

1

The Clod and the Pebble

William Blake

‘Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell’s despair.’

So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle’s feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

‘Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another’s loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven’s despite.’

Clod – lump of clay or earth
metres meet – appropriate rhymes
in . . . despite – in scornful contempt of

2

Song

Lady Mary Wroth

Love a child is ever crying;
 Please him, and he straight is flying;
 Give him he the more is craving,
 Never satisfied with having.

His desires have no measure;
 Endless folly is his treasure;
 What he promiseth he breaketh.
 Trust not one word that he speaketh.

He vows nothing but false matter,
 And to cozen you he'll flatter.
 Let him gain the hand, he'll leave you,
 And still glory to deceive you.

He will triumph in your wailing,
 And yet cause be of your failing.
 These his virtues are, and slighter
 Are his gifts, his favours lighter.

Feathers are as firm in staying,
 Wolves no fiercer in their preying.
 As a child then leave him crying,
 Nor seek him so given to flying.

straight – immediately

false matter – i.e. lies

cozen – deceive

let him gain the hand – i.e. if you allow him
 to get the upper hand

glory to – relish the opportunity to

his favours lighter – his kindnesses even flimsier

as firm in staying – as rigidly fixed (i.e. not at all)

3

A Silent Love

Edward Dyer

The lowest trees have tops, the ant her gall,
The fly her spleen, the little spark his heat;
The slender hairs cast shadows, though but small,
And bees have stings, although they be not great;
Seas have their source, and so have shallow springs;
And love is love, in beggars and in kings.

Where waters smoothest run, there deepest are the fords,
The dial stirs, yet none perceives it move;
The firmest faith is found in fewest words,
The turtles do not sing, and yet they love;
True hearts have ears and eyes, no tongues to speak;
They hear and see, and sigh, and then they break.

the ant her gall . . . fly her spleen – i.e. even such tiny creatures possess the means to take offence or experience sadness

fords – crossing-points in a river

dial – sun-dial (which tells the time by the gradual change of the sun's shadow)

turtles – doves (mute birds that were supposed to mate for life)

4

Passion

Kathleen Raine

Full of desire I lay, the sky wounding me,
Each cloud a ship without me sailing, each tree
Possessing what my soul lacked, tranquillity.

Waiting for the longed-for voice to speak
Through the mute telephone, my body grew weak
With the well-known and mortal death, heartbreak.

The language I knew best, my human speech
Forsook my fingers, and out of reach
Were Homer's ghosts, the savage conches of the beach.

Then the sky spoke to me in language clear,
Familiar as the heart, than love more near.
The sky said to my soul, 'You have what you desire.'

'Know now that you are born along with these
Clouds, winds, and stars, and ever-moving seas
And forest dwellers. This your nature is.

Lift up your heart again without fear,
Sleep in the tomb, or breathe the living air,
This world you with the flower and with the tiger share.'

Then I saw every visible substance turn
Into immortal, every cell new born
Burned with the holy fire of passion.

This world I saw as on her judgment day
When the war ends, and the sky rolls away,
And all is light, love and eternity.

5

Winter Song

Elizabeth Tollet

Ask me no more, my truth to prove,
What I would suffer for my love.
With thee I would in exile go
To regions of eternal snow,
O'er floods by solid ice confined,
Through forest bare with northern wind:
While all around my eyes I cast,
Where all is wild and all is waste.
If there the tim'rous stag you chase,
Or rouse to fight a fiercer race,
Undaunted I thy arms would bear,
And give thy hand the hunter's spear.
When the low sun withdraws his light,
And menaces an half-year's night,
The conscious moon and stars above
Shall guide me with my wand'ring love.
Beneath the mountain's hollow brow,
Or in its rocky cells below,
Thy rural feast I would provide,
Nor envy palaces their pride.
The softest moss should dress thy bed,
With savage spoils about thee spread:
While faithful love the watch should keep,
To banish danger from thy sleep.

savage spoils – i.e. the trophies of the hunt

6

Last Sonnet

John Keats

Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priest-like task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

with eternal lids apart – i.e. with uninterrupted watching
Eremite – religious recluse, hermit
ablution – washing

7

Love (III)

George Herbert

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked anything.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.

FINIS.

*Glory be to God on high, and on earth
 peace, good will towards men.*

grow slack – become remiss, negligent

8

Lovers' Infiniteness

John Donne

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

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

stocks entire – undiminished store
general – indifferently offered

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

love's riddles . . . losing sav'st it – it is the paradox of love that in giving your heart to another, it is transfigured; and compare Matthew 16:25, where Jesus says: 'For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it'

9

The Bargain

Sir Philip Sidney

My true love hath my heart, and I have his,
By just exchange, one for the other given.
I hold his dear, and mine he cannot miss,
There never was a better bargain driven.
His heart in me keeps me and him in one,
My heart in him his thoughts and senses guides;
He loves my heart, for once it was his own,
I cherish his, because in me it bides.
His heart his wound received from my sight,
My heart was wounded with his wounded heart;
For as from me on him his hurt did light,
So still methought in me his hurt did smart.
Both equal hurt, in this change sought our bliss:
My true love hath my heart and I have his.

cannot miss – can scarcely fail to acknowledge

bides – stays, abides

his wound – i.e. his heart's wound

hurt did light – received his wound

change – exchange