:
But one worse fault, ambition, I confess,
That makes me oft my best friends overpass,
Unseen, unheard, while thought to highest place
Bends all his powers, even unto Stella's grace.

Because I often, in a dark abstracted mood,
Seem most alone among the greatest company,
With a dearth of words to say, or answers that are awry,
Those, who wish to make speech follow from speech,
Judge, and rumour flies abroad from their judgment,
That the foul poison of bubbling pride so lies
In my swelling breast that I only
Fawn on myself, and despise others:
Yet I do not think pride possesses my soul,
Which looks too often in its unflattering mirror:
But one worse fault, ambition, I confess to,
That makes me often overlook my best friends,
Unseen, unheard, while thought bends all its powers
To the highest place, that is to Stella's grace.

You that with allegory's curious frame,
Of others' children changelings use to make,
With me those pains for God's sake do not take:
I list not dig so deep for brazen fame.
When I say "Stella," I do mean the same
Princess of Beauty, for whose only sake
The reins of Love I love, though never slake,
And joy therein, though nations count it shame.
I beg no subject to use eloquence,
Nor in hid ways do guide Philosophy:
Look at my hands for no such quintessence;
But know that I in pure simplicity
Breathe out the flames which burn within my heart
Love only reading unto me this art.

You who are used to making changelings of other's
children
(Poems) by employing allegory's curious structure,
Do not take those pains with me for God's sake.
I do not wish to dig so deep for brazen fame.
When I say, 'Stella', I actually mean that same
Princess of beauty, for whose sake alone
I love the reins of love, though they are never slackened,
And joy in them, though nations count it shameful.
I do not ask for a subject in order to be eloquent,
Nor seek to lead philosophy amongst hidden ways:
Look for no such quintessence at my hands,
But know that I, in pure simplicity,
Breathe out the flames that burn in my heart,
Love alone teaching me this art.

Like some weak lords, neighbor'd by mighty kings,
To keep themselves and their chief cities free,
Do easily yield, that all their coasts may be
Ready to store their camps of needful things:
So Stella's heart finding what power Love brings,
To keep itself in life and liberty,
Doth willing grant, that in the frontiers he
Use all to help his other conquerings:
And thus her heart escapes, but thus her eyes
Serve him with shot, her lips his heralds are;
Her breasts his tents, legs his triumphal car;
Her flesh his food, her skin his armour brave,
And I, but for because my prospect lies
Upon that coast, am giv'n up for a slave.

As some weak lords, the neighbours of mighty kings,
In order to guarantee themselves and their major cities
freedom,
Quickly agree that all their coastlines should be
Prepared to store what is necessary for the kings' camps,
So Stella's heart, finding what power Love possesses,
In order to keep itself (her heart) in life and liberty,
Willingly grants that on her frontiers he (Love)
May use all to help his other conquests:
And so her heart escapes, but in this way her eyes
Serve him with their bullets (rays), her lips are his heralds,
Her breasts are his tents, her legs his triumphal chariot,
Her flesh is his food, her skin is his brave armour:
And I, because my intent is fixed on that coast,
Am given up to slavery.

Whether the Turkish new moon minded be
To fill his horns this year on Christian coast;
How Poles' right king means, with leave of host,
To warm with ill-made fire cold Muscovy;
If French can yet three parts in one agree;
What now the Dutch in their full diets boast;
How Holland hearts, now so good towns be lost,
Trust in the shade of pleasing Orange tree;
How Ulster likes of that same golden bit
Wherewith my father once made it half tame;
If in the Scotch court be no welt'ring yet:
These questions busy wits to me do frame.
I, cumber'd with good manners, answer do,
But know not how, for still I think of you.

Whether the Turks (under the crescent flag) think
To attack the Christian coast this year (Spain in 1582):
How Poland's rightful king (Stephen Bathory) intends
Without leave to invade Russia (1580 to 1582):
If the three French factions (Catholics, Huguenots,
Politiques) can agree:
What the Germans (Deutsch) can boast at the Diet of
Augsburg (1582):
How Holland having lost towns to Spain (Breda, Tournay,
Oudenarde,
Lier, Ninove 1581-82) put their faith in William of Orange:
How Ulster likes that same golden bit (the land tax?)
whereby
My father (Sir Henry Sidney, Lord Deputy Governor 1576-
8) half tamed it:
If the Scottish Court is still weltering in intrigues (Raid of
Ruthven, August):
These questions are asked of me by busy wits:
I, constrained by good manners, am obliged to answer and
do,
But am not aware how, because I am always thinking of
you.

With how sad steps, oh Moon, thou climb'st the skies,
How silently, and with how wan a face.
What, may it be, that even in heav'nly place
That busy archer his sharp arrows tries?
Sure, if that long with Love acquainted eyes
Can judge of Love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks; thy languish'd grace
To me that feel the like, thy state describes.
Then ev'n of fellowship, oh Moon, tell me
Is constant love deem'd there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here thy be?
Do they above love to be lov'd, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that Love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness?

With what sad steps O Moon you climb the skies,
How silently and with how pale a face:
What, can it be that even in a heavenly place
That busy archer (Cupid) tries out his sharp arrows?
Surely, if eyes that are long acquainted with love
Can make judgments about it, you feel for lovers:
I read it in your looks: your languished grace
Reveals your state to me who feel similarly.
Therefore out of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constancy in love deemed up there also to be lack of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as they are here?
Do those above love to be loved, and yet
Scorn the lovers who are possessed by that love?
Do they call their ungratefulness (unwillingness to please)
virtue also?

Morpheus the lively son of deadly sleep,
Witness of life to them that living die,
A prophet oft, and oft an history,
A poet eke, as humours fly or creep,
Since thou in me so sure a power dost keep,
That never I with clos'd-up sense do lie,
But by thy work my Stella I descry,
Teaching blind eyes both how to smile and weep;
Vouchsafe of all acquaintance this to tell:
Whence hast thou ivory, rubies, pearl and gold,
To show her skin, lips, teeth, and head so well?
“Fool,” answers he, “no Indies such treasures hold,
But from thy heart, while my sire charmeth thee,
Sweet Stella’s image I do steal to me.”

Morpheus, the lively son of deadly sleep (Somnus, in Greek myth),
Who brings apparently living images to the living who die (of grief),
Who is often a prophet of things to come, and a historian of things past,
A poet also, according to how the bodily humours soar or are depressed:
Since you have such certain power in me
That I never lie down with closed-up senses
Without seeing my Stella, through your efforts
That teach my blind eyes how to smile and to weep,
Deign to tell me because of all this familiarity with me:
Where do you obtain ivory, rubies, pearl and gold
To depict her skin, lips, teeth and hair so well?
He answers, 'Fool, it is not the Indies that hold these treasures,
Rather I steal sweet Stella's image from your heart
And make it mine, while my father (Sleep) charms you.'

Note: See the myth of Ceyx and Alcyone: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* XI 735, used by Chaucer in the *Book of the Duchess*, for the role of Morpheus.

I might, unhappy word, oh me, I might,
And then would not, or could not see my bliss;
Till now, wrapt in a most infernal night,
I find how heav'nly day, wretch, I did miss.
Heart, rend thyself, thou dost thyself but right;
No lovely Paris made thy Helen his:
No force, no fraud, robb'd thee of thy delight,
Nor Fortune of thy fortune author is:
But to myself my self did give the blow,
While too much wit (forsooth) so troubled me,
That I respects for both our sakes must show:
And yet could not by rising morn foresee
How fair a day was near, oh punish'd eyes,
That I had been more foolish or more wise.

I might, an unhappy word, O me, I might have,
And then would not, or could not see my bliss;
Until now, wrapped in a most infernal night,
I realise how I, a wretch, missed heavenly day.
Heart rend yourself: it would only be right to do so;
No lovely Paris made your Helen his,
No force, or fraud robbed you of your delight,
Nor is Fate the author of your fate;
But I myself dealt the blow to myself,
While in truth so much thought troubled me regarding it
(the abortive
Betrothal in 1576 to Stella, Penelope Devereux: she was
then 12 years old)
That I was forced to be cautious, for both our sakes:
And yet I could not by rising morn (her childish looks)
foresee
How fair a day (her mature beauty) was near: O punished
eyes
If only I had been more foolish or more wise (thought less
or loved more).

Come, let me write. "And to what end?" To ease
A burthen'd heart. "How can words ease, which are
The glasses of thy daily vexing care?"
Oft cruel fights well pictur'd forth do please.
"Art not asham'd to publish thy disease?"
Nay, that may breed my fame, it is so rare.
"But will not wise men think thy words fond ware?"
Then be they close, and so none shall displease.
"What idler thing than speak and not be heard?"
What harder thing than smart, and not to speak?
Peace, foolish wit, with wit my wit is marr'd.
Thus write I while I doubt to write, and wreak
My harms on ink's poor loss; perhaps some find
Stella's great powers, that so confuse my mind.

Come, let me write, 'And for what purpose?' to ease
A burdened heart. 'How can words bring ease, which are
the mirrors

Reflecting your daily vexing cares?'

Often cruel battles please when painted.

'Are you not ashamed to make public knowledge of your
trouble?'

No: that may increase my fame: it is so unusual.

'But will wise men not think your words to be foolish
trifles?'

Then let them be kept private and so they will displease
nobody.

'What is more useless than to speak and not be heard?'

What is harder than to be in pain, and not speak about it?

Peace foolish thoughts: my thought is marred by thought.

So I write when I am doubtful of the point of writing, and
impose

My troubles on a waste of ink; perhaps some of my
writings reflect

Stella's great powers: and that is what so confuses my
mind.

What may words say, or what may words not say,
Where truth itself must speak like flattery?
Within what bounds can one his liking stay,
Where Nature doth with infinite agree?
What Nestor's counsel can my flames allay,
Since Reason's self doth blow the coal in me?
And ah what hope, that hope should once see day,
Where Cupid is sworn page to Chastity?
Honour is honour'd, that thou dost possess
Him as thy slave, and now long needy Fame
Doth even grow rich, naming my Stella's name.
Wit learns in thee perfection to express,
Not thou by praise, but praise in thee is rais'd:
It is a praise to praise, when thou art prais'd.

What may words say, or what may they not say,
When truth itself must sound like flattery?
Within what bounds can a man restrain his attraction
To someone, who unites the natural with the infinite?
What wise counsel (like Nestor's in Homer) can lessen my
flames,
Since reason itself fans the fire in me?
And ah, what hope is there that hope will ever be realised
When Cupid is a page sworn to the service of one so
chaste?
Honour is honoured that you possess him
As your slave, and now Fame that has long been
impoverished
Grows rich (Stella being Lord Rich's wife), naming my
Stella's name.
Wit learns to express perfection in you,
You are not enhanced by praise, but praise is enhanced by
you:
It is like praising praise itself, when you are praised.

Stella, whence doth this new assault arise,
A conquer'd, yelden, ransack'd heart to win?
Whereto long since through my long batter'd eyes,
Whole armies of thy beauties entered in.
And there long since, Love thy lieutenant lies,
My forces raz'd, thy banners rais'd within:
Of conquest, do not these effects suffice,
But wilt now war upon thine own begin?
With so sweet voice, and by sweet Nature so
In sweetest strength, so sweetly skill'd withal,
In all sweet stratagems sweet Art can show,
That not my soul, which at thy foot did fall
Long since, forc'd by thy beams, but stone nor tree
By Sense's privilege, can 'scape from thee.

Stella from where does this new assault arise,
To win a heart already conquered, yielded, ransacked?
Where, long since, through my long-assaulted eyes,
Whole armies of your beauty entered:
And where, long since, Love, your lieutenant, occupied it,
My forces having been razed, your banners raised within it.
Do these effects of conquest not satisfy you?
And will you now begin a new war on what is already
yours?
Provided by sweet nature with such a sweet voice,
And, in such sweet strength, with such sweet skills
In all the stratagems that sweet art can display,
Then not only my soul, which fell at your feet,
Long since overpowered by your eye-beams, but also
stones and trees
Cannot use the privilege of the senses to escape being
drawn to you.

Note: Orpheus's singing stirred the stones and trees, see
Ovid, *Metamorphoses* X:11

My mouth doth water, and my breast doth swell,
My tongue doth itch, my thoughts in labour be:
Listen then, lordings, with good ear to me,
For of my life I must a riddle tell.
Toward Aurora's court a nymph doth dwell,
Rich in all beauties which man's eye can see:
Beauties so far from reach of words, that we
Abase her praise, saying she doth excel:
Rich in the treasure of deserv'd renown,
Rich in the riches of a royal heart,
Rich in those gifts which give th'eternal crown;
Who though most rich in these and every part,
Which make the patents of true worldly bliss,
Hath no misfortune, but that Rich she is.

My mouth waters to utter, my breast swells for speech,
My tongue itches for it, and my thoughts are labouring to
speak,
Listen then, lords, carefully to me,
Because I must relate an event in my life as a riddle.
A nymph (Penelope Rich) lives towards the Dawn (in
Essex, in the East)
Rich in all the beauties a man's eye can see,
Beauties so far above words that we reduce the praise
By even using words to say how superior she is:
Rich in the treasure of a well-deserved fame,
Rich in the riches of a royal heart,
Rich in those (spiritual) gifts that grant an eternal crown:
Who though she is rich in these things and everything
Which constitutes true earthly bliss,
Has only one misfortune, that she is (married to Lord) Rich.

Note: Lord Rich's house was Leigh's in Essex in Eastern
England.

This night while sleep begins with heavy wings
To hatch mine eyes, and that unbitted thought
Doth fall to stray, and my chief powers are brought
To leave the scepter of all subject things,
The first that straight my fancy's error brings
Unto my mind, is Stella's image, wrought
By Love's own self, but with so curious draught,
That she, methinks, not only shines but sings.
I start, look, hark, but what in clos'd-up sense
Was held, in open'd sense it flies away,
Leaving me nought but wailing eloquence:
I, seeing better sights in sight's decay,
Call'd it anew, and wooed sleep again:
But him her host that unkind guest had slain.

Tonight, as sleep, with his heavy wings, begins
To close my eyes, and my unbridled thought
Begins to wander, and my mental powers are led
To abandon control over things subject to them,
The first thing that my imagination's wandering brings
To mind is Stella's image: created
By Love himself, but with such careful draughtsmanship,
That she seems not only to shine with light, but also to sing.
I am startled, I look, and listen, but what is captured in
sleep
Flies away when my senses are awake,
Leaving me nothing but wailing speech:
Since I see better sights when my waking sight is dimmed,
I invoked Stella's image again, and tried to sleep again:
But Stella's image like a cruel guest had killed sleep, its
host.

Come sleep, oh sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
Th'indifferent judge between the high and low;
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease
Of those fierce darts, Despair at me doth throw:
Oh make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay if thou do so:
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light;
A rosy garland, and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy Grace, thou shalt in me
Livelier than elsewhere Stella's image see.

Come sleep, O sleep, the reliable bond of peace,
The resting place of wit, the balm of sorrow,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The impartial judge between the high and low:
With a strong shield, shield me from the crowd
Of fierce spears that despair throws at me:
O, make me cease fighting in these civil wars:
I will pay a good tribute of gifts if you do so.
Accept, from me, smooth pillows, a sweetest bed,
A bedroom proofed against noise, and closed to light,
A rose-garland of secrecy, and a weary head:
And if these things, which belong to you as of right
anyway,
Do not win your heavy thanks, you may also see
Stella's image in my mind, more alive than elsewhere.

As good to write as for to lie and groan,
Oh Stella dear, how much thy power hath wrought,
That hast my mind, none of the basest, brought
My still-kept course, while others sleep, to moan.
Alas, if from the height of Virtue's throne,
Thou canst vouchsafe the influence of a thought
Upon a wretch, that long thy grace hath sought;
Weigh then how I by thee am overthrown:
And then, think thus, although thy beauty be
Made manifest by such a victory,
Yet noblest conquerors do wrecks avoid.
Since then thou hast so far subdued me,
That in my heart I offer still to thee,
Oh do not let thy Temple be destroyed.

Better to write than lie here and groan.
O Stella dear, how much your power has achieved,
That has brought my mind, which is not a base one,
To bemoan the course it has adhered to.
Alas, if you can deign, from the height of your virtue's
throne
To think about a wretch who has long desired your grace,
Reflect on how I am overthrown by you:
And then think as follows: although your beauty
Is made apparent by such a victory, yet
The noblest conquerors avoid complete ruin of their
conquests.
Since then you have defeated me to this extent
That I still make offerings to you in my heart's temple,
Don't let that temple itself be destroyed.

Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well, that I obtain'd the prize,
Both by the judgment of the English eyes,
And of some sent from that sweet enemy France;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance,
Town-folks my strength; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance;
Others, because of both sides I do take
My blood from them who did excel in this,
Think Nature me a man of arms did make.
How far they shot awry! The true cause is,
Stella look'd on, and from her heav'nly face
Sent forth the beams, which made so fair my race.

Having guided my horse, my hand, my lance, so well
Today, that I obtained the prize,
Both as judged by English eyes
And some sent from that sweet enemy France:
Horsemen proclaim my skill in horsemanship:
Townsmen my strength: a more discerning judge
Praises my dexterity achieved by constant practice:
Some who are lucky ascribe it to mere chance:
Others because I am descended on both sides
From those who excel in these pursuits,
Think it was Nature that made me good at tilting:
How mistaken they were! The true reason is
That Stella was watching, and from her heavenly face
Sent out the rays that made my competing successful.

Note: In May 1581 he participated in the tournament at court in front of Elizabeth and the French delegation (in England to negotiate a match with the Duke of Alençon).

Oh eyes, which do the spheres of beauty move,
Whose beams be joys, whose joys all virtues be,
Who while they make Love conquer, conquer Love,
The schools where Venus hath learn'd chastity;
Oh eyes, whose humble looks most glorious prove
Only lov'd tyrants, just in cruelty,
Do not, oh do not from poor me remove,
Keep still my zenith, ever shine on me.
For though I never see them, but straightways
My life forgets to nourish languish'd sprites;
Yet still on me, oh eyes, dart down your rays:
And if from majesty of sacred lights,
Oppressing mortal sense, my death proceed,
Wracks triumphs be, which Love (high set) doth breed.

O, eyes that move the spheres of beauty,
Whose rays are joys, whose joys are all the virtues:
Who while they force love to conquer, in turn conquer love,
The schools where Venus has learned to be chaste:
O eyes where humble looks prove to be most glorious,
To be beloved tyrants, just in their cruelty:
Do not, O do not, take yourselves away from me:
Keep above me in the zenith, and always shine on me.
Since though I never see them without my life
Immediately forgetting to nourish its own weary spirits,
Yet still dart your rays down on me, O eyes:
And if my death is caused by the majestic power
Of your sacred lights, oppressing mortal sense,
Disasters that noble love creates are triumphs.

Note: The last line, see Petrarch Canzoniere 140, line 14.

Fair eyes, sweet lips, dear heart, that foolish I
Could hope by Cupid's help on you to prey;
Since to himself he doth your gifts apply,
As his main force, choice sport, and easeful stay.
For when he will see who dare him gainsay,
Then with those eyes he looks, lo by and by
Each soul doth at Love's feet his weapons lay,
Glad if for her he give them leave to die.
When he will play, then in her lips he is,
Where blushing red, that Love's self them doth love,
With either lip he doth the other kiss:
But when he will for quiet's sake remove
From all the world, her heart is then his room
Where well he knows, no man to him can come.

Fair eyes, sweet lips, dear heart, how foolish
For me to hope to prey on you with Cupid's help:
Since he makes use of your gifts himself,
As his main power, best sport, and restful ease.
Because, when he looks who will deny him?
So when Love looks with these eyes, by and by
Each soul lays its weapons at Love's feet,
Glad if Love gives that soul permission to die for her.
When he sports, then he is in her lips,
Where they blush red, because Love himself loves them,
While with either lip he kisses the other lip:
But when Love wishes to remove himself from everyone,
For the sake of peace, her heart is then his room,
Where he knows full well that no man can reach him.

My words I know do well set forth my mind,
My mind bemoans his sense of inward smart;
Such smart may pity claim of any heart,
Her heart, sweet heart, is of no tiger's kind:
And yet she hears, yet I no pity find;
But more I cry, less grace she doth impart,
Alas, what cause is there so overthwart,
That nobleness itself makes thus unkind?
I much do guess, yet find no truth save this:
That when the breath of my complaints doth touch
Those dainty doors unto the court of bliss,
The heav'nly nature of that place is such,
That once come there, the sobs of mine annoys
Are metamorphos'd straight to tunes of joys.

I know my words truly communicate my thoughts:
My mind grieves at its sense of inner pain:
Such pain has the right to claim pity from any heart:
Her heart, a sweet heart, is not that of a tigress:
And yet she hears me but I find no pity in her:
Rather the more I complain, the less kind she is.
Alas, what reason for this could there be that's so perverse
It makes nobility of mind, itself, unkind to another?
I try hard to guess, but only find this possible truth:
That when the breath of my complaint touches
Those dainty doors (her ears) to the courts of bliss (her
mind)
The heavenly nature of her mind is such
That once arrived there the sobbing of my grievances
Is straight away transformed to joyful tunes.

Stella oft sees the very face of woe
Painted in my beclouded stormy face:
But cannot skill to pity my disgrace,
Not though thereof the cause herself she know:
Yet hearing late a fable, which did show
Of lovers never known, a grievous case,
Pity thereof gat in her breast such place
That, from that sea deriv'd, tears' spring did flow.
Alas, if fancy drawn by imag'd things,
Though false, yet with free scope more grace doth breed
Than servant's wrack, where new doubts honour brings;
Then think, my dear, that you in me do read
Of lovers' ruin some sad tragedy:
I am not I, pity the tale of me.

Stella often sees the face of unhappiness itself
Painted on my clouded and stormy face:
But is unable to pity my state of disgrace,
Even though she knows the cause of it herself:
Yet when she heard a story, lately, that depicted
A sorry example of lovers who never met together,
Pity was so powerful in her breast,
That a stream of tears, derived from it, flowed out.
Alas, if imagination, stirred by imaginary but false things,
Nevertheless creates more kindness than the torment
Of a real lover, where honour causes doubts to arise,
Then, my dear, imagine that you are reading
Some sad tragedy concerning a lover's ruin, in me:
I am not I, then: you can pity the story of me, instead.

I curs'd thee oft, I pity now thy case,
Blind-hitting boy, since she that thee and me
Rules with a beck, so tyrannizeth thee,
That thou must want or food, or dwelling place,
For she protest to banish thee her face.
Her face? Oh Love, a rogue thou then should'st be!
If Love learn not alone to love and see,
Without desire to feed of further grace.
Alas poor wag, that now a scholar art
To such a schoolmistress, whose lessons new
Thou needs must miss, and so thou needs must smart.
Yet dear, let me his pardon get of you,
So long (though he from book miche to desire)
Till without fuel you can make hot fire.

I often cursed you, now I pity your state,
Boy (Cupid), who aims and hits blindly, because she, who
rules
You and me with a nod of her head, so tyrannises you now
That you must be in need of food, or a place to live.
Since she affirms she'll banish you from her presence:
Her presence? O Love you would be despicable, then,
If you, Love, could not, uniquely, learn to love and see
Without the desire to be nourished by any other kindness.
Alas, poor child, who are now a pupil
To such a school-mistress, whose next lessons
You must miss, and so must be punished for it.
Yet, dear, let me obtain his pardon for this, from you,
(Though he plays truant from books to desire) for as long
as
It takes you to make a hot fire without fuel.

What, have I thus betray'd my liberty?
Can those black beams such burning marks engrave
In my free side? Or am I born a slave,
Whose neck becomes such yoke of tyranny?
Or want I sense to feel my misery?
Or spite, disdain of such disdain to have,
Who for long faith, though daily help I crave,
May get no alms but scorn of beggary?
Virtue awake, beauty but beauty is;
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Leave following that, which it is gain to miss.
Let her go! Soft, but here she comes. Go to,
Unkind, I love you not. Oh me, that eye
Doth make my heart give to my tongue the lie.

What: have I given my freedom away like this?
Can those eye-beams from her dark eyes engrave such
brands
On my free side? Or was I born a slave
Whose neck is suited to such a tyrannical yoke?
Or do I lack the sensations to feel my misery?
Or do I lack spirit, to be so scorned by her scorn?
I, who, though I ask for help from her every day, receive
No alms from her, for all my long loyalty, but scorn for my
begging instead.
Virtue, rouse yourself: beauty is only beauty:
I may, I must, I can, I will, I do
Cease to follow that which it is beneficial to lose.
Let her go. Peace, here she comes. 'Away with you,
Unkind one, I do not love you': O me, that eye of hers
Makes my heart deny the words on my tongue.

Soul's joy, bend not those morning stars from me,
Where Virtue is made strong by Beauty's might,
Where Love is chasteness, Pain doth learn delight,
And Humbleness grows one with Majesty.
Whatever may ensue, oh, let me be
Co-partner of the riches of that sight:
Let not mine eyes be hell-driv'n from that light:
Oh look, oh shine, oh let me die and see.
For though I oft myself of them bemoan,
That through my heart their beamy darts be gone,
Whose cureless wounds ev'n now most freshly bleed:
Yet since my death-wound is already got,
Dear killer, spare not thy sweet cruel shot:
A kind of grace it is to kill with speed.

Soul's joy, don't direct those morning stars (your eyes)
away from me,
Which strengthen virtue by the power of their beauty,
In which love is chaste, through which pain learns to feel
delight,
And humility becomes identical with majesty.
Whatever may happen, O, let me be
A sharer in the riches of that sight:
Don't let my eyes be driven from that light towards Hell:
O look, O shine, O let me die and still see them.
Though I often grieve for myself because of them,
Because their shining arrows have pierced my heart,
Whose incurable wounds bleed freshly even now:
Yet since I have already received my death-wound,
Dear killer, don't spare your sweet and cruel dart:
It is a sort of kindness to kill quickly.

I on my horse, and Love on me doth try
Our horsemanships, while by strange work I prove
A horseman to my horse, a horse to Love;
And now man's wrongs in me, poor beast, descry.
The reins wherewith my rider doth me tie,
Are humbled thoughts, which bit of reverence move,
Curb'd in with fear, but with gilt boss above
Of hope, which makes it seem fair to the eye.
The wand is will; thou, fancy, saddle art,
Girt fast by memory, and while I spur
My horse, he spurs with sharp desire my heart:
He sits me fast, however I do stir:
And now hath made me to his hand so right,
That in the manage myself takes delight.

I try my horsemanship on my horse, and Love tries his on
me,
While, by curious effort, I show myself as a horseman
To my horse, and show myself as a horse to Love:
And now, poor beast, see man's wrong actions in me.
The reins my rider (Love) ties me with
Are humbled thoughts, moved by the horse's bit of
Reverence,
Curbed by Fear, but with the gilt boss (metal knob on the
bit)
Of Hope, that makes it (the curb) seem acceptable to the
eye.
The riding crop is Will, and you, Imagination, are the
saddle,
Fastened on by Memory: and while I spur
My horse, Love spurs my heart with sharp Desire:
He sits tight, however I move:
And now has made me respond so sensitively to his hand
That I myself take delight in my own training.

Stella, the fullness of my thoughts of thee
Cannot be stay'd within my panting breast,
But they do swell and struggle forth of me,
Till that in words thy figure be express'd.
And yet as soon as they so formed be,
According to my Lord Love's own behest:
With sad eyes I their weak proportion see,
To portrait that which in this world is best.
So that I cannot choose but write my mind,
And cannot choose but put out what I write,
While these poor babes their death in birth do find:
And now my pen these lines had dashed quite,
But that they stopp'd his fury from the same,
Because their forefront bare sweet Stella's name.

Stella, the extent of my thoughts about you
Cannot be contained in my panting breast,
Rather the thoughts swell and struggle from me,
Until your image is expressed in words.
And yet as soon as my words are formed
According to my lord's, Love's, own request
I see, with sad eyes, that their delineations are too weak
To portray that (you) which is the best in this world.
So that I cannot choose but write what is in my mind,
And cannot choose but to publish what I write,
While these poor babes (the poems) find death at birth:
And now my pen would have scratched out these lines
Except that they themselves prevented its fury from doing
so,
Because their first line began with sweet Stella's name.

Pardon mine ears, both I and they do pray,
So may your tongue still fluently proceed,
To them that do such entertainment need,
So may you still have somewhat new to say.
On silly me do not the burden lay,
Of all the grave conceits your brain doth breed;
But find some Hercules to bear, instead
Of Atlas tir'd, your wisdom's heav'nly sway.
For me, while you discourse of courtly tides,
Of cunning fishers in most troubled streams,
Of straying ways, when valiant error guides:
Meanwhile my heart confers with Stella's beams
And is even irk'd that so sweet comedy,
By such unsuited speech should hinder'd be.

Pardon my ears: both I, and they, pray
That your tongue might still go on talking fluently
To those people who need such entertainment, and
That you might always have something new to say.
Don't lay the burden of all the serious ideas
Your brain creates on foolish me,
But find some Hercules, instead of this weary Atlas,
To bear the heavenly weight of your wisdom.
As for me, while you speak about the ebb and flow of
Court life,
Of cunning fishermen in most troubled waters,
Of wandering sea-paths where brave error is the guide,
My heart, in the meantime, is in communion with Stella's
eyes,
And is even annoyed that such a sweet play (of thought)
Should be disturbed by such inappropriate speech.

A strife is grown between Virtue and Love,
While each pretends that Stella must be his:
Her eyes, her lips, her all, saith Love, do this
Since they do wear his badge, most firmly prove.
But Virtue thus that title doth disprove:
That Stella (oh dear name) that Stella is
That virtuous soul, sure heir of heav'nly bliss,
Not this fair outside, which our hearts doth move;
And therefore, though her beauty and her grace
Be Love's indeed, in Stella's self he may
By no pretense claim any manner place.
Well, Love, since this demur our suit will stay,
Let Virtue have that Stella's self; yet thus
That Virtue but that body grant to us.

A (legal) dispute has started between Virtue and Love,
In which each declares that Stella must be his:
Love says that her eyes, lips, all of her prove this,
Firmly, since they all wear his badge (of livery).
But Virtue disproves Love's claim in this way, saying:
That Stella, (O dear name), that Stella is
Really her own virtuous soul, the certain heir of heavenly
bliss,
Not her lovely exterior that stirs our hearts:
And therefore, though her beauty and her grace do indeed
Belong to Love, he cannot pretend to lay any kind of claim
to her Self.
Well, Love, since this objection halts our (legal) action,
Let Virtue have Stella's self (her soul): yet, in doing so,
Let Virtue which is her soul grant her body to us.

In martial sports I had my cunning tried,
And yet to break more staves did me address:
While, with the people's shouts, I must confess,
Youth, luck, and praise, ev'n fill'd my veins with pride;
When Cupid having me his slave descried,
In Mars's livery, prancing in the press:
"What now, *Sir Fool*," said he; I would no less.
"Look here, I say." I look'd and Stella spied,
Who hard by made a window send forth light.
My heart then quak'd, then dazzled were mine eyes;
One hand forgot to rule, th'other to fight.
Nor trumpet's sound I heard, nor friendly cries;
My foe came on, and beat the air for me,
Till that her blush taught me my shame to see.

I had tried out my cunning in warlike sports,
But still was intent on breaking more tilting-staffs,
While, due to the crowd's applause, I confess,
Youth, luck and praise filled my veins with pride:
When Cupid having caught sight of me, his slave,
In Mars' livery and prancing about in the action,
Said: 'What now, sir fool, I would like the same attention
from you,
Look here, I say,' I looked and saw Stella
Who made a nearby window send out light.
Then my heart trembled, and my eyes were dazzled,
One hand forgot to control the reins, the other to fight:
I heard neither the trumpet's signal, nor the friendly cries:
My opponent charged, and beat the air chasing me,
Until her blush taught me to see my own shame.

Because I breathe not love to every one,
Nor do not use set colours for to wear,
Nor nourish special locks of vowed hair,
Nor give each speech the full point of a groan,
The courtly nymphs, acquainted with the moan
Of them, who in their lips Love's standard bear;
"What he?" say they of me. "Now I dare swear,
He cannot love. No, no, let him alone."
And think so still, so Stella know my mind,
Profess indeed I do not Cupid's art;
But you, fair maids, at length this true shall find:
That his right badge is worn but in the heart;
Dumb swans, not chatt'ring pies, do lovers prove;
They love indeed, who quake to say they love.

Because I don't breathe love to everyone,
And am not seen wearing the usual colours of a lover,
And don't keep special locks of hair given as a pledge,
And don't end each speech with a groan, like a full-stop,
The nymphs of the court, familiar with the moan of those
(lovers)

Who carry Love's standard on their lips (show their love in
speech):

Say of me: 'What, I dare swear he cannot love:

No, no, leave him be.'

And they can think so, still, as long as Stella knows my
mind.

I don't profess to know Cupid's art:

But you, fair maids, will find this truth, in the end,

That Love's true badge is only worn in the heart:

Dumb swans not chattering magpies, prove to be the lovers:

They love truly who tremble to say that they love.

Muses, I oft invoked your holy aid,
With choicest flow'rs my speech t'engarland so
That it, despis'd in true by naked show,
Might win some grace in your sweet skill array'd.
And oft whole troops of saddest words I stay'd,
Striving abroad a-foraging to go;
Until by your inspiring I might know
How their black banner might be best display'd.
But now I mean no more your help to try,
Nor other sug'ring of my speech to prove,
But on her name incessantly to cry:
For let me but name her whom I do love
So sweet sounds straight mine ear and heart do hit,
That I well find no eloquence like it.

Muses, I have often invoked your holy aid,
In order to garland my speech with choicest flowers,
So that, dressed with your sweet skill, it might win some
grace,

Since true but naked speech is despised:
And often I held back whole troops of saddest words,
Striving to go foraging further off
Until I might know through your inspiration
How their black banner (sad meaning) might be best
displayed.

But now I intend to seek no more help from you,
And not to attempt any other sugaring of my speech,
But to speak about her name incessantly:
Since if I only name her whom I love,
Such sweet sounds straight away strike my ear and heart,
So that I can truly find no eloquence like it.

Fie, school of Patience, fie! Your lesson is
Far, far too long to learn it without book:
What, a whole week without one piece of look,
And think I should not your large precepts miss?
When I might read those letters fair of bliss,
Which in her face teach virtue, I could brook
Somewhat thy leaden counsels, which I took
As of a friend that meant not much amiss:
But now that I, alas, do want her sight,
What, dost thou think that I can ever take
In thy cold stuff a phlegmatic delight?
No, Patience, if thou wilt my good, then make
Her come, and hear with patience my desire,
And then with patience bid me bear my fire.

Fie, school of Patience, fie: your lesson is
Far, far too long to remember without the book:
What, don't you think that after a whole week
Without a fraction of a look I would forget your great
precepts?
When I could read those fair letters of bliss,
That, in her face, teach virtue, I could tolerate
Your leaden counsels a little, which I accepted
As if they were from a well-meaning friend:
But now, alas, that I lack sight of her,
Do you think I can ever take
A chilled delight in your cold counsel?
No, Patience, if you wish me well, then make
Her come here, and listen to my passion with patience,
And then patiently tell me to endure these flames of mine.

Woe, having made with many fights his own
Each sense of mine; each gift, each power of mind
Grown now his slaves, he forc'd them out to find
The thorough'st words, fit for Woe's self to groan,
Hoping that when they might find Stella alone,
Before she could prepare to be unkind,
Her soul, arm'd but with such a dainty rind,
Should soon be pierc'd with sharpness of the moan.
She heard my plaints, and did not only hear,
But them (so sweet is she) most sweetly sing,
With that fair breast making woe's darkness clear:
A pretty case! I hoped her to bring
To feel my griefs, and she with face and voice
So sweets my pains, that my pains me rejoice.

Since Sorrow, after many battles, has made
Each of my senses, each gift, and each power of my mind,
his own,
So that they have become his slaves, he has forced them to
find
The most far-reaching words fit for sorrow itself to groan
in,
Hoping that when they chanced to find Stella alone
And before she could prepare to be unkind,
Her soul, armed with such a dainty external covering,
Would soon be pierced by the intensity of their moaning.
She heard my complaints, and not only heard them,
But sang them sweetly (being so sweet herself)
Making sorrow's darkness apparent using her fair breast.
A pretty case! I hoped to cause her
To feel my grief, and she, with face and voice,
Makes my pains so sweet that they gladden me.

Doubt there hath been, when with his golden chain
The Orator so far men's hearts doth bind,
That no place else their guided steps can find,
But as he them more short or slack doth rein,
Whether with words this sovereignty he gain,
Cloth'd with fine tropes, with strongest reasons lin'd,
Or else pronouncing grace, wherewith his mind
Prints his own lively form in rudest brain:
Now judge by this, in piercing phrases late,
Th'anatomy of all my woes I wrate;
Stella's sweet breath the same to me did read.
Oh voice, oh face! maugre my speech's might,
Which wooed woe, most ravishing delight
E'en those sad words, e'en in sad me did breed.

There has been controversy, as to whether,
When an orator binds men's hearts with his golden chain
So that their controlled thought has its pace set
By the tightness or slackness of his rhetoric,
He achieves this power by words, ornamented
With fine expressions, and containing the truest arguments,
Or by the grace of his delivery, by means of which
His mind prints its living form in the dullest brain.
Now judge by this: I lately wrote
The anatomy of all my sorrows in piercing phrases,
Stella's sweet breath read the same back to me.
O voice, O face, despite my speech's power,
That wooed sorrow, even those sad words,
even in sad me, created a most ravishing delight.

Note: The classical controversy was as to whether the content or the means of delivery influenced the audience more. (Cicero, *De Oratore*: Quintilian XI)

Dear, why make you more of a dog than me?
If he do love, I burn, I burn in love;
If he wait well, I never thence would move;
If he be fair, yet but a dog can be.
Little he is, so little worth is he;
He barks, my songs thine own voice oft doth prove:
Bidden perhaps he fetcheth thee a glove,
But I unbid, fetch ev'n my soul to thee.
Yet while I languish, him that bosom clips,
That lap doth lap, nay lets in spite of spite
This sour-breath'd mate taste of those sugar'd lips.
Alas, if you grant only such delight
To witless things, then Love I hope (since wit
Becomes a clog) will soon ease me of it.

Dear, why do you make more fuss of your dog than me?
If he can love, I burn, I burn in love:
If he can wait for you, I'd never move from you:
If he is attractive, still he can only be a dog.
He's little, so he's worth little:
He barks, your own voice often tries out my songs:
Perhaps he fetches your glove when commanded,
But I, unasked, fetch even my soul for you.
But while I languish, your bosom presses against him,
Your lap encloses him, and allows despite its slobbering
This sour-breathed companion to taste your sugared lips.
Alas, if you only grant such delight to witless things,
Then I hope that, since wit is an obstacle,
Love will soon rid me of it.

When my good angel guides me to the place,
Where all my good I do in Stella see,
That heav'n of joys throws only down on me
Thunder'd disdains and lightnings of disgrace:
But when the rugg'st step of Fortune's race
Makes me fall from her sight, then sweetly she
With words, wherein the Muses' treasures be,
Shows love and pity to my absent case.
Now I, wit-beaten long by hardest Fate,
So dull am, that I cannot look into
The ground of this fierce Love and lovely hate:
Then some good body tell me how I do,
Whose presence absence, absence presence is;
Blest in my curse, and cursed in my bliss.

When my good angel guides me to the place
Where I see all my good in Stella,
That heaven of joys only ever throws down
Thunderous disdain, and lightning of disgrace, on me:
But when the roughest footstep in fortune's race
Makes me fall from her sight, then with words,
In which are the Muses' treasures, she sweetly
Shows love and pity to my state of absence.
Now I, my wits long addled by hardest fate,
Am so dull that I cannot understand the cause
Of this fierce love and lovely hate:
Then some good person tell me my state,
My presence being absence, and absence my presence:
Blessed in what curses me, and cursed in my bliss.

Oft with true sighs, oft with uncalled tears,
Now with slow words, now with dumb eloquence
I Stella's eyes assail, invade her ears;
But this at last is her sweet breath'd defense:
That who indeed infelt affection bears,
So captives to his saint both soul and sense,
That wholly hers, all selfness he forbears,
Thence his desires he learns, his life's course thence.
Now since her chaste mind hates this love in me,
With chasten'd mind, I straight must show that she
Shall quickly me from what she hates remove.
Oh Doctor Cupid, thou for me reply,
Driv'n else to grant by angel's sophistry,
That I love not, without I leave to love.

Often with true sighs, often with unprompted tears,
Sometimes with slow words, sometimes dumb eloquence,
I attack Stella's eyes and invade her ears:
But this, in the end, is her sweetly breathed defence:
That whoever, indeed, experiences affection inwardly,
Makes both soul and sense so much the captives of his
Saint,
That, completely hers, he forgoes all thought of self,
From his Saint he learns his desires and his life's course.
Now since her chaste mind hates the love that is in me,
I must straightaway, with chastened mind, show
That she can quickly separate me from what she hates.
O Doctor Cupid, reply in my place,
Or I will be driven to admit, by angel's sophistry,
That I cannot love unless I leave off loving.

Late tir'd with woe, ev'n ready for to pine,
With rage of love, I call'd my love unkind;
She in whose eyes Love, though unfelt, doth shine,
Sweet said that I true love in her should find.
I joy'd, but straight thus water'd was my wine,
That love she did, but lov'd a Love not blind,
Which would not let me, whom she lov'd, decline
From nobler course, fit for my birth and mind:
And therefore by her love's authority,
Will'd me these tempests of vain love to flee,
And anchor fast myself on Virtue's shore.
Alas, if this the only metal be
Of Love, new-coin'd to help my beggary,
Dear, love me not, that you may love me more.

Lately, tired with sorrow, almost ready to pine
With the fury of love, I called my love unkind:
She, in whose eyes love, though unfelt, shines,
Said sweetly that I would find true love in her.
I was overjoyed, but straight away my wine was watered,
Because she loved, but did not love a love that was blind,
But one which would not let me, whom she loved,
Fall back from the nobler path, fit for one of my birth and
mind:
And therefore, by the authority of her love,
Urged me to fly from these tempests of useless love,
And anchor myself fast on the shore of virtue.
Alas, if this is the only metal of love,
New-coined to aid me in my poverty,
Dear, love me not, that you may love me more.

Note: Ficino's Neoplatonic philosophy has two Venuses
and two Cupids, one earthly and blind, the other heavenly
and sighted.

Oh grammar rules, oh now your virtues show
So children still read you with awefull eyes,
As my young dove may in your precepts wise
Her grant to me, by her own virtue know.
For late, with heart most high, with eyes most low,
I crav'd the thing which ever she denies:
She, lightning Love, displaying Venus' skies,
Lest once should not be heard, twice said, "No, No."
Sing then, my Muse, now *Io Paeon* sing,
Heav'ns envy not at my high triumphing:
But grammar's force with sweet success confirm:
For grammar says (oh this, dear Stella, weigh,)
For grammar says (to grammar who says nay?)
That in one speech two negatives affirm.

O rules of grammar, O now show your virtues:
As children still read you with respectful eyes,
So let my young dove see, by her own virtue,
In your wise precepts, what she has granted me.
For lately, with heart most high, with eyes most low,
I asked for the thing that she always denies:
She, lightning love, displaying Venus' skies,
Lest once could not be heard, said twice: 'No, no.'
Sing then my Muse, now *Io Paeon*, sing,
And Heavens, envy not my high triumph,
But confirm grammar's force with sweet success:
For grammar says (O dear Stella, consider this),
For grammar says (Who says no to grammar?)
That in the same speech, two negatives affirm.

Note: 'Not a no' implies 'a yes'.

First Song

*Doubt you to whom my Muse these notes intendeth,
Which now my breast o'ercharged to music lendeth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only in you my song begins and endeth.*

*Who hath the eyes which marry state with pleasure,
Who keeps the key of Nature's chiefest treasure?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only for you the heav'n forgot all measure.*

*Who hath the lips, where wit in fairness reigneth,
Who womankind at once both decks and staineth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only by you Cupid his crown maintaineth.*

*Who hath the feet, whose step all sweetness planteth,
Who else for whom Fame worthy trumpets wanteth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only to you her scepter Venus granteth.*

*Who hath the breast, whose milk doth passions nourish,
Whose grace is such, that when it chides doth cherish?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only through you the tree of life doth flourish.*

*Who hath the hand which without stroke subdueth,
Who long dead beauty with increase reneweth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;*

Only to you all envy hopeless rueth.

*Who hath the hair which, loosest, fastest tieth,
Who makes a man live, then glad when he dieth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only of you the flatterer never lieth.*

*Who hath the voice, which soul from senses sunders,
Whose force but yours the bolts of beauty thunders?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only with you are miracles not wonders.*

*Doubt you to whom my Muse these notes intendeth,
Which now my breast o'ercharg'd to music lendeth?
To you, to you, all song of praise is due;
Only in you my song begins and endeth.*

Do you doubt for whom my Muse intends these notes,
Which my over-full heart now issues as music?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only in you my song begins and ends.

Who has the eyes that join stateliness with pleasure,
Who keeps the key of Nature's greatest treasure?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only for you the heavens forgot all limits.

Who has the lips where wit reigns in beauty,
Who both adorns womankind and makes it inferior?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only through you does Cupid maintain his crown.

Who has the feet whose steps plant all sweetness,
Who else is there for whom Fame lacks fitting trumpets?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only through you does the tree of life flourish.

Who has the hand that subdues without violence,
Who renews long-dead beauty greater than before?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only at you does all envy weep with hopelessness.

Who has the hair that ties the tightest when it is loosest,
Who makes a man live, and happy when he dies?
To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only in describing you does the flatterer never lie.

Who has the voice that splits the soul from the senses,

Whose power but yours sends out the lightning bolts of
beauty?

To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only with you are miracles nothing wondrous.

Do you doubt for whom my Muse intends these notes,
Which my over-full heart now issues as music?

To you, to you, all song of praise is owed,
Only in you my song begins and ends.

No more, my dear, no more these counsels try,
Oh give my passions leave to run their race:
Let Fortune lay on me her worst disgrace,
Let folk o'ercharg'd with brain against me cry,
Let clouds bedim my face, break in mine eye,
Let me no steps but of lost labour trace,
Let all the earth with scorn recount my case,
But do not will me from my love to fly.
I do not envy Aristotle's wit,
Nor do aspire to Caesar's bleeding fame;
Nor aught do care, though some above me sit;
Nor hope, nor wish another course to frame,
But that which once may win thy cruel heart:
Thou art my wit, and thou my virtue art.

My Dear, no longer repeat your advice,
O allow my passions to run their race:
Let Fortune make me an example of her worst disgrace,
Let people full of intellect criticise me,
Let clouds shadow my face, and rain down into my eyes,
Let me walk no steps but those of lost effort,
Let all the earth tell my story with scorn,
But don't urge me to fly from my love.
I don't envy Aristotle's intellect,
Or aspire to Caesar's blood-stained fame,
I don't care at all though some are higher than me,
I don't hope or wish to take another path,
Except the path that might someday win your cruel heart:
You are my intellect, and you are my virtue.

Love by sure proof I may call thee unkind,
That giv'st no better ear to my just cries:
Thou whom to me such my good turns should bind,
As I may well recount, but none can prize:
For when, nak'd boy, thou couldst no harbour find
In this old world, grown now so too too wise,
I lodg'd thee in my heart, and being blind
By nature born, I gave to thee mine eyes.
Mine eyes, my light, my heart, my life alas,
If so great services may scorn'd be,
Yet let this thought thy tig'rish courage pass:
That I perhaps am somewhat kin to thee,
Since in thine arms, if learn'd fame truth hath spread,
Thou bear'st the arrow, I the arrowhead.

Love, you who fail to lend a helpful ear to my just cries,
I call you unkind, having certain proof of it:
You whom my good deeds should tie to me: such deeds as I
May indeed tell of, even though no one can assess their
worth:
For when, naked boy, you could find no refuge
In this old world, which has grown now too over-wise for
you,
I gave you lodging in my heart, and since you
Are born blind, I gave you my own eyes.
If such great services to you are scorned,
Namely my eyes, my light, my heart, my life, alas,
Yet let your courage, like a tiger's, approve of this thought,
That I perhaps am somehow related to you:
Since in your coat of arms, if learned fame has spoken
truly,
You display an arrow, I display an arrow-head.

Note: The runaway Cupid given refuge by the lovers is
from Anacreontea 33.

Sidney refers to his own coat of arms, a golden arrowhead
on a blue background
(*'or, a pheon azure'*).

And do I see some cause a hope to feed,
Or doth the tedious burden of long woe
In weaken'd minds, quick apprehension breed,
Of every image which may comfort show?
I cannot brag of word, much less of deed;
Fortune wheels still with me in one sort slow:
My wealth no more, and no whit less my need,
Desire still on the stilts of Fear doth go.
And yet amid all fears a hope there is
Stol'n to my heart, since last fair night, nay day,
Stella's eyes sent to me the beams of bliss,
Looking on me, while I look'd other way:
But when mine eyes back to their heav'n did move,
They fled with blush, which guilty seem'd of love.

And do I see some reason that encourages hope,
Or does the tedious burden of long sorrow,
In weakening minds, breed a quick apprehension
Of every image that might offer comfort?
I cannot boast of words, much less of actions:
Fortune still turns for me in the same slow manner:
Desire still walks on stilts, in fear,
No longer my wealth, yet no less my need.
And yet amongst all fears there is a hope
Stolen into my heart, since last beautiful night, no, day,
That Stella's eyes sent me rays of bliss,
Looking at me, while I was looking the other way:
But when my eyes returned to their heaven (her eyes),
They fled with a blush, which seemed to show guilty love.

Hope, art thou true, or dost thou flatter me?
Doth Stella now begin with piteous eye
The ruins of her conquest to espy:
Will she take time, before all wracked be?
Her eye's speech is translated thus by thee.
But failst thou not in phrase so heav'nly high?
Look on again, the fair text better try:
What blushing notes dost thou in margin see?
What sighs stol'n out, or kill'd before full born?
Hast thou found such and such like arguments?
Or art thou else to comfort me foresworn?
Well, how so thou interpret the contents,
I am resolv'd thy error to maintain,
Rather than by more truth to get more pain.

Hope are you genuine, or do you flatter me?
Does Stella begin to view the ruins
Of her conquest with compassionate eyes?
Will she pause before all is destroyed?
Her eyes' speech is translated in that way by you:
But surely you fail to comprehend so noble and heavenly a
text?
Look again, and try to understand the lovely writing better:
What blushing notes do you see in the margin?
What sighs let slip, or killed before being born?
Have you found similar arguments to these?
Or have you sworn not to comfort me in any other way?
Well, however you interpret the content,
I am resolved to support your error,
Rather than feel greater pain through greater truth.

Stella, the only planet of my light,
Light of my life, and life of my desire,
Chief good, whereto my hope doth only aspire,
World of my wealth, and heav'n of my delight:
Why dost thou spend the treasure of thy sprite,
With voice more fit to wed Amphion's lyre,
Seeking to quench in me the noble fire
Fed by thy worth, and kindled by thy sight?
And all in vain, for while thy breath most sweet,
With choicest words, thy words with reasons rare,
Thy reasons firmly set on Virtue's feet,
Labour to kill in me this killing care:
Oh, think I then, what paradise of joy
It is, so fair a Virtue to enjoy.

Stella, the only planet that gives me light,
Light of my life, and life of my desire,
Chief good, to which alone my hope aspires,
World of my wealth, and heaven of my delight:
Why do you spend the treasures of your spirit,
With a voice more suited to Amphion's lyre (that moved
stones),
On trying to quench the noble fire in me,
That is fed by your worth and kindled by sight of you?
And all in vain, since while your sweet breath,
With choice words, your words with rare reasons,
Your reasons firmly underpinned by virtue,
Labour to kill this killing care of mine:
O then I think what a paradise of joy
It is to enjoy so lovely a virtue.

Note: Amphion's lyre had the power to move stones,
during the building of Thebes.

Oh joy, too high for my low style to show:
Oh bliss, fit for a nobler state than me:
Envy, put out thine eyes, lest thou do see
What oceans of delight in me do flow.
My friend, that oft saw through all masks my woe,
Come, come, and let me pour myself on thee;
Gone is the winter of my misery,
My spring appears, oh see what here doth grow.
For Stella hath with words where faith doth shine,
Of her high heart giv'n me the monarchy:
I, I, O I may say that she is mine,
And though she give but thus condition'ly
This realm of bliss, while virtuous course I take,
No kings be crown'd, but they some covenants make.

O joy, too noble for my low style to display it:
O bliss, suited to a nobler state than mine:
Envy, blind yourself, in case you see
What oceans of delight flow in me.
My friend, who often saw my sorrow through all my
masks,
Come, come, and let me pour out my feelings to you:
Gone is the winter of my misery,
My spring appears, O see what grows here:
For Stella has, with words in which faith shines,
Given me the monarchy of her noble heart:
I, I, O, I may say that she is mine.
And though she only makes this realm of bliss
Conditional on my taking a virtuous path,
Likewise no kings are crowned, unless they are bound by
oaths.

Note: Lines here were echoed by Shakespeare(7-8) and
Donne (5-6).

My Muse may well grudge at my heav'nly joy,
If still I force her in sad rimes to creep:
She oft hath drunk my tears, now hopes t' enjoy
Nectar of mirth, since I Jove's cup do keep.
Sonnets be not bound prentice to annoy:
Trebles sing high, as well as basses deep:
Grief but Love's winter livery is, the boy
Hath cheeks to smile, as well as eyes to weep.
Come then, my Muse, show thou height of delight
In well-rais'd notes, my pen the best it may
Shall paint out joy, though but in black and white.
Cease, eager Muse; peace, pen, for my sake stay;
I give you here my hand for truth of this:
Wise silence is best music unto bliss.

My Muse may well begrudge my heavenly joy,
If I still force her to creep in sorrowful rhymes:
She has often drunk tears, but now hopes to enjoy
The nectar of mirth, now I am Jupiter's cupbearer.
Sonnets are not bound as apprentices to pain:
Trebles sing high, as well as basses deep:
Grief is only Love's winter clothing: the boy (Cupid)
Has cheeks to smile as well as eyes to weep.
Come then, my Muse, show the height of delight
With well-made notes: my pen will paint joy
As best it can, though only in black and white.
Cease, eager Muse, peace pen, for my sake, stop,
I give you here my hand to show the truth of this,
Wise silence is the best music to accompany bliss.

Note: Sidney held the office of Royal cup-bearer.
Ganymede was cup-bearer to Jupiter.

Who will in fairest book of Nature know
How Virtue may best lodg'd in beauty be;
Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.
There shall he find all vices' overthrow,
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty
Of Reason, from whose light those night birds flee;
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.
And not content to be Perfection's heir
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.
So while thy beauty draws the heart to love,
As fast thy virtue bends that love to good:
“But ah,” Desire still cries, “give me some food.”

He who wishes to know how virtue
May be most fittingly present in beauty,
Let him learn from Love to read those fair lines
In you, Stella, who display true goodness.
There he will he find the overthrow of all vices.
Not through crude force but by Reason's sweetest
sovereignty,
From whose light those night-birds (the vices) fly,
Because that inward sun shines so from your eyes.
And not content merely to be perfection's heir
Yourself, you try to encourage all minds in that direction,
Minds that recognise what is most beautiful in you.
So while your beauty draws the heart to love you,
Your virtue, as quickly, directs that love towards goodness:
'But ah,' Desire still cries: 'give me some nourishment.'

Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure love, that I
One from the other scarcely can descry,
While each doth blow the fire of my heart;
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part,
Venus is taught with Dian's wings to fly:
I must no more in thy sweet passions lie;
Virtue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart.
Service and honour, wonder with delight,
Fear to offend, will worthy to appear,
Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my sprite:
These things are left me by my only dear;
But thou, Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
Now banish'd art, but yet alas how shall?

Desire, though you are my companion of old,
And often cling to my pure love, so that I
Can scarcely distinguish one of you from the other,
While each of you intensifies the fire in my heart,
Now I must part from your company:
Venus has been taught how to fly with Diana's (chaste)
wings:

I must no longer inhabit your sweet passions:
Virtue's gold must now tip my Cupid's arrow.
Service and honour, admiration with delight,
Fear of offending, a will worthy to be revealed,
Care shining in my eyes, Faith shining in my spirit,
These things are what my only darling has left me:
But you, Desire, because you would possess everything,
Are now banished, and yet how can you be?

Note: Sidney's coat of arms was a blue arrow-head on a
gold background,
but there is an erotic reference here also.

Second Song

*Have I caught my heav'nly jewel,
Teaching sleep most fair to be?
Now will I teach her that she,
When she wakes, is too, too cruel.*

*Since sweet sleep her eyes hath charm'd,
The two only darts of Love:
Now will I with that boy prove
Some play, while he is disarm'd.*

*Her tongue waking still refuseth,
Giving frankly niggard "No":
Now will I attempt to know
What "No" her tongue sleeping useth.*

*See, the hand which waking guardeth,
Sleeping, grants a free resort:
Now will I invade the fort;
Cowards Love with loss rewardeth.*

*But, oh, fool, think of the danger
Of her just and high disdain:
Now will I alas refrain,
Love fears nothing else but anger.*

*Yet those lips so sweetly swelling
Do invite a stealing kiss:
Now will I but venture this,*

Who will read must first learn spelling.

Oh sweet kiss. But ah, she's waking.

Luring beauty chastens me:

Now will I away hence flee.

Fool! More fool for no more taking.

Have I caught my heavenly jewel
Teaching sleep how to be most lovely?
Now I'll teach her that when she's awake
She is too too cruel.

Since sweet sleep has charmed her eyes,
Which are the only two arrows of Love:
Now I will with that boy (Cupid) try
Some play, while he is disarmed.

Her tongue, when awake, still refuses me,
Yielding, frankly, a miserly: 'No':
Now I'll attempt to find out
What 'No' her sleeping tongue employs.

See the hand that guards her when awake,
Allows free access when she is asleep:
Now I'll invade the fort:
Love rewards cowards with loss.

But, O fool, think of the danger
From her just and noble scorn:
Now alas, I will refrain:
Love fears nothing but her anger.

Yet those lips that swell so sweetly
Invite me to steal a kiss:
So I'll attempt just this:
Who wishes to read must first learn to spell.

O sweet kiss, but, ah, she's waking,

Frowning beauty chastens me:
Now I'll hurry away from here:
Fool, the more foolish for not taking more.

Love still a boy, and oft a wanton is,
School'd only by his mother's tender eye:
What wonder then if he his lesson miss,
When for so soft a rod dear play he try?
And yet my Star, because a sugar'd kiss
In sport I suck'd, while she asleep did lie,
Doth lour, nay chide; nay, threat for only this:
Sweet, it was saucy Love, not humble I.
But no 'scuse serves, she makes her wrath appear
In Beauty's throne; see now who dares come near
Those scarlet judges, threat'ning bloody pain?
Oh heav'nly fool, thy most kiss-worthy face
Anger invests with such a lovely grace,
That Anger's self I needs must kiss again.

Love is still a boy and often wanton,
Disciplined only by his mother's tender eye:
What wonder then if he misses his lessons,
When he can indulge in lovely play for so little
punishment?
And yet, my star (Stella), frowns, even chides,
Even threatens me, because in jest I snatched
A sugared kiss, while she lay there sleeping:
Sweet, it was saucy Love that did it, not humble me.
But no excuse will do, she makes her anger appear
In beauty's throne (her face): see now who dares approach
Those scarlet judges (her lips), threatening bloody pain?
O heavenly fool, anger invests your most
Kiss-worthy face with such a lovely grace
That I am prompted to kiss anger's self again.

Note: High Court judges were robed in scarlet.

I never drank of Aganippe well,
Nor ever did in shade of Tempe sit,
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell;
Poor layman I, for sacred rites unfit.
Some do I hear of poets' fury tell,
But (God wot) wot not what they mean by it:
And this I swear by blackest brook of hell,
I am no pick-purse of another's wit.
How fall it then, that with so smooth an ease
My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow
In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?
Guess we the cause. "What, is it thus?" Fie, no.
"Or so?" Much less. "How then?" Sure, thus it is:
My lips are sweet, inspir'd with Stella's kiss.

I never drank from the Muses' well, Aganippe,
Nor ever sat in the shade of Tempe's valley:
And Muses scorn to live in common minds:
I am a poor layman, unfit for sacred rites.
Some people, I hear, speak of poet's fury,
But God knows I don't know what they mean by it:
And I swear by the blackest river of hell,
That I am no pick-pocket of another's wit.
How does it happen then that I can speak my thoughts
With such smooth ease, and what I speak flows
In verse, and my verse pleases the most intelligent?
We guess the cause: 'What, is it this?' 'No, indeed':
'Or this?' Much less so: 'What is it then?' Sure it is this:
My lips are sweet, inspired by Stella's kiss.

Note: Aganippe was the Muses' fountain on Mount Helicon. Tempe is the valley in Thessaly where Apollo pursued Daphne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I:567).
The Styx is Hell's blackest river.

Of all the kings that ever here did reign,
Edward nam'd Fourth, as first in praise I name;
Not for his fair outside, nor well-lin'd brain,
Although less gifts imp feathers oft on Fame:
Nor that he could young-wise, wise-valiant frame
His sire's revenge, join'd with a kingdom's gain;
And, gain'd by Mars, could yet mad Mars so tame,
That balance weigh'd what sword did late obtain;
Nor that he made the Flow'r-de-luce so 'fraid,
Though strongly hedg'd of bloody Lion's paws,
That witty Lewis to him a tribute paid;
Nor this, nor that, nor any such small cause,
But only for this worthy knight durst prove
To lose his crown, rather than fail his love.

I name Edward the Fourth as the most deserving of praise
Among all the kings that ever reigned in England,
Not for his good looks, nor his profound mind,
Although lesser gifts often enhance Fame (imp=graft
feathers on a hawk):
Nor because he could, being wise young, and courageously
wise,
Plan his father's (Duke of York, killed fighting the
Lancastrians) revenge,
Gain a kingdom by war, and yet reign in peace thereafter,
So that the scales of justice ruled what the sword had won:
Nor that he made the French fleur-de-lys so afraid,
Though defended by the red lion of the Scots
(mercenaries?)
That cunning Louis XI bought off his invasion with gold:
Neither this, nor that, nor any little cause of that kind,
But only because this worthy knight dared
To lose his crown, rather than fail his love (Lady Grey, his
wife)

Note: Edward IV (1442-82) usurped the throne in 1461. His father had been killed fighting against the House of Lancaster. He invaded France in 1474 and was persuaded to abandon the invasion with a payment by Louis XI of France of 75,000 crowns. In 1464 he had secretly married Lady Elizabeth Grey, the widow of Sir Richard Grey, while the Earl of Warwick, 'the Kingmaker', was negotiating a French marriage for him. Warwick drove him into exile in 1470 but he regained the throne in 1471.

She comes, and straight therewith her shining twins do
move
Their rays to me, who in her tedious absence lay
Benighted in cold woe; but now appears my day,
The only light of joy, the only warmth of love.
She comes with light and warmth, which like Aurora prove
Of gentle force, so that mine eyes dare gladly play
With such a rosy morn, whose beams most freshly gay
Scorch not, but only do dark chilling sprites remove.
But lo, while I do speak, it groweth noon with me,
Her flamy glist'ring lights increase with time and place;
My heart cries, 'Ah, it burns'; mine eyes now dazzl'd be:
No wind, no shade can cool, what help then in my case,
But with short breath, long looks, staid feet and walking
head,
Pray that my sun go down with meeker beams to bed.

She comes and straightaway her shining twins (her eyes) do
shine

Their rays towards me, who in the tedium of her absence,
Lay disconsolate in cold sorrow, but now my day appears,
The only light of joy, the only warmth of love.

She comes with light and warmth that, like Aurora (the
dawn), prove

Of gentle force, so that my eyes dare to play joyously
With such a rosy morning, whose beams fresh and
delightful

Do not scorch, but only revive the frozen spirits.

But lo, while I speak, it turns to noon around me,
Her flaming glittering lights (eyes) brighten with time and
place:

My heart cries: 'Ah, it burns,' my eyes are dazzled now:
No wind or shade can cool them: what can help me then,
Except to pray, with sighs, gazing, rooted to the spot, but
with busy mind,

That my sun will set with rays that are less fierce.

Those looks, whose beams be joy, whose motion is delight,
That face, whose lecture shows what perfect beauty is:
That presence, which doth give dark hearts a living light:
That grace, which Venus weeps that she herself doth miss:
That hand, which without touch holds more than Atlas
might:
Those lips, which make death's pay a mean price for a kiss:
That skin, whose past-praise hue scorns this poor term of
white:
Those words, which do sublime the quintessence of bliss:
That voice, which makes the soul plant himself in the ears:
That conversation sweet, where such high comforts be,
As constru'd in true speech, the name of heav'n it bears,
Makes me in my best thoughts and quiet'st judgment see,
That in no more but these I might be fully blest:
Yet ah, my maiden Muse doth blush to tell the rest.

Those looks, whose rays are joy, whose motion is delight,
That face which shows what perfect beauty is, when read:
That presence which shines a living light into dark hearts:
That grace, which Venus weeps the lack of, herself:
That hand, which without touching holds more than Atlas'
strength:

Those lips which make the payment of death a low price
for a kiss,

That skin, whose colour, beyond praise, scorns the meagre
word 'white':

Those words, which distil the quintessence of bliss:

That voice, which makes the soul intent on hearing:

That sweet conversation, in which such noble comfort
exists

That, understood in true speech, it bears the name of
'heaven',

Make me see in my truest thoughts and calmest judgement,

That I could be fully blessed by these things alone:

Yet ah, my virgin Muse blushes to speak of the rest.

Note: Atlas held the world on his shoulders.

Oh how the pleasant airs of true love be
Infect'd by those vapours, which arise
From out that noisome gulf, which gaping lies
Between the jaws of hellish Jealousy:
A monster, others' harm, self-misery,
Beauty's plague, Virtue's scourge, succour of lies;
Who his own joy to his own hurt applies,
And only cherish doth with injury;
Who since he hath, by Nature's special grace,
So piercing paws as spoil when they embrace,
So nimble feet as stir still, though on thorns,
So many eyes ay seeking their own woe,
So ample ears as never good news know:
Is it not evil that such a Devil want horns?

O how the pleasant airs of true love are
Infected by those vapours which rise
From the foul gulf, that gapes
Between the jaws of hellish Jealousy:
A monster, harmful to others, a misery to the self,
A plague to beauty, a scourge to virtue, the nourisher of
lies:
That finds its own delight in its own hurt,
And only cherishes by doing harm:
Since it has, by Nature's special grace,
Such piercing claws, that ruin what they grasp,
Such nimble feet that can still move, though on thorns,
So many eyes always searching for their own sorrow,
Such ample ears that never hear good news:
Isn't it evil that such a Devil lacks horns (= is not yet
cuckolded)?

Sweet kiss, thy sweets I fain would sweetly indite,
Which even of sweetness sweetest sweet'ner art:
Pleasing'st consort, where each sense holds a part;
Which, coupling doves, guides Venus' chariot right;
Best charge, and bravest retreat in Cupid's fight,
A double key, which opens to the heart,
Most rich, when most his riches it impart;
Nest of young joys, schoolmaster of delight,
Teaching the mean at once to take and give;
The friendly fray, where blows both wound and heal,
The pretty death, while each in other live;
Poor hope's first wealth, hostage of promis'd weal,
Breakfast of love: but lo! Lo, where she is.
Cease we to praise; now pray we for a kiss.

Sweet kiss, I would like to write sweetly of your sweets,
That are the sweetest sweeteners of sweetness:
You, the most pleasing partner, in which each sense has a
part,
That yokes doves together, and steers Venus's chariot truly:
The fiercest assault and the bravest retreat in Cupid's
battles:
A double key, that opens the heart,
Richest when it most freely gives away its riches:
Nest of young joys, schoolmaster of delight,
Teaching the middle way, to both take and give:
The friendly fight where blows both wound and heal:
The pretty death, where each lives in the other:
Poor hope's first wealth, hostage of promised well-being,
Breakfast of love: but look, look she is here:
Let us leave off praising, and pray for a kiss.

Sweet swelling lip, well may'st thou swell in pride,
Since best wits think it wit thee to admire;
Nature's praise, Virtue's stall, Cupid's cold fire,
Whence words, not words but heav'nly graces, slide;
The new Parnassus, where the Muses bide,
Sweet'ner of music, wisdom's beautifier:
Breather of life, and fast'ner of desire,
Where Beauty's blush in Honour's grain is dyed.
Thus much my heart compell'd my mouth to say,
But now, spite of my heart, my mouth will stay,
Loathing all lies, doubting this flattery is:
And no spur can his resty race renew,
Without how far this praise is short of you,
Sweet lip, you teach my mouth with one sweet kiss.

Sweet swelling lip, you may well swell in pride,
Since the best minds think it clever to admire you:
Nature's praise, virtue's seat, Cupid's cold fire,
From which words that are not words but heavenly graces
fall:

The new Parnassus where the Muses reside:
Sweetener of music, beautifier of wisdom:
Breather of life, and binder of desire,
Where beauty's blush is dyed with the scarlet hue of
honour.

This much my heart compelled my mouth to say,
But now, despite my heart, my mouth will pause,
Loathing all lies, questioning whether this is mere flattery:
And no spur can renew its restless race,
Unless, sweet lip, with one sweet kiss, you teach
My mouth how far this praise falls short in describing you.

Oh kiss, which dost those ruddy gems impart,
Or gems, or fruits of new-found Paradise,
Breathing all bliss and sweet'ning to the heart,
Teaching dumb lips a nobler exercise;
Oh kiss, which souls, e'en souls, together ties
By links of Love, and only Nature's art:
How fain would I paint thee to all men's eyes,
Or of thy gifts at least shade out some part;
But she forbids, with blushing words, she says
She builds her fame on higher-seated praise;
But my heart burns, I cannot silent be.
Then since (dear life) you fain would have me peace,
And I, mad with delight, want wit to cease,
Stop you my mouth with still, still kissing me.

O kiss that shares those reddened jewels,
Either gems or fruits of a new-found paradise,
Breathing all bliss and sweetening the heart,
Teaching dumb lips a nobler exercise:
O kiss, that even ties souls together
With links of love, and Nature's art alone:
How I wish to depict you for all men to see,
Or at least delineate some part of you.
But she forbids it: with blushing words she says
She builds her fame on a nobler praise.
But my heart burns. I cannot be silent:
Then since (dear life) you wish me to be silent,
And I, mad with delight, want words to cease,
Stop my mouth yourself by kissing me, on and on.

Nymph of the garden where all beauties be,
Beauties which do in excellency pass
His who till death look'd in a wat'ry glass,
Or hers, whom naked the Trojan boy did see;
Sweet garden nymph, which keeps the cherry tree
Whose fruit doth far th'Hesperian taste surpass;
Most sweet-fair, most fair-sweet, do not alas,
From coming near those cherries banish me:
For though full of desire, empty of wit,
Admitted late by your best-graced Grace,
I caught at one of them a hungry bit,
Pardon that fault. Once more grant me the place
And I do swear e'en by the same delight,
I will but kiss, I never more will bite.

Nymph of the garden where all beauties are:
Beauties that in their excellence surpass
His who gazed in the watery mirror till he died,
Or hers whom the Trojan boy saw naked:
Sweet garden nymph, who guards the cherry tree (her lips)
Whose fruit far exceeds the Hesperian fruit in taste:
Most sweet-fair, most fair-sweet, do not, alas,
Prevent me from coming close to those cherries:
For though, filled with desire and empty of reason,
When lately admitted by your best-graced grace (to the
'garden')

I caught at one of them (her lips) in hunger, a little,
Pardon my fault, and allow me near that place once more,
And I swear, even by the same delight,
I will only kiss, I will never, in future, bite.

Note: The Garden of the Hesperides, where the Hesperides, the daughters of Night and Darkness guarded the golden apples. Narcissus drowned while gazing at his own reflection in the water (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* III:402-510). Venus revealed herself naked to Paris in the contest between the goddesses, whose prize was a golden apple.

Good, brother Philip, I have borne you long.
I was content you should in favour creep,
While craftily you seem'd your cut to keep,
As though that fair soft hand did you great wrong.
I bare (with envy) yet I bare your song,
When in her neck you did love ditties peep;
Nay, more fool I, oft suffer'd you to sleep
In lilies' nest, where Love's self lies along.
What, doth high place ambitious thoughts augment?
Is sauciness reward of courtesy?
Cannot such grace your silly self content,
But you must needs with those lips billing be?
And through those lips drink nectar from that tongue?
Leave that, Sir Phip, lest off your neck be wrung.

Good brother Philip (her pet sparrow) I've tolerated you for
a long time:

I was content that you should creep into her favour,
While you seemed craftily to behave with propriety,
As though that fair soft hand annoyed you greatly.

I endured it (with envy), I endured your song
When you piped love songs against her neck:

Why, the more fool I, I often allowed you to sleep
In the nest of lilies (her breasts) where Love himself lies.

What, does a high place increase ambitious thoughts?

Is sauciness the reward for courtesy?

Cannot such graciousness content your foolish self,
Without you needing to be billing with those lips,
And drinking nectar from that tongue through them?
Leave off, sir Phip, lest your head be wrung off!

Third Song

*If Orpheus' voice had force to breathe such music's love
Through pores of senseless trees, as it could make them
move;*

*If stones good measure danc'd, the Theban walls to build,
To cadence of the tunes, which Amphion's lyre did yield,
More cause a like effect at leastwise bringeth:
Oh stones, oh trees, learn hearing; Stella singeth.*

*If Love might sweeten so a boy of shepherd brood,
To make a lizard dull to taste Love's dainty food;
If eagle fierce could so in Grecian maid delight,
As his light was her eyes, her death his endless night:
Earth gave that love, heav'n I trow love refineth:
Oh beasts, oh birds; look Love. Lo, Stella, shineth.*

*The birds, beasts, stones and trees feel this, and feeling
love;
And if the trees nor stones stir not the same to prove,
Nor beasts nor birds do come into this blessed gaze,
Know that small Love is quick, and great Love doth amaze:
They are amaz'd, but you with reason arm'd,
Oh eyes, oh ears of men, how are you charm'd!*

If Orpheus's voice had the power to breathe such music's
love
Into the pores of senseless trees so as to make them move:
If stones danced in harmony, to create the walls of Thebes,
To the cadence of the tunes from Amphion's lyre:
Then a like effect at least should arise from a greater cause:
O stones, O trees, acquire hearing, since Stella sings.

If love might so sweeten a boy of shepherd race,
As to make a dragon reluctant to taste love's dainty food:
If a fierce eagle could so delight in a Greek girl
As to make her eyes his light, her death his endless night:
Earth gave that love: Heaven I believe refines love:
O birds, O beasts, look and see how Stella radiates love.

The birds, beasts, stones and trees feel this, and feeling it,
they love:
And if the trees, and the stones don't move to prove it,
And the beasts and birds don't come to her blessed gaze,
Know that a lesser love is lively, while a great one dazes
us:
They are all dazed, but O eyes, O ears of men,
Armed with reason, how much more are you charmed!

Note: Orpheus drew the trees and stone to his singing.
Amphion built the walls of Thebes with the help of his
magical lyre that could move stones.
From Pliny's Natural History VIII:61 and X:18, Sidney
takes the stories of Thoas the Arcadian rescued from
robbers by a dragon to which he had been kind, and a girl

of Sestos who nurtured an eagle that sacrificed itself in her funeral pyre.

Highway, since you my chief Parnassus be,
And that my Muse, to some ears not unsweet,
Tempers her words to trampling horses' feet,
More oft than to a chamber melody;
Now blessed you, bear onward blessed me
To her, where I my heart safest shall meet;
My Muse and I must you of duty greet
With thanks and wishes, wishing thankfully.
Be you still fair, honour'd by public heed,
By no encroachment wrong'd, nor time forgot;
Nor blam'd for blood, nor sham'd for sinful deed.
And, that you know I envy you no lot,
Of highest wish, I wish you so much bliss,
Hundreds of years you Stella's feet may kiss.

Highway, since you are my main Parnassus,
And since my Muse, who is not un-sweet to some ears,
Tunes her words to the trampling of horses' hooves
More often than to a melody played in a room:
Now blessed, carry blessed me onwards
To her presence where I'm certain to meet my own heart.
My Muse and I must greet you dutifully
With thanks and wishes, wished thankfully.
May you remain sound, honoured by public care,
Not wronged by any encroachment, or shamed by sinful
actions.
And so that you know I grudge you no share
Of noblest wishes, I wish you this much bliss,
That you may kiss Stella's feet for hundreds of years.

I see the house; my heart thyself contain,
Beware full sails drown not thy tott'ring barge,
Lest joy, by nature apt sprites to enlarge,
Thee to thy wrack beyond thy limits strain.
Nor do like lords, whose weak confused brain
Not pointing to fit folks each undercharge,
While every office themselves will discharge,
With doing all, leave nothing done but pain.
But give apt servants their due place: let eyes
See beauty's total sum summ'd in her face;
Let ears hear speech, which wit to wonder ties;
Let breath suck up those sweets; let arms embrace
The globe of weal, lips Love's indentures make:
Thou but of all the kingly tribute take.

I see her house: my heart, restrain yourself:
Beware full sails don't sink your unstable barge
Lest joy, which, of its nature, is apt to swell the spirits,
Strains you beyond your limits, to your shipwreck:
And don't be like those lords, whose weak confused minds,
Failing to appoint suitable people to the required tasks,
And undertaking every post themselves,
Leave nothing done but harm, by claiming to do all.
But give suitable servants their proper position: let eyes
See the sum of beauty, summed up in her face,
Let ears hear her speech, that joins intelligence with
wonder,
Let breath suck up her sweetness, let arms embrace
That world of well-being, and lips make Love's contracts:
You, heart, merely accept a royal tribute from them all.

Fourth Song

*Only joy, now here you are,
Fit to hear and ease my care:
Let my whispering voice obtain
Sweet reward for sharpest pain.
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*Night hath clos'd all in her cloak,
Twinkling stars love-thoughts provoke:
Danger hence good care doth keep;
Jealousy itself doth sleep:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*Better place no wit can find
Cupid's yoke to loose or bind:
These sweet flowers on fine bed, too,
Us in their best language woo:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*This small light the moon bestows
Serves thy beams but to disclose,
So to raise my hap more high;
Fear not else, none can us spy:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*That you heard was but a mouse,
Dumb sleep holdeth all the house
Yet asleep; methinks they say:
“Young folks, take time while you may.”
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*Niggard Time threatens, if we miss
This large offer of our bliss,
Long stay ere he grant the same:
Sweet, then, while each thing doth frame,
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*You fair mother is abed,
Candles out and curtains spread;
She thinks you do letters write,
Write, but let me first indite:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*Sweet alas, why strive you thus?
Concord better fitteth us;
Leave to Mars the force of hands,
Your power in your beauty stands:
Take me to thee, and thee to me.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

*Woe to me! And do you swear
Me to hate? But I forbear.
Cursed be my dest'nies all,*

*That brought me so high, to fall;
Soon with my death I will please thee.
“No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.”*

My only joy, now you are here,
Fit to hear and ease my care:
Let my whispering voice obtain
A sweet reward for sharpest pain:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Night has enclosed everything in her cloak,
Twinkling stars provoke thoughts of love:
Danger is careful to keep far away,
Jealousy itself is asleep:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Thought can't find a better place
To loose or fasten Cupid's yoke:
These sweet flowers on a fine bed, too,
Woo us in their best language:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

The small light the Moon grants us,
Only serves to reveal your rays.
So as to raise my fortunes higher:
Fear nothing else, no one can see us:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

What you heard was merely a mouse:
Dumb sleep has gripped the whole house:
Yet, asleep, I seem to hear them say,

Young people, take time while you can:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Grudging time threatens, that if we fail
To take up this fine offer of our bliss,
It will be a long time before he repeats it:
Then, sweet, while everything allows,
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Your lovely mother is in bed,
Candles quenched, and curtains drawn:
She thinks you're writing letters:
Write, but let me write first:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Sweet, alas, why do you struggle so?
Harmony is better suited to us.
Leave strength of hands to Mars,
Your power is in your beauty:
Take me to you, and you to me.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Woe to me, do you swear
To hate me? I will restrain myself:
Cursed be my fate
That lifted me so high in order to fail:
Soon I'll please you with my death.
'No, no, no, no, my dear, let be.'

Alas, whence came this change of looks? If I
Have chang'd desert, let mine own conscience be
A still-felt plague, to self-condemning me:
Let woe gripe on my heart, shame load mine eye.
But if all faith, like spotless ermine lie
Safe in my soul, which only doth to thee
(As his sole object of felicity)
With wings of love in air of wonder fly,
Oh ease your hand, treat not so hard your slave:
In justice pains come not till faults do call.
Or if I needs, sweet Judge, must torments have,
Use something else to chasten me withal
Than those blest eyes, where all my hopes do dwell.
No doom should make one's heav'n become his hell.

Alas, where does this change in your looks come from?
If I deserve differently than before let my own conscience
be

A plague: to be felt forever by me, who condemn myself.
Let sorrow grip my heart, shame load my eye.

But if all faith, like spotless ermine, lies

Safe in my soul, which only flies to you

(As its soul object of happiness)

With wings of love, in marvellous air,

O lighten your hand, don't treat your slave so harshly:

In justice punishments don't come till faults are proven:

Or if (sweet judge) I have to experience torture,

Use something else to punish me with

Than your blest eyes, where all my hopes reside:

No fate should make a man's hell of his heaven.

Fifth Song

*While favour fed my hope, delight with hope was brought,
Thought waited on delight, and speech did follow thought;
Then drew my tongue and pen records unto thy glory:
I thought all words were lost, that were not spent of thee;
I thought each place was dark but where thy lights would
be,
And all ears worse than deaf, that heard not out thy story.*

*I said thou wert most fair, and so indeed thou art;
I said thou wert most sweet, sweet poison to my heart;
I said my soul was thine (oh that I then had lied!)
I said thine eyes were stars, thy breasts the milk'n way;
Thy fingers Cupid's shafts, thy voice the angels' lay:
And all I said so well, as no man it denied.*

*But now that hope is lost, unkindness kills delight;
Yet thought and speech do live, though metamorphos'd
quite:
For Rage now rules the reins, which guided were by
Pleasure.
I think now of thy faults, who late thought of thy praise;
That speech falls now to blame, which did thy honour
raise;
The same key open can, which can lock up a treasure.*

*Thou then whom partial heavens conspir'd in one to frame,
The proof of Beauty's worth, th'inheritrix of fame,
The mansion seat of bliss, and just excuse of lovers;*

*See now those feathers pluck'd, wherewith thou flew'st
most high:
See what clouds of reproach shall dark thy honour's sky.
Whose own fault casts him down, hardly high seat
recovers.*

*And oh, my Muse, though oft you lull'd her in your lap,
And then a heav'nly child gave her ambrosian pap,
And to that brain of hers your hidd'nest gifts infus'd,
Since she, disdainning me, doth you in me disdain,
Suffer not her to laugh, while both we suffer pain:
Princes in subjects wrong'd, must deem themselves abus'd.*

*Your client poor myself, shall Stella handle so?
Revenge, revenge, my Muse! Defiance' trumpet blow:
Threat'n what may be done, yet do more than you threat'n.
An, my suit granted is; I feel my breast doth swell.
Now child, a lesson new you shall begin to spell:
Sweet babes must babies have, but shrewd girls must be
beaten.*

*Think now no more to hear of warm fine-odor'd snow,
Nor blushing lilies, nor pearls' ruby-hidden row,
Nor of that golden sea, whose waves in curls are broken:
But of thy soul, so fraught with such ungratefulness,
As where thou soon might'st help, most faith dost most
oppress,
Ungrateful who is call'd, the worst of evils is spoken.*

*Yet worse than worst, I say thou art a thief. A thief?
Now God forbid. A thief, and of worst thieves the chief:
Thieves steal for need, and steal but goods, which pain
recovers,
But thou rich in all joys, dost rob my joys from me,
Which cannot be restor'd by time nor industry:
Of foes the spoil is evil, far worse of constant lovers.*

*Yet gentle English thieves do rob, but will not slay;
Thou English murd'ring thief, wilt have hearts for thy prey:
The name of murd'rer now on thy fair forehead sitteth:
And ev'n while I do speak, my death wounds bleeding be,
Which (I protest) proceed from only cruel thee:
Who may and will not save, murder in truth committeth.*

*But murder, private fault, seems but a toy to thee.
I lay then to thy charge unjustest tyranny,
If rule by force without all claim a tyrant showeth;
For thou dost lord my heart, who am not born thy slave,
And, which is worse, makes me, most guiltless, torments
have;
A rightful prince by unright deeds a tyrant groweth.*

*Lo, you grow proud with this, for tyrants make folk bow:
Of foul rebellion then I do appeach thee now;
Rebel by Nature's law, rebel by law of reason,
Thou, sweetest subject, wert born in the realm of Love,
And yet against thy prince thy force dost daily prove:
No virtue merits praise, once touch'd with blot of treason.*

*But valiant rebels oft in fools' mouths purchase fame:
I now then stain thy white with vagabonding shame,
Both rebel to the son, and vagrant from the mother;
For wearing Venus' badge in every part of thee,
Unto Diana's train thou runaway didst flee:
Who faileth one, is false, though trusty to another.*

*What, is not this enough? Nay, far worse cometh here;
A witch I say thou art, though thou so fair appear;
For I protest, my sight ne'er thy face enjoyeth,
Bit I in me am chang'd, I am alive and dead:
My feet are turn'd to roots; my heart becometh lead;
No witchcraft is so evil, as which man's mind destroyeth.*

*Yet witches may repent, thou art far worse than they.
Alas, that I am forc'd such evil of thee to say,
I say thou art a devil, though cloth'd in angel's shining:
For thy face tempts my soul to leave the heav'n for thee,
And thy words of refuse, do pour ev'n hell on me:
Who tempt, and tempted plague, are devils in true defining.*

*You then, ungrateful thief, you murd'ring tyrant you,
You rebel runaway, to lord and lady untrue,*

*You witch, you devil (alas) you still of me belov'd,
You see what I can say; mend yet your froward mind,
And such skill in my Muse you reconcil'd shall find,
That all these cruel words your praises shall be prov'd.*

While your favour fed my hope, delight appeared along
with hope,
Thought was servant to delight, and speech followed
thought:
Then my tongue and pen became records of your glory:
I thought all words were idle that were not about you:
I thought every place dark except where your lights (eyes)
might be,
And all ears worse than deaf that did not listen to your story
to the end.

I said you were very lovely, and so indeed you are:
I said you were very sweet, sweet poison to my heart:
I said my soul was yours (O if only I had lied then):
I said your eyes were stars, your breast the Milky Way,
Your fingers Cupid's arrows, your voice the angels' song:
And I said it all well, and no one denied it.

But now hope is gone, your unkindness kills delight,
Though thought and speech still live, yet quite transformed:
For rage now holds the reins which pleasure used to guide.
I think of your faults, now, who used to think of your
praise:
My speech blames you, which celebrated your honour:
The same key that can secure a treasure can unlock it.

You then, whom the favouring heavens conspired to create
As the sole proof of beauty's value, the inheritor of fame:
The mansion house of bliss, and true justification for
lovers:

See those feathers plucked now with which you flew so high:
See what clouds of reproach will darken your honour's sky:
She who' brought down by her own fault will scarcely
regain high place.

And O my Muse, thought you often lulled her in your lap,
And then, being a child of heaven, gave her the food of the
gods,
And infused your deepest gifts into that brain of hers:
Since she, by disdainning me, disdains you in me,
Don't let her laugh while we both suffer pain:
Princes whose subjects are wronged must consider
themselves abused.

Shall Stella handle your servant, my poor self, in this way?
Revenge, revenge, my Muse, blow the trumpet of defiance:

Sixth Song

*Oh you that hear this voice,
Oh you that see this face,
Say whether of the choice
Deserves the former place:
Fear not to judge this 'bate,
For it is void of hate.*

*This side doth Beauty take,
For that doth Music speak,
Fit orators to make
The strongest judgments weak:
The bar to plead their right
Is only true delight.*

*Thus doth the voice and face
These gentle lawyers wage
Like loving brothers' case
For father's heritage:
That each, while each contends,
Itself to other lends.*

*For Beauty beautifies
With heav'nly hue and grace
The heav'nly harmonies;
And in this faultless face
The perfect beauties be
A perfect harmony.*

*Music more loft'ly swells
In speeches nobly plac'd:
Beauty as far excels
In action aptly grac'd:
A friend each party draws
To countenance his cause.*

*Love more affected seems
To Beauty's lovely light,
And Wonder more esteems
Of Music's wondrous might:
But both to both so bent,
As both in both are spent.*

*Music doth witness call
The ear, his truth to try:
Beauty brings to the hall
The judgment of the eye:
Both in their objects such
As no exceptions touch.*

*The common sense, which might
Be arbiter of this,
To be forsooth upright,
To both sides partial is:
He lays on this chief praise,
Chief praise on that he lays.*

*The Reason, princess high,
Whose throne is in the mind,
Which Music can in sky
And hidden beauties find:
Say whether thou wilt crown
With limitless renown.*

O you that hear this voice,
O you that see this face,
Say which of the two
Deserves the first place:
Don't fear to judge this debate,
Since it is devoid of hate.

Beauty takes one side,
Music speaks for the other:
Orators capable of making
The strongest judgements weak:
The 'bar' (legal and musical) where they plead their case
Is only true delight.

So do the voice and face
Two gentle lawyers, dispute
As in a loving brother's case
Settling a father's will,
So that each, while each contends,
Lends its help to the other.

Because Beauty beautifies,
With its heavenly colour and grace
The heavenly harmonies (of voice):
And in this faultless face
Its perfect beauties are
A perfect harmony.

Music swells more loftily
In speeches delivered nobly:
Beauty excels by just as much

In actions which are suitably graceful.
Each of the parties leads a friend
To agree with his cause.

Love seems more drawn
To Beauty's lovely light,
While Wonder thinks more
Of Music's wondrous power:
But both are attracted to both,
So that both are consumed in both.

Music calls the ear as witness
To examine his truth:
Beauty brings to the hall
The eye's judgement:
Both in their purposes such
As admit of no legal objections.

Common Sense which might
Be the judge of all this,
To be truly even-handed,
Is partial to both sides:
He gives the highest praise to this one,
And the highest praise to that one.

Let you, Reason, then, the high princess
Whose throne is in the mind,
Who can find music
And hidden beauties in the sky,
Say which you will crown
With limitless renown.

Note: A reference in the last verse to the Pythagorean
'Music of the Spheres'

Seventh Song

*Whose senses in so evil consort, their step-dame Nature
lays,
That ravishing delight in them most sweet tunes do not
raise;
Or, if they do delight therein, yet are so cloy'd with wit,
As with sententious lips to set a title vain on it:
Oh let them hear these sacred tunes, and learn in wonder's
schools
To be in things past bounds of wit, fools, if they be not
fools.*

*Who have so leaden eyes, as not to see sweet Beauty's
show,
Or seeing, have so wooden wits, as not that worth to know;
Or knowing, have so muddy minds, as not to be in love;
Or loving, have so frothy thoughts, as eas'ly thence to
move:
Oh let them see these heav'nly beams, and in fair letters
read
A lesson fit, both sight and skill, love and firm love to
breed.*

*Hear then, but then with wonder hear; see, but adoring see:
No mortal gifts, no earthly fruits, now here descended be:
See, do you see this face? A face? Nay image of the skies,
Of which the two life-giving lights are figur'd in her eyes:
Hear you this soul-invading voice, and count it but a voice?
The very essence of their tunes, when angels do rejoice.*

Those in whose senses their step-mother Nature creates
such disharmony,
That the sweetest tunes don't stir ravishing delight in them:
Or if they do delight in them, yet are so wearied with
thought
As to call such delight idle, with moralising lips:
O let them hear these sacred tunes, and learn in wonder's
school,
If they're not unwise, to be unwise in what exceeds our
understanding.

Those who have such leaden eyes that they cannot see
beauty:
Or seeing it have such dull wits as not to know its worth:
Or being in love, have such capricious thoughts that they
fall out of it:
O let them see these heavenly eyes, and read in those lovely
letters,
A lesson fit to breed a love that's a firm love, from that
sight and reading.

Hear, but hear with wonder: see but with adoration.
These are not mortal gifts or earthly fruits that have
descended.
Do you see this face. A face? No it is an image of the skies,
Where the two life-giving lights (sun and moon) are
imaged in her eyes:
Do you hear this soul-invading voice and call it just a
voice?
It's the very essence of the angels melodies when they
rejoice.

Eighth Song

*In a grove most rich of shade,
Where birds wanton music made,
May, then young, his pied weeds showing,
New perfum'd with flowers fresh growing,*

*Astrophil with Stella sweet
Did for mutual comfort meet,
Both within themselves oppress'd,
But each in the other bless'd.*

*Him great harms had taught much care,
Her fair neck a foul yoke bare;
But her sight his cares did banish,
In his sight her yoke did vanish.*

*Wept they did, but now betwixt
Sighs of woe were glad sights mix'd,
With arms cross'd, yet testifying
Restless rest, and living dying.*

*Their ears hungry of each word,
Which the dear tongue would afford,
But their tongues restrain'd from walking
Till their hearts had ended talking,*

*But when their tongues could not speak,
Love itself did silence break;
Love did set his lips asunder,*

Thus to speak in love and wonder:

*“Stella, sovereign of my joy,
Fair triumpher of annoy,
Stella star of heavn’ly fire,
Stella lodestone of desire;*

*Stella in whose shining eyes
Are the lights of Cupid's skies,
Whose beams when they one are darted,
Love therewith is straight imparted;*

*“Stella, whose voice when it speaks,
Senses all asunder breaks;
Stella, whose voice when it singeth,
Angels to acquaintance bringeth;*

*“Stella, in whose body is
Writ each character of bliss,
Whose face all, all beauty passeth,
Save thy mind, which yet surpasseth:*

*“Grant, oh grant--but speech alas
Fails me, fearing on to pass--
Grant, oh me, what am I saying?
But no fault there is in praying.*

*“Grant, oh dear, on knees I pray,”
(Knees on ground he then did stay)
“That not I, but since I love you,
Time and place for me may move you.*

*“Never season was more fit,
Never room more apt for it;
Smiling air allows my reason,
These birds sing, ‘Now use the season.’*

*“This small wind, which so sweet is,
See how it the leaves doth kiss;
Each tree in his best attiring,
Sense of love to love inspiring.*

*“Love makes earth the water drink,
Love to earth makes water sink;
And if dumb things be so witty,
Shall a heav’nly grace want pity?”*

*There his hands in their speech, fain
Would have made tongue’s language plain;
But her hands his hands repelling,
Gave repulse, all grace excelling.*

*Then she spake; her speech was such
As not ear but heart did touch:
While such wise she love denied,
As yet love she signified.*

*“Astrophil,” said she, “my love,
Cease in these effects to prove:
Now be still, yet still believe me,
Thy grief more than death would grieve me.*

*“If that any thought in me
Can taste comfort but of thee,
Let me, fed with hellish anguish,
Joyless, hopeless, endless languish.*

“If those eyes you praised, be

*Half so dear as you to me,
Let me home return, stark blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder minded.*

*“If to secret of my heart
I do any wish impart
Where thou art not foremost plac’d,
Be both wish and I defac’d.*

*“If more may be said, I say,
All my bliss in thee I lay;
If thou love, my love content thee,
For all love, all faith is meant thee.*

*“Trust me, while I thee deny,
In myself the smart I try;
Tyrant Honour doth thus use thee
Stella’s self might not refuse thee.*

*“Therefore, dear, this no more move,
Lest, though I leave not thy love,
Which too deep in me is fram’d,
I should blush when thou art nam’d.”*

*Therewithal away she went,
Leaving him so passion-rent
With what she had done and spoken,
That therewith my song is broken.*

In a richly shaded grove,
Where birds made wanton music,
While May was still young, showing its multi-coloured
clothes,
And freshly perfumed with the newly opened flowers,

Astrophil met with sweet Stella
For mutual consolation,
Both oppressed in themselves
But blessed in each other.

Great trouble had taught him great sorrows:
Her lovely neck bore a foul yoke (of marriage):
But sight of her banished his cares,
And sight of him freed her from her yoke.

They had wept for a while, alas:
But now their very tears smiled,
While their eyes directed by love
Reflected each other mutually.

They sighed but glad sighs
Were mixed with the sighs of woe,
Arms crossed in a melancholy pose, but witnessing
To a restless calm, to a life-in-death.

Their ears longing for every word
That their dear tongues could offer,
But their tongues held from moving
Until their hearts had finished talking.

But though their tongues could not speak,
Love itself broke the silence:
Love opened his lips
To speak, in love and wonder:

‘Stella, queen of my joy,
Lovely conqueror of annoyance,
Stella, star of heavenly fire,
Stella, lodestone of desire:

Stella, in whose shining eyes
Are the sun and moon of Cupid’s skies,
Whose beams impart love straight away
To whatever they once are fired at:

Stella whose voice shatters the senses
When it speaks:
Stella whose voice acquaints us
With the angels when it sings:

Stella in whose body
Each letter of bliss is written:
Whose face exceeds all beauty,
All except your mind which surpasses the rest:

Grant, O grant (but alas speech
Fails me, fearing to continue):
Grant (O, what am I saying?
Still there is nothing wrong with praying).

Grant, O my dear, on my knees I pray,

(He then knelt on the ground)
That, since I love you, not me
But the time and place might move you.

There was never a season more suited,
Nor a place more fitting for it:
The smiling air concedes my point,
The birds sing: 'Now, make use of the season.'

See how this light wind which is so sweet
Kisses the leaves,
Each tree being in its loveliest foliage,
Breathing the knowledge of love to the lover.

Love makes the earth drink water,
Love makes water sink into the earth:
And if dumb things are so intelligent,
Shall your heavenly grace be lacking in pity?'

At this point his hands sought to use their language
To make the tongue's meaning clear:
But her hands repulsing his hands,
Pushed him away, gracefully.

Then she spoke: her speech was such
As touched the heart and not just the ears:
While she denied such love as his,
Her speech still signified love.

'Astrophil, my love,' she said,
'Stop trying to force these embraces:

Be still, but still believe me,
Your grief would grieve me more than death.

If any thought of mine could comfort me
Except my thoughts of you,
Let me be fed with the anguish of hell,
And languish forever, joyless and hopeless.

If the eyes that you praised
Are half as dear to me as you are,
Let me return home with blind eyes,
And with my mind even more blind.

If I add any wish
To the secret of my heart,
Where you are not supreme in it,
Let me and my wish both be destroyed.

If anything more can be said, I will say
That I place all my bliss in you:
If you love, be content with my love,
Since all love and loyalty to you is intended.

Believe me, that while I deny you
I testify to the pain in myself:
It is honour, the tyrant, who does this to you,
Stella's own inner self would not refuse you.

So, don't request this any more, love,
In case, though I cannot leave off loving you,
That love being too deep within me,

I should be forced to blush when you are named.’

With this she went away,
Leaving him so torn by passion
As a result of what she had said and done,
That because of it my song is broken off.

Ninth Song

*Go, my flock, go get you hence,
Seek a better place of feeding,
Where you may have some defence
From the storms in my breast breeding,
And showers from my eyes proceeding.*

*Leave a wretch, in whom all woe
Can abide to keep no measure,
Merry flock, such one forego,
Unto whom mirth is displeasure,
Only rich in mischief's treasure.*

*Yet alas, before you go,
Hear your woeful master's story,
Which to stones I else would show:
Sorrow only then hath glory
When 'tis excellently sorry.*

*Stella, fiercest shepherdess,
Fiercest but yet fairest ever;
Stella, whom O heav'ns do bless,
Though against me she persever,
Though I bliss inherit never.*

*Stella hath refused me,
Stella, who more love hath prov'd
In this caitiff heart to be,
Than can in good ewes be mov'd*

Toward lambkins best belov'd.

*Stella hath refused me,
Astrophil, that so well serv'd,
In this pleasant spring must see,
While in pride flowers be preserv'd,
Himself only winter-starv'd.*

*Why alas doth she then swear
That she loveth me so dearly,
Seeing me so long to bear
Coals of love that burn'd so clearly;
And yet leave me helpless merely?*

*Is that love? Forsooth, I trow,
If I saw my good dog griev'd,
And a help for him did know,
My love should not be believ'd
But he were by me reliev'd.*

*No, she hates me, wellaway,
Feigning love, somewhat to please me:
For she knows, if she display
All her hate, death soon would seize me,
And of hideous torments ease me.*

*Then adieu, dear flock, adieu:
But alas, if in your straying
Heav'nly Stella meet with you,
Tell her in your piteous blaying,
Her poor slave's unjust decaying.*

Go from here, my flock,
And search for a better pasture,
Where you would have some protection
From the storms breeding in my breast,
And the showers raining from my eyes.

Leave behind a wretch all sorrowful,
In whom no restraint can be maintained:
Happy flock, leave such a one
To whom mirth is displeasure,
Who's only rich in trouble's treasure.

Yet, alas, before you go,
Listen to your sad master's story,
Which otherwise I would tell to the stones:
Sorrow is only glorious
When it's justified in its sadness.

Stella, that fiercest shepherdess,
The fiercest but the loveliest ever,
Stella, may the Heavens bless her,
Though she holds out against me,
Though I should never inherit bliss;

Stella has denied me,
Stella, who has proved there is
More love in this wretched heart,
Than can be stirred in good ewes
By their dearest lambs.

Stella has refused me:

Astrophil, who has served her so well,
Must see himself winter-starved
In this pleasant spring
While flowers are protected in their glory.

Why, alas, does she swear
That she loves me so dearly,
Seeing me bearing for so long
The coals of love that burn so clearly,
Yet leave me merely helpless?

Is that love? I think, truly,
That if I saw my dog in pain,
And knew of a way to help him,
No one would believe I loved him
Unless I went to his relief.

No she hates me, sadly,
Feigning love a little so as to please me,
Because she knows if she showed
All her dislike, death would soon seize me,
And ease me of my hideous torment.

So farewell, my flock, farewell:
But, alas, if in your straying
Heavenly Stella meets you
Tell her with your pitiful bleating,
Of her poor slave's unjust wasting.

When I was forc'd from Stella, ever dear
Stella, food of my thoughts, heart of my heart;
Stella, whose eyes make all my tempests clear,
By iron laws of duty to depart:
Alas I found that she with me did smart;
I saw that tears did in her eyes appear;
I saw that sighs her sweetest lips did part,
And her sad words my saddest sense did hear.
For me, I wept to see pearls scatter'd so;
I sigh'd her sighs, and wailed for her woe,
Yet swam in joy, such love in her was seen.
Thus, while th'effect most bitter was to me,
And nothing than the cause more sweet could be,
I had been vex'd, if vex'd I had not been.

When I was forced to leave ever-dear Stella,
Stella, food of my thoughts, heart of my heart,
Stella, whose eyes clear away all my storms,
Bound to depart by the iron laws of duty:
Alas, I found that she was hurt because of me,
I saw that tears appeared in her eyes;
I saw that sighs parted her sweetest lips,
And my saddened mind heard her sad words.
I wept to see such pearls scattered for me,
I sighed her sighs, and cried for her sadness,
Yet swam in joy that such love was seen in her.
So, when the effect was deeply bitter to me,
Yet nothing could be sweeter than the cause,
I would have been in conflict within myself, if I were not
already.

Out, traitor Absence, darest thou counsel me
From my dear captainess to run away,
Because in brave array here marched she
That to win me, oft shows a present pay?
Is faith so weak? Or is such force in thee?
When sun is hid, can stars such beams display?
Cannot heav'n's food, once felt, keep stomachs free
From base desire on earthly cates to prey?
Tush, Absence, while thy mists eclipse that light,
My orphan sense flies to th'inward sight
Where memory sets forth the beams of love;
That where before heart lov'd and eyes did see,
In heart both sight and love now coupl'd be;
United powers make each the stronger prove.

Away Absence, you traitor: dare you advise me
To turn away from my dear commander,
Because another marches here, finely turned-out,
Who often displays a present affection, to win me?
Is loyalty so weak? Or is there such power in you
(absence)?
When the sun is hidden, can the stars display its
equivalent?
Cannot heaven's food once tasted keep the stomach free
From a base desire to feed on earthly food?
Tut, absence: while your mists obscure that light,
My orphaned mind flies to that inward sight,
Where memory reveals the rays of love:
So that where heart loved and eyes saw, previously,
Now they are both coupled together in that sight:
Powers united together make each stronger.

Now that of absence the most irksome night,
With darkest shade doth overcome my day;
Since Stella's eyes, wont to give me my day,
Leaving my hemisphere, leave me in night,
Each day seems long, and longs for long-stay'd night;
The night as tedious, woos th'approach of day;
Tir'd with the dusty toils of busy day,
Languish'd with horrors of the silent night;
Suffering the ills both of the day and night,
While no night is more dark than is my day,
Nor no day hath less quiet than my night:
With such bad mixture of my night and day,
That living thus in blackest winter night,
I feel the flames of hottest summer day.

Now that the most unpleasant night of Absence
Covers my daylight with its darkest shadow:
Because Stella's eyes that usually give me light,
Have left my hemisphere, leaving me in night;
Each day seems long, and longs for long-delayed night:
The night, as tedious, woos the approach of day;
Tired with the dusty labours of a busy day,
Wearied by the horrors of the silent night,
Suffering the troubles of both day and night,
While no night is darker than my day,
And no day is less quiet than my night:
With such an evil mixture of my night and day,
So that, living like this in the blackest winter night,
I still feel the flames of the hottest summer day.

Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips my history:
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
Nor so ambitious am I, as to frame
A nest for praise in my young laurel tree:
In truth I swear, I wish not there should be
Grav'd in mine epitaph a poet's name:
Ne if I would, could I just title make,
That any laud to me thereof should grow,
Without my plumes from others' wings I take.
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
Since all my words thy beauty doth indite,
And Love doth hold my hand, and makes me write.

Stella, don't think that I seek fame through verse,
I who seek, hope, love and live only yourself;
Your eyes are my pride, your lips my history;
If you fail to praise me, all other praise is shameful.
Nor am I so ambitious as to compose
A home for my fledgling praise in a laurel tree;
Truly I swear that I don't wish there to be
The name of 'poet' carved in my epitaph:
No, I would, if I could, merely have such title,
That if any praise of me should afterwards arise,
It would be without my taking feathers from others' wings.
Since nothing flows from my own will or intellect,
Rather your beauty pens all my words,
And Love holds my hand, and makes me write.

Note: The laurel is Apollo's tree from which wreaths were cut to crown poets, and there is also a reference here to Petrarch's Laura.

Stella, while now by honour's cruel might,
I am from you, light of my life, mis-led,
And that fair you, my Sun, thus overspread
With absence' veil, I live in sorrow's night;
If this dark place yet show like candle light
Some beauty's piece, as amber-colour'd head,
Milk hands, rose cheeks, or lips more sweet, more red,
Or seeing jets black but in blackness bright.
They please, I do confess; they please mine eyes,
But why? Because of you they models be,
Models such be wood globes of glist'ring skies.
Dear, therefore be not jealous over me,
If you hear that they seem my heart to move.
Not them, O no, but you in them I love.

Stella, while now, because of the demands of honour,
I am led away from you, the light of my life,
And because you my lovely sun, are overcast
With the veil of absence, I live in sorrow's night;
And if this dark place still shows like a candle-light
Some portion of beauty, an amber-coloured head of hair,
Milk-white hands, rosy cheeks, or sweeter, redder lips,
Or jet-black eyes, bright in their blackness:
They please my eyes: I confess it.
But why do they? Because they are likenesses of you,
As wooden globes act as models of the starry skies.
So, dear, don't be jealous concerning me,
If you hear that they appear to move my heart:
It's not them I love, O no, it's you in them.

Be your words made, good sir, of Indian ware,
That you allow me them by so small rate?
Or do you cutted Spartans imitate,
Or do you mean my tender ears to spare,
That to my questions you so total are?
When I demand of Phoenix Stella's state,
You say, forsooth, you left her well of late.
Oh God, think you that satisfies my care?
I would know whether she did sit or walk,
How cloth'd, how waited on; sigh'd she or smil'd;
Whereof, with whom, how often she did talk,
With what pastime time's journey she beguil'd,
If her lips deign'd to sweeten my poor name.
Say all, and all well said, still say the same.

Are your words, good sir, made of precious Indian wares,
That you give them out so sparingly?
Or do you imitate the laconic Spartans?
Or is it because you intend to spare my tender ears
That you answer my questions so briefly?
When I ask how Stella, my phoenix, is,
You say, indeed, you left her not long ago, and she was
well.
O God, do you think that satisfies my concern?
I wish to know whether she sat or walked;
How she was dressed, how waited on: did she sigh or
smile,
How often, where, and with whom, did she talk;
With what pastimes did she pass time's journey;
Whether her lips deigned to repeat my name sweetly.
Tell me everything, and, when it's all said, go on saying it.

Tenth Song

*Oh dear life, when shall it be
That mine eyes thine eyes may see?
And in them thy mind discover,
Whether absence have had force
Thy remembrance to divorce
From the image of thy lover?*

*Or if I myself find not,
After parting, aught forgot,
Nor debarr'd from beauty's treasure,
Let no tongue aspire to tell,
In what high joys I shall dwell,
Only thought aims at the pleasure.*

*Thought, therefore I will send thee
To take up the place for me;
Long I will not after tarry.
There unseen thou mayst be bold
Those fair wonders to behold
Which in them my hopes do carry.*

*Thought, see thou no place forbear,
Enter bravely everywhere,
Seize on all to her belonging;
But if thou wouldst guarded be,
Fearing her beams, take with thee
Strength of liking, rage of longing.*

*Think of that most grateful time
When my leaping heart will climb
In her lips to have his bidding:
There those roses for to kiss,
Which do breath a sugar'd bliss,
Opening rubies, pearls dividing.*

*Think of my most princely power,
When I blessed shall devour
With my greedy licorous senses
Beauty, music, sweetness, love,
While she doth against me prove
Her strong darts but weak defenses.*

*Think, think of those dallyings,
When with dove-like murmurings,
With glad moaning passed anguish,
We change eyes, and heart for heart,
Each to other do impart,
Joying till joy make us languish.*

*Oh my thought, my thoughts' surcease,
Thy delights my woes increase,
My life melts with too much thinking.
Think no more, but die in me,
Till thou shalt revived be
At her lips, my nectar drinking.*

O, dear life, when will I
Be able to view your eyes?
And find from them whether,
In your mind, Absence has had the power
To free your memory
From the image of me, your lover?

O, if I find that
After this separation
I am not shut out from beauty's treasure,
Let no tongue hope to say
What great joy I will experience:
Thought alone can aspire to that delight.

So, I will send you, Thought,
To establish my place for me:
I won't be slow to follow.
There, invisible, you may dare
To look on those wonders
That carry my hopes with them.

Thought, see that you go everywhere:
Enter confidently and seize
On everything that belongs to her:
But if you wish to defend yourself,
Fearing her gaze, take with you
Strength of liking, and rage of longing.

Think of that pleasing time
When my leaping heart will climb
To my lips to achieve its desire,

To kiss those roses (lips) there
That breathe a sugared bliss,
Rubies opening, dividing pearls.

Think of my princely power
When, blessed, I will devour
With my greedy, lustful senses,
Beauty, music, sweetness, love,
While she tries her fierce arrows,
But weak defences, against me.

Think, think of those dallyings,
When, with dove-like murmurings,
Anguish past, with glad moaning,
We exchange gazes, and heart for heart,
Communicate with each other,
Joying till joy makes us languish.

O my Thought suspend all thought,
Your delights increase my sorrows,
My life melts with too much thinking:
Think no more but die in me,
Until you are revived
Drinking my nectar (this song, sung by her) at her lips.

Oh fate, oh fault, oh curse, child of my bliss,
What sobs can give words grace my grief to show?
What ink is black enough to paint my woe?
Through me, wretch me, ev'n Stella vexed is.
Yet Truth (if caitiff's breath may call thee) this
Witness with me: that my foul stumbling so
From carelessness did in no manner grow,
But wit confus'd with too much care did miss.
And do I then myself this vain 'scuse give?
I have (live I and know this?) harmed thee;
Though worlds 'quite me, shall I myself forgive?
Only with pains my pains thus eased be,
That all thy hurts in my heart's wrack I read;
I cry thy sighs, my dear; thy tears I bleed.

O fate, O fault, O curse, the result of my bliss,
What tears can give words the grace to show my grief?
What ink is black enough to paint my sorrow?
On account of me, wretched me, is Stella annoyed.
Yet truth (if a base person is allowed to call on you)
Witness this with me, that my foul mistake
Was not the result of carelessness,
But thought confused by too much affection was at fault.
And do I then give myself this useless excuse?
I have (Do I know this and still live?) harmed you,
Though worlds acquit me, can I forgive myself?
My pains are only eased by pain, in this way,
That I find all your hurt in my heart's pain:
I cry your sighs, my dear: I bleed your tears.

Grief find the words, for thou hast made my brain
So dark with misty vapours, which arise
From out thy heavy mould, that in-bent eyes
Can scarce discern the shape of mine own pain.
Do thou then (for thou canst) do thou complain
For my poor soul, which now that sickness tries,
Which ev'n to sense, sense of itself denies,
Though harbingers of death lodge there his train.
Or if thy love of plaint yet mine forbears,
As of a caitiff worthy so to die,
Yet wail thyself, and wail with causeful tears,
That though in wretchedness thy life doth lie,
Yet growest more wretched than thy nature bears
By being plac'd in such a wretch as I.

Grief, find the words, since you have made my brain
So dark with misty vapours, those that rise
From your heavy earth, that the inner eye
Can scarcely see the shape of my own pain.
Since you can, you should make lament
For my poor soul, tormented by that sickness
That even denies self any sense of itself,
Even though premonitions of death lodge there.
Or if your love of lamentation avoids mine,
As belonging to a wretch worthy of such a death,
Still, weep yourself, and weep with reason,
That though your existence is wretched,
It grows more wretched than normal,
By being placed in such a wretch as I am.

Yet Sighs, dear Sighs, indeed true friends you are,
That do not leave your least friend at the worst,
But as you with my breast I oft have nurs'd,
So grateful now you wait upon my care.
Faint coward Joy no longer tarry dare,
Seeing Hope yield when this woe strake him first:
Delight protests he is not for th'accurst,
Though oft himself my mate-in-arms he sware.
Nay Sorrow comes with such main rage, that he
Kills his own children, Tears, finding that they
By love were made apt to consort with me.
Only, true Sighs, you do not go away;
Thank may you have for such a thankful part,
Thank-worthiest yet when you shall break my heart.

Sighs, dear sighs, you are still true friends,
Who do not forsake the least of your friends when things
are worst:

Rather, as I have often nursed you within my breast,
Now you in gratitude serve my sorrow.

Joy, that faint coward, no longer dares to linger,
Having seen how Hope yielded when this sadness first
struck him:

Delight protests he is not destined for those accursed,
Though he often swore he was my comrade in arms.

No, Sorrow comes, with such great rage that he
Kills his own children, Tears, finding that they
Were made fit to consort with me by Love.

Only you, true sighs, do not go away:

Thanks you may have, for playing a part so deserving of
thanks,

Most worthy of thanks when you finally break my heart.

Thought, with good cause thou lik'st so well the Night,
Since kind or chance gives both one livery,
Both sadly black, both blackly darken'd be,
Night barr'd from sun, thou from thy own sun's light;
Silence in both displays his sullen might,
Slow Heaviness in both holds one degree--
That full of doubts, *thou* of perplexity;
Thy tears express Night's native moisture right.
In both a mazeful solitariness:
In Night of sprites the ghastly powers stir,
In thee, or sprites or sprited ghastliness.
But, but (alas) Night's side the odds hath far,
For that at length yet doth invite some rest,
Thou though still tir'd, yet still dost it detest.

You, Thought, have good reason to like the night so much,
Since Nature or chance gives both one colour:
Both are sadly black, both are blackly darkened,
Night is barred from the sun, you from your own sun's
(Stella's) light:
Silence in both displays his sullen power:
Slow heaviness holds the same sway in both:
Night full of insecurity, you full of perplexity:
Your tears truly express night's natural moisture:
In both there is a bewildering solitariness:
At night the ghastly powers of spirits stir,
In you, either spirits or spiritual horror:
But, but (alas) Night has by far the better of it,
Since eventually it does invite me to rest a little,
While you (Thought), though tired still, still hate it (rest).

Dian, that fain would cheer her friend the Night,
Shows her oft at the full her fairest race,
Bringing with her those starry nymphs, whose chase
From heav'nly standing hits each mortal wight.
But ah, poor Night, in love with Phoebus' light,
And endlessly despairing of his grace,
Herself (to show no other joy hath place)
Silent and sad in mourning weeds doth dight:
Ev'n so (alas) a lady, Dian's peer,
With choice delights and rarest company
Would fain drive clouds from out my heavy cheer.
But woe is me, though Joy itself were she,
She could not show my blind brain ways of joy
While I despair my Sun's sight to enjoy.

Diana (the Moon) who would like to cheer her friend the
Night,
Often shows her fairest face to her at the full,
Bringing those starry nymphs with her, whose arrows
From their heavenly station strike each mortal being.
But ah, poor Night, in love with Phoebus' (the Sun's) light,
And endlessly despairing of his grace,
Dresses herself, silent and sad, in mourning clothes,
To show that no other joy is of value:
In the same way (alas) a lady, Diana's equal,
Would like to drive the clouds from my heavy mood.
But, woe is me, though she were joy itself,
She could not show my blind brain the way to joy,
While I despair of the sight of my sun (Stella).

Ah bed, the field where joy's peace some do see,
The field where all my thoughts to war be train'd,
How is thy grace by my strange fortune stain'd!
How thy lee shores by my sighs storm'd be!
With sweet soft shades thou oft invitest me
To steal some rest, but wretch I am constrain'd
(Spurr'd with Love's spur, though gall'd and shortly rein'd
With Care's hard hand) to turn and toss in thee.
While the black horrors of the silent night
Paint woe's black face so lively to my sight,
That tedious leisure marks each wrinkled line:
But when Aurora leads out Phoebus' dance
Mine eyes then only wink, for spite perchance,
That worms should have their Sun, and I want mine.

Ah, Bed, the field where some see joy's peace,
The field where all *my* thoughts are trained on war,
How your grace is stained by my strange fate!
How your lee (unsafe, downwind) shores are assaulted by
my sighs!
You invite me, with sweet soft shadows,
To steal some rest: but, wretched, I am constrained
(Spurred by love's spur, though sore, and reined in tight,
By Care's harsh hand) to toss and turn, in you:
While the black horrors of the silent night
Paint sorrow's black face so clearly to my sight,
That tedious leisure notes each wrinkled line:
But when Aurora (Dawn) leads out Phoebus' (the Sun's)
dance,
Only then do my eyes close, perhaps from spite
That worms should have their sun, and I lack mine (Stella).

When far-spent night persuades each mortal eye,
To whom nor art nor nature granteth light,
To lay his then mark-wanting shafts of sight,
Clos'd with their quivers, in sleep's armoury;
With windows ope then most my mind doth lie,
Viewing the shape of darkness and delight,
Takes in that sad hue which the inward night
Of his maz'd powers keeps perfect harmony;
But when birds charm, and that sweet air which is
Morn's messenger, with rose enamel'd skies,
Calls each wight to salute the flower of bliss,
In tomb of lids then buried are mine eyes,
Forc'd by their lord, who is asham'd to find
Such light in sense, with such a darken'd mind.

When the depths of night persuade each mortal eye,
To which neither art or nature grants light,
To lay down its arrows of sight that lack a target,
Shut, with their quivers (eyeballs), in sleep's armoury:
My mind most often lies with windows (eyes) open,
Viewing the shape of darkness, and delight:
Absorbing that dark colour, which is in perfect harmony
With the inner darkness of its baffled thoughts:
But when the birds' chorus, and that sweet breeze which is
Morning's messenger, with rose-tinted skies
Call each person to salute the flowers of bliss:
Then my eyes are buried in a tomb of eyelids,
Forced to be so, by their owner, who is ashamed to find
Such light available to his senses while his mind is so dark.

Oh tears, no tears, but rain from Beauty's skies,
Making those lilies and those roses grow,
Which aye most fair, now more than most fair show,
While graceful Pity Beauty beautifies.
Oh honeyed sighs, which from that breast do rise,
Whose pants do make unspilling cream to flow,
Wing'd with whose breath, so pleasing zephyrs blow
As can refresh the hell where my soul fries;
Oh plaints conserv'd in such a sugar'd phrase
That Eloquence itself envies your praise
While sobb'd-out words a perfect music give.
Such tears, sighs, plaints, no sorrow is but joy:
Or if such heav'nly signs must prove annoy,
All mirth farewell, let me in sorrow live.

O tears, which are not tears but rain, from beauty's skies,
Making those lilies and those roses grow
Which always lovely, now appear more than lovely,
When graceful Pity beautifies Beauty;
O honeyed sighs, that rise from that breast,
Whose panting makes unspoilt cream flow,
Winged with whose breath such pleasing zephyrs blow
As are able to refresh the hell where my soul burns;
O complaints, conserved in such a sugared phrase
That eloquence itself envies your praise,
While words, sobbed out, make a perfect music;
Such tears, sighs, complaints are not sorrows, but joy:
Or if such heavenly signs must prove to be harmful,
Farewell all mirth, and let me live in sorrow.

Stella is sick, and in that sickbed lies
Sweetness, that breathes and pants as oft as she:
And Grace, sick too, such fine conclusions tries
That Sickness brags itself best grac'd to be.
Beauty is sick, but sick in so fair guise
That in that paleness Beauty's white we see,
And Joy, which is inseparate from those eyes,
Stella now learns (strange case) to weep in thee.
Love moves thy pain, and like a faithful page,
As thy looks stir, runs up and down to make
All folks press'd at thy will thy pain t'assuage.
Nature with care sweats for her darling's sake,
Knowing worlds pass, ere she enough can find
Of such heav'n stuff, to clothe so heav'nly mind.

Stella is ill, and in that sick-bed sweetness lies,
That breathes and pants as often as she (Stella) does;
And grace, also ill, engages in such subtle trials,
That sickness boasts that it is the most graced of states.
Beauty is ill, but ill in such a lovely way
That we see beauty's whiteness in that paleness;
And Joy, which is inseparable from those eyes,
Stella now learns (strangely) to weep in you (to weep in
joy).
Love takes action at your pain, and like a faithful page,
As your glance moves, runs up and down to make
All people ready to relieve your pain as you wish;
Nature with care sweats for her darling's sake,
Knowing worlds pass, before she can find
Enough heavenly matter to clothe such a heavenly mind.

Where be those roses gone, which sweeten'd so our eyes?
Where those red cheeks, which oft with fair increase did
frame
The height of honour in the kindly badge of shame?
Who hath the crimson weeds stol'n from my morning
skies?
How did the colour vade of those vermilion dyes
Which Nature self did make, and self engrain'd the same?
I would know by what right this paleness overcame
That hue, whose force my heart still unto thraldom ties.
Galen's adoptive sons, who by a beaten way
Their judgments hackney on, the fault on sickness lay,
But feeling proof makes me say they mistake it far:
It is but Love, which makes his paper perfect white
To write therein more fresh the story of delight,
While Beauty's reddest ink Venus for him doth stir.

Where are those roses gone that so sweetened our eyes?
Where those red cheeks that often, with a lovely
heightening
Of their colour, framed high honour with shame's pleasant
stain?
Who has stolen the crimson clouds from my morning
skies?
What makes the colour of those vermilion dyes fade,
That Nature made itself, and itself ingrained the dye?
I want to know by what right this paleness overcame
That colour whose power still binds my heart in slavery.
Galen's (the Physician's) followers, who pass hackneyed
Judgements based on an antiquated method, blame it on
illness,
But heart-felt evidence makes me say they greatly err in
this,
It is merely Love, who makes his paper a perfect white
In order to write the story of delight more freshly,
While Venus mixes Beauty's reddest ink (blushes) for him.

Note: Galen's 'sons' are the followers of the Greek
Physician.

Oh happy Thames, that didst my Stella bear,
I saw thyself, with many a smiling line
Upon thy cheerful face, Joy's livery wear,
While those fair planets on thy streams did shine.
The boat for joy could not to dance forbear,
While wanton winds with beauties so divine
Ravish'd, stay'd not, till in her golden hair
They did themselves (O sweetest prison) twine.
And fain those Aeol's youth there would their stay
Have made, but, forc'd by Nature still to fly,
First did with puffing kiss those locks display:
She so dishevel'd, blush'd; from window I
With sight thereof cried out; oh fair disgrace,
Let Honour self to thee grant highest place.

O happy River Thames, that carried my Stella,
I saw you wear the appearance of Joy,
With many a smiling ripple on your cheerful surface,
While those fair planets (her eyes) shone on your streams.
The boat could not prevent itself dancing for joy,
While straying winds, ravished by such divine
Beauties, would not rest until they had twined themselves
In her golden hair (O the sweetest of prisons).
And those breezes (Aeolian winds) wished to rest there,
But being forced to keep flying on by Nature
Displayed her hair, with kissing puffs of air, before they did
so.
She, dishevelled in that way, blushed: I cried out
At the sight from my window, saying: 'O fair disgrace,
Let honour itself grant you first place.'

Note: Aeolus (Sydney's Aeol) was god of the winds in
Greek mythology.

Envious wits, what hath been mine offence,
That with such poisonous care my looks you mark,
That to each word, nay sigh of mine you hark,
As grudging me my sorrow's eloquence?
Ah, is it not enough that I am thence?
Thence, so far thence, that scarcely any spark
Of comfort dare come to this dungeon dark,
Where rigorous exile locks up all my sense?
But if I by a happy window pass,
If I but stars upon mine armour bear
--Sick, thirsty, glad (though but of empty glass):
Your moral notes straight my hid meaning tear
From out my ribs, and puffing prove that I
Do Stella love. Fools, who doth it deny?

Envious minds, what offence have I committed
That you examine my looks with such poisonous care.
And listen to every word and sigh of mine,
As if you grudged me the eloquence of my sorrow?
Is it not enough that I am far, far from Stella,
So far, that scarcely any spark of comfort
Dares to come into this dark dungeon
Where the rigour of exile imprisons all my senses?
Yet if I'm fortunate enough to pass by a certain window,
If I wear Stella's emblems, stars, on my armour,
Sick, thirsty, glad (though only of the empty glass):
Your moralising words immediately tear my hidden
meaning
From out of my ribs, and proudly show that I
Love Stella. Fools, who denies it?

Eleventh Song

*“Who is it that this dark night
Underneath my window plaineth?”
It is one who from thy sight
Being (ah!) exil’d, disdaineth
Every other vulgar light.*

*“Why alas, and are you he?
Be not yet those fancies chang’d?”
Dear, when you find change in me,
Though from me you be estrang’d,
Let my change to ruin be.*

*“Well, in absence this will die.
Leave to see, and leave to wonder.”
Absence sure will help, if I
Can learn how myself to sunder
From what in my heart doth lie.*

*“But time will these thoughts remove:
Time doth work what no man knoweth.”
Time doth as the subject prove:
With time still the affection groweth
In the faithful turtledove.*

*“What if you new beauties see?
Will not they stir new affection?”
I will think they pictures be
(Image like of saint’s perfection)*

Poorly counterfeiting thee.

*“But your reason’s purest light
Bids you leave such minds to nourish.”
Dear, do Reason no such spite;
Never doth thy beauty flourish
More than in my reason’s sight.*

*“But the wrongs love bears will make
Love at length leave undertaking.”
No. The more fools it do shake,
In a ground of so firm making,
Deeper still they drive the stake.*

*“Peace, I think that some give ear.
Come no more, lest I get anger.”
Bliss, I will my bliss forbear,
Fearing, sweet, you to endanger,
But my soul shall harbour there.*

*“Well, be gone. Be gone, I say,
Lest that Argus’ eyes perceive you.”
Oh unjustest fortune’s sway,
Which can make me thus to leave you
And from louts to run away!*

‘Who is it that complains
Beneath my window, this dark night?’
It is one who being (alas) exiled
From your sight, disdains
Every other common light.

‘Why, are you he, alas?
Are those fanciful ideas not altered yet?’
Dear, when you find I have altered,
Though you are estranged from me,
Let my alteration be to a state of ruin.

‘Well, the ability to see and to wonder
Will die because of absence.’
Certainly, absence will help, if I
Can learn how to separate my self
From what exists in my heart.

‘But time will erase these thoughts:
Time achieves what no one can conceive of.’
Time suits itself to the subject:
Affection continues to grow with time
In the faithful turtle-dove.

‘What if you see fresh beauties,
Won’t they stir a new affection?’
I will think them merely pictures
(Like images of a saint’s perfection)
Poorly representing you.

‘But your reason’s purest light

Gives you leave to nourish such states of mind.’
Dear, don’t do reason such wrong;
Your beauty never flourishes more
Than in my reason’s sight.

'But the wrongs your love suffers
Will make love at last stop trying.'
No, the more it shakes fools,
When their love is so firmly established,
They drive the stake of love still deeper.

'Peace, I think that someone can hear:
Come no more, lest I grow angry.'
Bliss, I will forgo my bliss,
Fearing (sweet) to endanger you,
But my soul will remain here.

'Well, be gone, be gone, I say,
Lest that Argus's eyes see you.'
O most unjust fortune's power
That can make me so leave you,
And run away from these nobodies.

Note: The many-eyed Argus was set to guard the Io, Jupiter's mistress, after her transformation into a heifer. He was lulled to sleep and killed by Mercury, and then transformed by Juno into a peacock.
(Ovid: *Metamorphoses* I:622-746)

Unhappy sight, and hath she vanish'd by
So near, in so good time, so free a place?
Dead glass, dost thou thy object so embrace,
As what my heart still sees thou canst not spy?
I swear by her I love and lack, that I
Was not in fault, who bent thy dazzling race
Only unto the heav'n of Stella's face,
Counting but dust what in the way did lie.
But cease, mine eyes; your tears do witness well
That you, guiltless thereof, your nectar miss'd:
Curs'd be the page from whom the bad torch fell.
Curs'd be the night which did your strife resist,
Curs'd be the coachman which did drive so fast,
With no worse curse than absence makes me taste.

Unhappy Sight, has she passed by and gone,
So near, at so good a time, in so open a place?
Dead glass (his power of vision) do you so grasp your
object
That you cannot see what my heart still can?
I swear by her I love and lack that I
Was not at fault, who turned your (his vision's) dazzling
course
Solely towards the heaven of Stella's face,
Counting what was between as merely dust.
But cease, my eyes, your tears witness truly
That you, innocently, missed your nectar:
May the pageboy who dropped a failed torch
And the night that resisted your attempts to see,
And the coachman who drove away so fast, be cursed
With a curse no less than absence makes me taste.

Oh absent presence, Stella is not here;
False flattering Hope, that with so fair a face
Bare me in hand, that in this orphan place,
Stella, I say my Stella, should appear:
What say'st thou now? Where is that dainty cheer
Thou told'st mine eyes should help their famish'd case?
But thou art gone, now that self-felt disgrace
Doth make me most to wish my comfort near.
But here I do store of fair ladies meet,
Who may with charm of conversation sweet
Make in my heavy mould new thought to grow:
Sure they prevail as much with me as he
That bade his friend, but then new maim'd, to be
Merry with him, and not think of his woe.

O absent presence, Stella is not here;
False flattering Hope that with so fair a face
Deceived me into thinking that in this bereaved place
Stella, I say my Stella, would appear.
What do you say now, where is that sweet food
You told my eyes would help their hungry state?
But you (hope) are gone, now that self-perceived disgrace
Makes me wish most deeply that your comfort were near.
But here I meet many lovely ladies,
Who may make new thoughts grow in my heavy soil
With the charm of their sweet conversation:
Certainly they succeed as effectively with me
As the man who told his friend, newly wounded,
To be merry with him, and not think of his sorrow.

Stella, since thou so right a princess art
Of all the powers which life bestows on me,
That ere by them aught undertaken be
They first resort unto that sovereign part;
Sweet, for a while give respite to my heart,
Which pants as though it still should leap to thee,
And on my thoughts give thy lieutenancy
To this great cause, which needs both use and art;
And as a queen, who from her presence sends
Whom she employs, dismiss from thee my wit,
Till it have wrought what thy own will attends.
On servant's shame oft master's blame doth sit;
Oh let not fools in me thy works reprove,
And scorning say, "See what it is to love."

Stella, since you are so truly a princess
Over all the powers that life grants me,
So that before they undertake anything
They first refer to your sovereign direction;
Sweet, let my heart alone for a while,
Which pants as though it should still leap towards you:
And give your authority to my thoughts
In this great cause that needs experience and art;
And like a queen who sends those she employs
From her presence, send my wit away from you,
Until it has created what your own wish waits for.
Often the master is blamed for the servant's shame;
O don't let fools reprove your actions, in me,
And say, scornfully: 'See what it is to love.'

When sorrow (using mine own fire's might)
Melts down his lead into my boiling breast;
Through that dark furnace to my heart oppress'd
There shines a joy from thee, my only light;
But soon as thought of thee breeds my delight,
And my young soul flutters to thee, his nest,
Most rude despair, my daily unbidden guest,
Clips straight my wings, straight wraps me in his night,
And makes me then bow down my head and say,
"Ah, what doth Phoebus' gold that wretch avail
Whom iron doors do keep from use of day?"
So strangely (alas) thy works in me prevail,
That in my woes for thee thou art my joy,
And in my joys for thee my only annoy.

When sorrow (using the heat of my own passion)
Melts down his lead into my boiling breast,
Through that dark furnace, to my oppressed heart,
A joy shines from you, my only light;
But as soon as thought of you gives birth to my delight,
And my young soul flutters to you, his nest,
Raw despair, my daily guest though unasked,
Immediately clips my wings, and wraps me in his night,
And then makes me bow my head and say:
Ah, what use is Apollo's gold (sunlight) to that wretch
Whom iron doors keep from enjoying the day?
So strangely (alas) do your actions rule me,
That, in my sadness concerning you, you are still my joy,
And in my joys concerning you, you are my only suffering.

Note: There are a hundred and eight sonnets, and also a hundred and eight stanzas in the eleven songs, being the number of Penelope's suitors in Homer. (Odyssey Book XVI:245). Each song and stanza is therefore a 'suitor' sent on behalf of Astrophil (Sidney) to Stella (Penelope Rich).

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