

MICHAEL DRAYTON (1563-1631), POET. For a brief biography of Drayton and selections from his *David and Goliath*, see the print anthology, pp. 336-40. For Christopher Marlowe's drama *Edward II* (1594), based on the same historical figures, see the print anthology, pp. 297-311.

EDITIONS:

Drayton, Michael. *Peirs Gaveston Earle of Cornwall. His Life, Death, and Fortune. The Works of Michael Drayton*. 5 vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 1931. 1.157-207.

From PIERS GAVESTON, EARL OF CORNWALL: HIS LIFE, DEATH, AND FORTUNE (1593)¹

TO THE WORTHY AND HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN, MASTER HENRY CAUNDISH, ESQUIRE.²

Time-ennobled gentleman, and ever-honoured Master Caundish, highly esteeming you (in mine own opinion) amongst the number of those who for their rare deserts and excellency of their minds (in this world-declining age) have their names registered in the catalogue of the most worthiest of this time, as a kind Maecenas³ to scholars, and a favourer of learning and arts—which shall engrave your name with the diamond of fame in the crystal mirror of heaven—I present to your judicial view, the tragical discourse, of the life, death, and fortune of PIERS GAVESTON, whose name hath been obscured so many years, and over-passed by the tragedians of these latter times; assuring myself your honourable patronage shall protect him against the art-hating humourists⁴ of this malicious time, whose envious thoughts (like quails) feed only on poison,⁵ snarling (like dogs) at everything which never so little disagreeeth from their own stoical dispositions. Thus confirming myself in your favourable and gracious acceptance of my Muse, which in my love I ever consecrate to your honourable house, I wish you that happiness which is due to your own worth and good desert.

Your ever affectionate,

MICHAEL DRAYTON.

¹ The 1st edition (date from Stationer's Register). The title page contains the Latin epigram, *Effugiunt avidos carmina sola rogos* ("Only his songs survive the voracious flames," Ovid, 'Elegy IX: On the Death of Tibullus'). The first edition consists of 290 stanzas; Drayton revised the second published edition of 1596, making many small changes and expanding the length to a total of 309 stanzas. Some of these changes are listed in the footnotes, below. *Piers Gaveston* (d. 1312), earl of Cornwall (granted, 1307) and royal favourite; son of a knight, Gaveston was by birth a gentleman, and (initially, at least) a valued member of the households of both Edward I and his son Prince Edward (1284-1327), later Edward II (reigned, 1307-27).

² *Master Henry Caundish, Esquire* Probably the eldest son of William Cavendish, first earl of Devonshire (1551-1626).

³ *Maecenas* i.e., a superlatively supportive patron (after Virgil's exemplary patron, Maecenas).

⁴ *humourists* those subject to whims or influenced by fads.

⁵ (*like quails*) ... *poison* Pliny's *Natural History* (trans. P Holland, 1603) is the source for this common folk belief that quails feed on poisonous seeds and thus are not wholesome meat (10.33).

[In the tradition of *A Mirror for Magistrates*, *Piers Gaveston* is a *de casibus* tragedy, an account of the rise and fall of a great man or woman, ruined by the instability of fortune and often by his or her own failings, sins, or crimes. The poem is framed as a first-person account, spoken by Gaveston's ghost, summoned from beyond the grave to testify to the circumstances of his own life and death, in particular his intimate relationship with Edward II, son of Edward I (sometimes called Edward Longshanks).]

[...]

8

When famous Edward wore the English crown⁶
 Victorious Longshanks, flower of chivalry,
 First of his name that reigned in Albion,⁷
 Through worlds renowned to all posterity:
 My youth began, and then began my bliss,
 Even in his days, those blessed days of his.

9

O days, no days, but little worlds of mirth,
 O years, no years, time sliding with a trice,⁸
 O world, no world, a very heaven on earth,
 O earth, no earth, a very paradise:
 A king, a man, nay more than this was he,
 If earthly man more than a man might be.

10

Such a one he was, as England's Beta is,⁹
 Such as she is, even such a one was he,
 Betwixt her rarest excellence and his
 Was never yet so near a sympathy.
 To tell your worth, and to give him his due,
 I say, my Sovereign, he was like to you.

11

His court a school, where arts were daily read,
 And yet a camp where arms were exercised.¹⁰
 Virtue and learning here were nourishèd,
 And stratagems by soldiers still devised:

⁶ *Edward* i.e., here, Edward I (reigned, 1272-1307).

⁷ *Albion* England.

⁸ *with a trice* speedily.

⁹ *England's Beta* Elizabeth I.

¹⁰ *camp* an army camp.

Here skilful schoolmen were his counsellors,
Scholars his captains, captains senators.

12

Here sprang the root of true gentility,
Virtue was clad in gold and crowned with honour,
Honour entitled to nobility,
Admired so of all that looked on her.
Wisdom, not wealth, possessed wise men's rooms,
Unfitting base, insinuating grooms.¹¹

13

Then Machi'vels were loathed as filthy toads,¹²
And good men as rare pearls were richly prized.
The learned were accounted little gods,
The vilest atheist as the plague despised.¹³
Desert then gained that virtue's merit craves,¹⁴
And artless peasants scorned as basest slaves.

14

Pride was not then which all things overwhelms;
Promotion was not purchasèd with gold.
Men hewed their honour out of steelèd helms;
In those days fame with blood was bought and sold.
No petti-fogger polled the poor for pence,¹⁵
These dolts, these dogs, as traitors banished hence.

15

Then was the soldier prodigal of blood,¹⁶
His deeds eternized by the poet's pen.
Who would not die to do his country good,¹⁷
When after death his fame yet lived to men?¹⁸
Then learning lived with liberality,
And men were crowned with immortality.

¹¹ *grooms* lowly servants.

¹² *Then Machi'vels were loathed* 1596: 'Then were vile worldlings loathed.' *Machi'vels* i.e., Machiavels, followers of the pragmatic political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, popularly represented in England as a vicious, atheistic, and entirely self-interested set of tenets for personal advancement.

¹³ *vilest* 1596: hateful

¹⁴ *that* i.e., that which.

¹⁵ *No ... pence* i.e., no corrupt lawyer or official was allowed to plunder the poor.

¹⁶ *prodigal of blood* i.e., he spent his blood just as a prodigal son spends money: freely and lavishly.

¹⁷ *Who would not die* 1596: Who spared his life

¹⁸ *yet lived to* 1596: remained with

16

Grant pardon then unto my wand'ring ghost,
 Although I seem lascivious in my praise,¹⁹
 And of perfection though I seem to boast,²⁰
 Whilst here on earth I trode this weary maze,
 Whilst yet my soul in body did abide,
 And whilst my flesh was pampered here in pride.

17

My valiant father was in Gascoigne born,²¹
 A man at arms, and matchless with his lance,
 A soldier vowed, and to King Edward sworn,
 With whom he served in all his wars in France,
 His goods and lands he pawned and laid to gage²²
 To follow him, the wonder of that age.

18

And thus himself he from his home exiled,
 Who with his sword sought to advance his fame,
 With me his joy, but then a little child,
 Unto the court of famous England came,
 Whereas the King, for service he had done,
 Made me a page unto the Prince his son.²³

19

My tender youth yet scarce crept from the shell,
 Unto the world brought such a wonderment,
 That all perfection seemed in me to dwell,
 And that the Heavens me all their graces lent.
 Some swore I was the quintessence of Nature,
 And some an angel, and no earthly creature.

20

The Heavens had limned my face with such a dye²⁴
 As made the curios't eye on earth amazed,²⁵
 Temp'ring my looks with love and majesty,
 A miracle to all that ever gazed,

¹⁹ *lascivious* the context suggests 'excessive, lavish, or unrestrained,' but the OED contains no usage of this kind for this word (usually it means 'inclined to lust, lewd, or wanton').

²⁰ *seem to* 1596: vainly

²¹ *Gascoigne* i.e., Gascogne in France.

²² *laid to gage* a synonym for 'pawn': deposit as security.

²³ *page* a young male servant (usually a boy or youth), who acted as a personal attendant.

²⁴ *limned* painted, illuminated.

²⁵ *curios't* most exacting, most carefully observant. *curios't* 1596: each curious

So that it seemed some pow'r had in my birth,
Ordainèd me his image here on earth.²⁶

21

O beauteous varnish of the heavens above,
Pure grain-dyed colour of a perfect birth,
O fairest tincture, adamant of love,²⁷
Angel-hued blush, the prospective of mirth,
O sparkling lustre, joying humane sight,
Life's joy, heart's fire, love's nurse, the soul's delight!

22

As purple-tressèd Titan with his beams,²⁸
The sable clouds of night in sunder cleaveth,
Enamelling the earth with golden streams,
When he his crimson canopy upheaveth,
Such was my beauty's pure translucent rays,
Which cheered the sun, and cleared the drooping days.

23

My looks, persuading orators of love,
My speech, divine infusing harmony,
And every word so well could passion move,
So were my gestures graced with modesty,
As where my thoughts intended to surprise,
I eas'ly made a conquest with mine eyes.²⁹

24

A gracious mind, a passing lovely eye,³⁰
A hand that gave, a mouth that never vaunted,³¹
A chaste desire, a tongue that would not lie,
A lion's heart, a courage never daunted,
A sweet conceit in such a carriage placed³²
As with my gesture all my words were graced.

25

Such was the work which Nature had begun,
As promisèd a gem of wondrous price.

²⁶ *his* referring back to the vague 'some power.'

²⁷ *adamant* magnet.

²⁸ *Titan* Sol, the sun god; thus, the sun.

²⁹ *I eas'ly ... eyes* It is usually the Petrarchan mistress to whom this sort of erotic power is attributed.

³⁰ *passing* i.e., surpassingly.

³¹ *vaunted* boasted.

³² *conceit* faculties of the mind; wit. *carriage* bodily deportment, bearing, mien.

This little star foretold a glorious sun,
 This curious plot an earthly paradise,
 This globe of beauty wherein all might see
 An after-world of wonders here in me.

26

As in th' autumnal season of the year,
 Some death-presaging comet doth arise,³³
 Or some prodigious meteor doth appear,
 Or fearful chasma unto humane eyes:³⁴
 Even such a wonder was I to behold,
 Where Heaven seemed all her secrets to unfold.

27

If cunning'st pencil-man that ever wrought³⁵
 By skilful art of secret symmetry,
 Or the divine Idea of the thought,
 With rare descriptions of high poesy,
 Should all compose a body and a mind,
 Such a one seemed I, the wonder of my kind.³⁶

28

With this fair bait I fished for Edward's love,³⁷
 My dainty youth so pleased his princely eye.
 Here sprang the league which time could not remove,³⁸
 So deeply grafted in our infancy,
 That friend, nor foe, nor life, nor death could sunder,
 So seldom seen, and to the world a wonder.

29

O heavenly concord, music of the mind,
 Touching the heart-strings with such harmony,
 The ground of nature, and the law of kind,³⁹
 Which in conjunction do so well agree,
 Whose revolution by effect doth prove,
 That mortal men are made divine by love!

³³ *death-presaging comet* Comets and meteors were commonly believed to be significant celestial omens, appearing in the sky to foretell or commemorate, for example, the death of great men, or to signal the impending wrath of God.

³⁴ *chasma* an alleged meteoric phenomenon, where the firmament or vault of heaven was rent apart.

³⁵ *pencil-man* artist.

³⁶ *a one seemed I* 1596: one was I

³⁷ *Edward* i.e., Prince Edward. See n1.

³⁸ *sprang* 1596: grew

³⁹ *the law of kind* i.e., the law pertaining to different species.

30

O strong combining chain of secrecy,
 Sweet joy of Heaven, the angels' oratory,
 The bond of faith, the seal of sanctity,
 The soul's true bliss, youth's solace, age's glory,
 An endless league, a bond that's never broken,
 A thing divine, a word with wonder spoken!

31

With this fair bud of that same blessed rose,
 Edward surnamed Carnarvan by his birth,⁴⁰
 Who in his youth it seemed that Nature chose
 To make the like whose like was not on earth,
 Had not his lust and my lascivious will
 Made him and me the instruments of ill.

32

With this sweet prince, the mirror of my bliss,
 My soul's delight, my joy, my fortune's pride,
 My youth enjoyed such perfect happiness,
 Whil'st tutors' care his wand'ring years did guide,
 As his affections on my thoughts attended,
 And with my life, his joys began and ended.

33

Whether it were my beauty's excellence,
 Or rare perfections that so pleased his eye,
 Or some divine and heavenly influence,
 Or natural attracting sympathy,
 My pleasing youth became his senses' object,
 Where all his passions wrought upon this subject.

34

Thou arc of Heaven, where wonders are enrolled,⁴¹
 O depth of Nature, who can look unto thee?
 Oh, who is he that hath thy doom controlled?⁴²
 Or hath the key of reason to undo thee?
 Thy works divine which powers alone do know,
 Our shallow wits too short for things below.

⁴⁰ *Carnarvan* Edward II was known as Edward of *Caernarfon*, since he was born at Caernarfon Castle in Wales.

⁴¹ *arc of Heaven* the firmament (especially the arrangement of the stars and planets which astrology asserted foretold and controlled the fates of men and women).

⁴² *doom* judgement.

35

The soul divine by her integrity,
 And by the functionous agents of the mind⁴³
 Clear-sighted, so perceiveth through the eye
 That which is pure and pleasing to her kind,
 And by her pow'rful motions apprehendeth,
 That which beyond our human sense extendeth.

36

This Edward in the April of his age,
 Whil'st yet the crown sat on his father's head
 My Jove with me, his Ganymed, his page,⁴⁴
 Frolic as May, a lusty life we led.⁴⁵
 He might command, he was my sovereign's son,
 And what I said, by him was ever done.

37

My words as laws authentic he allowed;
 Mine 'yea' by him was never crossed with 'no';
 All my conceit as current he avowed,⁴⁶
 And as my shadow still he servèd so,
 My hand the racket, he the tennis ball,
 My voice's echo, answering every call.

38

My youth the glass where he his youth beheld,⁴⁷
 Roses his lips, my breath sweet nectar showers,
 For in my face was Nature's fairest field,
 Richly adorned with beauty's rarest flowers.
 My breast his pillow, where he laid his head,
 Mine eyes his book, my bosom was his bed.⁴⁸

39

My smiles were life and heaven unto his sight,
 All his delight concluding my desire;
 From my sweet sum, he borrowed all his light,⁴⁹
 And as a fly played with my beauty's fire;⁵⁰

⁴³ *functionous agents of the mind* not in OED; presumably, those active or intellectual functions of the mind.

⁴⁴ *Jove and Ganymed* On this famous mythic pair of male lovers, see Glossary (print anthology).

⁴⁵ *lusty* full of physical energy (not necessarily in a narrowly sexual sense).

⁴⁶ *conceit as current* i.e., my conceptions as right or to be generally accepted [by others]; valued.

⁴⁷ *glass* mirror.

⁴⁸ *his book* 1596: this brook

⁴⁹ *From ... light* 1596: From mine eyes' beams he borrowed all his light

⁵⁰ *And ... fire* The fly's doomed attraction to the light of a flame is a common image of humanity's like attraction to

His love-sick lips at every kissing qualm,
Cling to my lips, to cure their grief with balm.

40

Like as the wanton ivy with his twine,
Whenas the oak his rootless body warms,⁵¹
The straightest saplings strictly doth combine,
Clipping the woods with his lascivious arms:⁵²
Such our embraces when our sport begins,
Lapt in our arms, like Leda's lovely twins.⁵³

41

Or as love-nursing Venus when she sports,
With cherry-lipped Adonis in the shade,⁵⁴
Figuring her passions in a thousand sorts,
With sighs, and tears, or what else might persuade,
Her dear, her sweet, her joy, her life, her love,
Kissing his brow, his cheek, his hand, his glove.

42

My beauty was the loadstar of his thought,⁵⁵
My looks the pilot to his wand'ring eye,
By me his senses all asleep were brought,
When with sweet love I sang his lullaby.
Nature had taught my tongue her perfect time,
Which in his ear struck duly as a chime.

43

With sweetest speech, thus could I syranize,⁵⁶
Which as strong philters youth's desire could move,⁵⁷
And with such method could I rhetorize,⁵⁸
My music played the measures to his love;

those things that seem desirable but are inevitably fatal and consuming (like illicit love).

⁵¹ *Like ... warms* The oak intertwined with the ivy is an ambivalent symbol in the period; the vine [sometimes, the ivy] twining around the oak was an emblem of mutual support in marriage and love, but the vine could also represent a more sinister, parasitic relationship, particularly given that the oak was a common emblem of the sovereign and the state.

⁵² *clipping* embracing fervently.

⁵³ *Leda's lovely twins* Castor and Pollux, called the Gemini. See 'Castor and Pollux' and 'Leda,' Glossary (print anthology). See also stanzas 142, 190, and 238; see n229.

⁵⁴ *Or ... shade* See 'Venus and Adonis,' Glossary (print anthology).

⁵⁵ *loadstar* a guiding star; that upon which one's eyes or desires are fixed.

⁵⁶ *syranize* attract or allure in the same ways as the classical Sirens, mermaids who lured mariners to their deaths with their entrancing voices.

⁵⁷ *philters* love potions; aphrodisiacs.

⁵⁸ *rhetorize* speak persuasively (according to the rules of rhetoric).

In his fair breast, such was my soul's impression,
As to his eyes, my thoughts made intercession.

44

Thus like an eagle seated in the sun,⁵⁹
But yet a phoenix in my sovereign's eye,⁶⁰
We act with shame, our revels are begun;
The wise could judge of our catastrophe,
 But we proceed to play our wanton prize,
 Our mournful chorus was a world of eyes.

45

The table now of all delight is laid,
Served with what banquets beauty could devise,⁶¹
The sirens sing, and false Calypso played,⁶²
Our feast is graced with youth's sweet comedies,
 Our looks with smiles are soothed of every eye,
 Carousing love in bowls of ivory.⁶³

46

Fraught with delight, and safely under sail,⁶⁴
Like flight-winged falcons now we take our scope;
Our youth and fortune blow a merry gale;
We loose the anchor of our virtues' hope.
 Blinded with pleasure in this lustful game,
 By oversight discard our king with shame.

47

My youthful pranks are spurs to his desire;
I held the reins that ruled the golden sun;
My blandishments were fuel to his fire;
I had the garland whosoever won.
 I waxed his wings and taught him art to fly,⁶⁵
 Who on his back might bear me through the sky.

⁵⁹ *like ... sun* Eagles were popularly believed to be able to look directly into the sun without being blinded.

⁶⁰ *phoenix* On this fabled Egyptian bird, see Glossary (print anthology).

⁶¹ *banquets* specifically, a banquet was a course of elaborate delicacies served after the main meal.

⁶² *sirens* See n56. *Calypso* a beautiful nymph, who imprisoned the wandering Greek hero Ulysses on her island in a vain attempt to compel him to marry her.

⁶³ *Carousing love in bowls of ivory* an image taken from ancient Greek songs in praise of drinking (cf. *Anacreontea* 4 and 5 [*Greek Lyric* 2], and Rochester's 'Nestor,' print anthology, p. 372-73).

⁶⁴ *Fraught* fully laden.

⁶⁵ *I ... fly* Gaveston implicitly compares himself first to Phaethon, holding the reins of the sun-chariot (see Glossary, print anthology), and then to the great artificer Daedalus, who most famously constructed pairs of wings for himself and his son Icarus so that they could escape their imprisonment on the isle of Crete (see 'Daedalus,' Glossary, print anthology). Cf. n73.

48

Here first that sun-bright temple was defiled,
 Which to fair virtue first was consecrated;
 This was the fruit wherewith I was beguiled,
 Here first the deed of all my fame was dated.
 O me! Even here from paradise I fell,
 From angel's state, from Heaven, cast down to Hell.

49

Lo here the very image of perfection,
 With the black pencil of defame is blotted;
 And with the ulcers of my youth's infection,
 My innocency is besmeared and spotted.
 Now comes my night, now my day is done;
 These sable clouds eclipse my rising sun.

50

Our innocence, our child-bred purity
 Is now defiled and as our dreams forgot,
 Drawn in the coach of our security.
 What act so vile, that we attempted not?
 Our sun-bright virtues' fountain-clear beginning
 Is now polluted by the filth of sinning.

51

O wit too wilful, first by Heaven ordained
 An antidote by virtue made to cherish,
 By filthy vice as with a mole art stained,
 A poison now by which the senses perish.
 That made of force all vices to control
 Defames the life and doth confound the soul.⁶⁶

52

The Heavens to see my fall doth knit her brows,
 The vaulty ground under my burthen groaneth;⁶⁷
 Unto mine eyes, the air no light allows,⁶⁸
 The very wind my wickedness bemoaneth.
 The barren earth repineth at my food,⁶⁹
 And Nature seems to curse her beastly brood.

⁶⁶ *That ... soul* i.e., wit (discernment, intelligence) is that which was created of necessity to control all vices, but being corrupted, wit can and does ruin a person's reputation and destroy his soul.

⁶⁷ *vaulty* arching like a vault.

⁶⁸ *no* corrected from 'my' in the 1594 edition.

⁶⁹ *repineth at my food* i.e., is discontented at having to provide my food.

53

And thus like slaves we sell our souls to sin,
 Virtue forgot by world's deceitful trust;
 Alone by pleasure are we entered in,
 Now wand'ring in the labyrinth of lust.
 For when the soul is drownèd once in vice,
 The sweet of sin makes Hell a paradise.

54

O Pleasure, thou, the very lure of sin,
 The root of woe, our youth's deceitful guide,
 A shop where all confected poisons been,⁷⁰
 The bait of lust, the instrument of pride,
 Enchanting Circe's smoothing cover-guile,⁷¹
 Alluring siren, flattering crocodile.⁷²

55

Our Jove which saw his Phoebus youth betrayed,
 And Phaethon guide the sun-car in the skies,⁷³
 Knew well the course with danger hardly stayed,
 For what is not perceived by wise men's eyes?
 He knew these pleasures, posts of our desire,⁷⁴
 Might by misguiding set his throne on fire.

56

This was a corr'sive to King Edward's days,⁷⁵
 These jarring discords quite untuned his mirth;
 This was the pain that never gave him ease,
 If ever Hell, this was his hell on earth.
 This was the burthen which he groanèd under,
 This pinched his soul, and rent his heart in sunder.

57

This venom sucked the marrow from his bones,
 This was the canker which consumed his years,⁷⁶

⁷⁰ *confectèd* composed (glancing at 'confections,' sweets).

⁷¹ *Circe* a sorceress, daughter of the sun-god, Sol, who most famously transforms Odysseus' men into pigs on the island of Aeaëa.

⁷² *flattering crocodile* The crocodile was thought to weep hypocritically as it devoured its victims, or as a method of drawing them closer in order to devour them. For *sirens*, see n56.

⁷³ *Our Jove ... skies* i.e., when Jove, king of the gods, (here, representing King Edward I) sees his son Phoebus Apollo (representing Prince Edward) allowing Phoebus' half-human son Phaethon (representing Gaveston) to drive the sun chariot across the sky. For the myth, see 'Phaethon,' Glossary, print anthology. Cf. n65.

⁷⁴ *posts* perhaps, simply, 'markers,' but perhaps also 'messengers.'

⁷⁵ *corr'sive* corrosive.

⁷⁶ *canker* malignant tumour or ulcer.

This fearful vision filled his sleep with groans,
 This winter snowed down frost upon his hairs,
 This was the moth, this was the fretting rust,
 Which so consumed his glory unto dust,

58

The humour found which fed this foul disease⁷⁷
 Must needs be stayed, ere help could be devised;
 The vein must breathe the burning to appease,⁷⁸
 Hardly a cure, the wound not cauterized.
 That member now wherein the botch was risen⁷⁹
 Infecteth all not cured by incision.

59

The cause conjectured by this prodigy,⁸⁰
 From whence this foul contagious sickness grew,
 Wisdom alone must give a remedy
 For to prevent the danger to ensue.
 The cause must end ere the effect could cease,
 Else might the danger daily more increase.

60

Now those whose eyes to death envie my glory,⁸¹
 Whose safety still upon my downfall stood,
 These, these, could comment on my youthful story,
 These were the wolves which thirsted for my blood,
 These all unlade their mischiefs at this bay,⁸²
 And make the breach to enter my decay.

61

These curs that lived by carrion of the court,
 These wide-mouthed hell-hounds long time kept at bay,
 Finding the King to credit their report,
 Like greedy ravens follow for their prey.
 Despiteful Langton, favourite to the King,⁸³

⁷⁷ *humour* engrained psychological predisposition to a particular set of attitudes, cast of mind, etc.

⁷⁸ *The vein ... appease* i.e., the King had to be subject to the medical procedure called venesection or blood-letting to repair the imbalance of fluids in his body (his *humours*) that were contributing to his physical decline. By implication, Gaveston is that 'botch' in the body of the state which must be excised to restore its health and that of the royal line.

⁷⁹ *botch* boil or tumour. *incision* i.e., the cut made in the flesh to allow the bad humour to drain away (see n78, above).

⁸⁰ *prodigy* extraordinary and unnatural situation.

⁸¹ *envie* i.e., envied.

⁸² *unlade* unloaded. *at this bay* said of the situation of a hunted animal when it is backed into a corner; unable to flee, it turns to face its attackers.

Was he which first me in disgrace could bring.⁸⁴

62

Such as beheld this lightning from above,
My princely Jove from out the air to thunder,
This earthquake which did my foundation move,
This bois'trous storm, this unexpected wonder,
They thought my sun had been eclipsèd quite,
And all my day now turned to winter's night.

63

My youth emboweled by their curious eyes,⁸⁵
Whose true reports my life anatomized,
Who still pursued me like deceitful spies,
To cross that which I wantonly devised.⁸⁶
Perceive the train me to the trap had led,⁸⁷
And down they come like hailstones on my head.

64

My sun eclipsed, each star becomes a sun,
When Phoebus fails, then Cynthia shineth bright,⁸⁸
These furnish up the stage—my act is done—
Which were but glow-worms to my glorious light,
Those erst condemned by my perfection's doom,⁸⁹
In Phoebus' chariot now possess my room.⁹⁰

65

The commons swore I led the Prince to vice;
The nobles said that I abused the King;
Grave matrons, such as lust could not entice,
Like women whispered of another thing.⁹¹
Such as could not aspire unto my place,
These were suborned to offer me disgrace.

⁸³ Walter *Langton* (d. 1321), bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and one of Edward I's trusted advisors.

⁸⁴ *Was ... bring* 1596: This was the Serpent struck me with his sting.

⁸⁵ *emboweled* i.e., disembowelled.

⁸⁶ *cross* oppose, frustrate.

⁸⁷ *train* trick, scheme.

⁸⁸ *Phoebus* the sun. *Cynthia* the moon.

⁸⁹ *erst* earlier. *doom* judgement.

⁹⁰ *Phoebus* Prince Edward (see n65 and n73). *possess my room* take my place.

⁹¹ *another thing* perhaps, sodomy (mentioned explicitly in stanza 212).

66

The staff thus broke whereon my youth did stay,⁹²
 And with the shadow all my pleasures gone.⁹³
 Now with the winds my joys fleet hence away,
 The silent night makes music to my moan;
 The tattling echoes whispering with the air,
 Unto my words sound nothing but despair.

67

The frowning heavens are all in sables clad,
 The planet of my life's misfortune reigneth;⁹⁴
 No music serves a dying soul to glad,⁹⁵
 My wrong to tyrants for redress complaineth.
 To ease my pain there is no remedy,
 So far despair exceeds extremity.

68

Why do I quake my downfall to report?
 Tell on, my ghost, the story of my woe.
 The King commands, I must depart the court;
 I ask no question, he will have it so.
 The lion's roaring lesser beasts do fear,
 The greatest fly when he approacheth near.

69

My Prince is now appointed to his guard,
 As from a traitor he is kept from me;
 My banishment already is prepared,
 Away I must, there is no remedy.
 On pain of death I may no longer stay,
 Such is revenge which brooketh no delay.

70

The skies with clouds are all envelopèd,
 The pitchy fogs eclipse my cheerful sun,
 The geatie night hath all her curtains spread,⁹⁶
 And all the air with vapours over-run.
 Wanting those rays whose clearness lent me light,

⁹² *stay* rely, depend.

⁹³ *with* 1596: like

⁹⁴ *the planet ... reigneth* referring to the belief that each human being was born under a particular constellation and arrangement of the planets; some arrangements were propitious, others were not; some planets were inherently fortunate, others could inflict disaster and suffering.

⁹⁵ *to glad* to make happy or joyful.

⁹⁶ *geatie* deep-black (the colour of jet).

My sunshine day is turned to black-faced night.

71

Like to the bird of Leda's leman's dye,⁹⁷
 Beating his breast against the silver stream,
 The fatal prophet of his destiny,
 With mourning chants his death-approaching theme:⁹⁸
 So now I sing the dirges of my fall,
 The anthems of my fatal funeral.

72

Or as the faithful turtle for her mate⁹⁹
 Whose youth enjoy'd her dear virginity,
 Sits shrouded in some melancholy brake¹⁰⁰
 Chirping forth accents of her misery,
 Thus half distracted sitting all alone,
 With speaking sighs, to utter forth my moan.

73

My beauty s'daining to behold the light,¹⁰¹
 Now weather-beaten with a thousand storms,
 My dainty limbs must travail day and night,
 Which oft were lull'd in princely Edward's arms,
 Those eyes where beauty sat in all her pride,
 With fearful objects fill'd on every side.¹⁰²

74

The Prince so much astonished with the blow,
 So that it seemed as yet he felt no pain,
 Until at length awakened by his woe,
 He saw the wound by which his joys were slain,
 His cares fresh bleeding, fainting more and more,
 No cataplasma now to cure the sore.¹⁰³

⁹⁷ *Like ... dye* i.e., he is shiningly white in his beauty, like the swan: most famously Jove transformed himself into a swan to sexually possess the mortal woman, Leda. Cf stanza 40. *leman* lover.

⁹⁸ *With ... theme* Swans were believed to sing beautifully just before they died.

⁹⁹ *mate* i.e., mate. Turtle doves were believed to mate for life, and were popular emblems of marital fidelity and love.

¹⁰⁰ *brake* thicket.

¹⁰¹ *s'daining* i.e., disdain.

¹⁰² *fill'd* either 'filled' or 'filed' (defiled).

¹⁰³ *cataplasma* plaster, emollient, poultice.

75

Now weep, mine eyes, and lend me tears at will,
 You sad-mused sisters help me to indite,¹⁰⁴
 And in your fair Castalia bathe my quill,¹⁰⁵
 In bloody lines whilst I his woes recite.
 Inspire my Muse, O Heavens, now from above,
 To paint the passions of a princely love!

76

His eyes about their rolling globes do cast,
 To find that sun from whom they had their light;
 His thoughts do labour for that sweet repast,
 Which passed the day, and pleased him all the night;
 He counts the hours, so slowly how they run,
 Reproves the day, and blames the loit'ring sun.

77

As gorgeous Phoebus in his first uprise,
 Discovering now his scarlet-coloured head,
 By troublous motions of the louring skies¹⁰⁶
 His glorious beams with fogs are overspread,
 So are his cheerful brows eclipsed with sorrow,
 Which cloud the shine of his youth-smiling morrow.

78

Now show'ring down a flood of brackish tears,¹⁰⁷
 The epithemaes to his heart-swol'n grief,¹⁰⁸
 Then sighing out a volley of despairs,
 Which only is th'afflicted man's relief,
 Now wanting sighs, and all his tears were spent,¹⁰⁹
 His tongue broke out into this sad lament.

79

“Oh, break my heart,” quoth he, “Oh, break and die,
 Whose infant thoughts were nursed with sweet delight;
 But now the inn of care and misery,
 Whose pleasing hope is murdered with despight!

¹⁰⁴ *sad-mused sisters* those sacred patrons of the arts and sciences, the Muses, were all daughters of Jove/Jupiter; the specific reference is perhaps to Melpomene (muse of tragedy) and Clio (muse of history). *indite* write down, compose.

¹⁰⁵ *Castalia* a spring on Mount Helicon, sacred to the Muses; thus, a source of divine, poetic inspiration.

¹⁰⁶ *louring* threatening, gloomy.

¹⁰⁷ *brackish* salty.

¹⁰⁸ *epithemaes* epitomes; abstracts or representations in miniature.

¹⁰⁹ *wanting* lacking (he has exhausted his sighs).

Oh, end my days, for now my joys are done,
Wanting my Piers, my sweetest Gaveston!¹¹⁰

80

“Farewell, my love, companion of my youth,
My soul’s delight, the subject of my mirth,
My second self if I report the truth,¹¹¹
The rare and only phoenix of the earth,¹¹²
Farewell, sweet friend, with thee my joys are gone,
Farewell my Piers, my lovely Gaveston.

81

“What are the rest but painted imagery,
Dumb idols made to fill up idle rooms,
But gaudy antics, sports of foolery,
But fleshly coffins, goodly gilded tombs,
But puppets which with others’ words reply,
Like prattling echoes soothing every lie?

82

“O damnèd world, I scorn thee and thy worth,
The very source of all iniquity!
An ugly dam that brings such monsters forth,¹¹³
The maze of death, nurse of impiety,
A filthy sink, where loathsomeness doth dwell,
A labyrinth, a jail, a very hell.

83

“Deceitful siren, traitor to my youth,¹¹⁴
Bane to my bliss, false thief that steal’st my joys!
Mother of lies, sworn enemy to truth,
The ship of fools fraught all with gauds and toys!¹¹⁵
A vessel stuffed with foul hypocrisy,
The very temple of idolatry!

84

“O earth-pale Saturn, most malevolent
Combustious planet, tyrant in thy reign,

¹¹⁰ *wanting* lacking.

¹¹¹ *second self* a very common classical description of the true friend: Cf. Cicero’s *Laelius*, “ [...] a friend is one’s other self.”

¹¹² *phoenix* See Glossary (print anthology).

¹¹³ *dam* mother (usually used of animals).

¹¹⁴ *siren* See n56.

¹¹⁵ *fraught* laden, loaded. *toys* knick-knacks, trinkets. *gauds* fripperies, trifles.

The sword of wrath, the root of discontent,
 In whose ascendant all my joys are slain:¹¹⁶
 Thou executioner of foul, bloody rage,
 To act the will of lame, decrepit age!

85
 “My life is but a very map of woes,
 My joys the fruit of an untimely birth,
 My youth in labour with unkindly throes,
 My pleasures are like plagues that reign on earth,
 All my delights like streams that swiftly run,
 Or like the dew exhalèd by the Sun!

86
 “O Heavens, why are you deaf unto my moan?
 S’dain you my prayers? or scorn to hear my miss?¹¹⁷
 Cease you to move, or is your pity gone?¹¹⁸
 Or is it you that rob me of my bliss?
 What, are you blind, or wink and will not see?¹¹⁹
 Or do you sport at my calamity?¹²⁰

87
 “O happy climate, whatsoe’er thou be,
 Cheered with those suns the fair’st that ever shone,
 Which hast those stars which guide my destiny,
 The brightest lamps in all the horizon,
 O happy eyes that see which most I lack,
 The pride and beauty of the Zodiac!¹²¹

[...]

97
 No sooner was his body wrapt in lead¹²²
 And that his mournful funerals were done,
 But that the crown was set on Edward’s head,
 Sing *Io* now, my ghost, the storm is gone;¹²³

¹¹⁶ *O ... slain* Medieval and Renaissance astrology consistently represented Saturn as an ill-omened planet, the dominance or zenith (the *ascendant*) of which could spell disaster for individuals and nations.

¹¹⁷ *S’dain* Disdain. *miss* catastrophe.

¹¹⁸ *move* here, experience passion or compassion.

¹¹⁹ *wink* close [one’s] eyes to something faulty; to be willfully ignorant.

¹²⁰ *sport at* enjoy.

¹²¹ *the pride and beauty of the Zodiac* i.e., Gaveston.

¹²² *his body* that of Edward’s father, Edward I (see stanza 8); his death paves the way for Prince Edward’s crowning as King Edward II and Gaveston’s recall from exile.

¹²³ *Io* a Greek exclamation of praise and thanksgiving.

The wind blows right, lo yonder breaks my day,
Carol, my Muse, and now sing care away.

98

Carnarvan now calls home within a while¹²⁴
Whom worthy Longshanks hated to the death,¹²⁵
Whom Edward swore should die in his exile,
He was as dear to Edward as his breath,¹²⁶
This Edward loved that Edward loved not;¹²⁷
Kings' wills performed: and dead men's words forgot.

99

Now waft me, wind, unto the blessed isle,
Rock me, my joys; love, sing me with delight;
Now sleep, my thoughts; cease sorrow for a while,
Now end my care; come day, farewell my night;
Sweet senses, now act every one his part,
Lo, here the balm that hath recured my heart.¹²⁸

100

Lo, now my Jove in his ascendant is,¹²⁹
In the aestivall solstice of his glory;¹³⁰
Now all the stars prognosticate my bliss,
And in the heaven all eyes may read my story.
My comet now world's wonder thus appears,¹³¹
Foretelling troubles of ensuing years.

101

Now am I mounted with Fame's golden wings,
And in the tropic of my fortune's height;
My flood maintained with a thousand springs,
Now on my back supporting Atlas' weight:¹³²
All tongues and pens attending on my praise,
Surnamed now, 'the wonder of our days.'

¹²⁴ *Carnarvan* Prince Edward, now King Edward II. See n40.

¹²⁵ Whom i.e., he whom [Gaveston]. *Longshanks* Edward I.

¹²⁶ *Edward* Prince Edward (now Edward II).

¹²⁷ *that* that which (i.e., Gaveston).

¹²⁸ *recured* cured, healed.

¹²⁹ *ascendant* the highest point of power and influence.

¹³⁰ *aestival* summer.

¹³¹ *comet* See n33.

¹³² *Atlas* demi-god, who bore the weight of this world on his shoulders, holding it up in its place in the cosmos.

102

Who ever saw the kindest Roman dame
 With extreme joy yield up her latest breath,¹³³
 When from the wars her son triumphing came,
 When stately Rome had mourned for his death:
 Her passion here might have expressed aright,
 When once I came into the Prince's sight.

103

Who ever had his lady in his arms,
 That hath of love but felt the misery,
 Touching the fire that all his senses warms,
 Now clips with joy her blushing ivory,¹³⁴
 Feeling his soul in such delights to melt:
 There's none but he can tell the joy we felt.

104

Like as when Phoebus darteth forth his rays,
 Gliding along the swelling ocean streams,
 Now whilst one billow with another plays,
 Reflecteth back his bright translucent beams:
 Such was the conflict then betwixt our eyes,
 Sending forth looks as tears do fall and rise.

105

It seemed the air devised to please my sight,
 The whistling wind makes music to my tale;
 All things on earth now feast me with delight,
 The world to me sets all her wealth to sale.
 Who now rules all in court but I alone,
 Who highly graced but only Gaveston?

106

Now like to Midas all I touch is gold,
 The clouds do show'r down gold into my lap;
 If I but wink the mightiest are controlled,
 Placed on the turret of my highest hap.¹³⁵
 My coffers now even like to oceans are,
 To whom all floods by course do still repair.¹³⁶

¹³³ *latest* last.

¹³⁴ *clips* embraces.

¹³⁵ *hap* fortune.

¹³⁶ *floods* streams, rivers.

107

With bounty now he frankly seals his love,
 And to my hands yields up the Isle of Man,¹³⁷
 By such a gift his kingly mind to prove.
 This was the earnest wherewith he began.¹³⁸
 Then Wallingford, Queen El'nor's stately dower,¹³⁹
 With many a town and many a goodly tower.

108

And all those sums his father had prepared
 By way of taxes for the Holy Land,¹⁴⁰
 He gave me frankly as my due reward.
 In bounty thus, it seemed he pleased his hand,
 Which made the world to wonder every hour,
 To see me drowned in this golden shower.¹⁴¹

109

Determined now to hoist my sail amain,¹⁴²
 The Earl of Cornwall he created me,
 Of England then the Lord High Chamberlain,
 Chief Secretary to his Majesty.¹⁴³
 What I devised, his treasure ever wrought,
 His bounty still so answered to my thought.

110

Yet more to spice my joys with sweet delight,
 Bound by his love apprentice to my pleasure,
 Whose eyes still levelled how to please my sight,
 Whose kindness ever so exceeded measure,
 Devised to quench my thirst with such a drink
 As from my quill drops nectar to my ink.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ *Isle of Man* an island between England and Ireland. The Isle of Man was, until the early 19th century, a peculiar jurisdiction in the British Isles: its rulers had the status of kings.

¹³⁸ *earnest* foretaste or pledge (of something to be received later in abundance).

¹³⁹ *Queen El'nor* Eleanor of Castille (1241-1290), wife of Edward I, mother of Edward II. *dower* 1596: bower

¹⁴⁰ *And ... Land* Edward I (Longshanks) went on crusade in 1270.

¹⁴¹ *To [...] shower* The image seems meant to remind the reader of the myth of Jove and the mortal woman Danaë. See 'Danaë,' Glossary (print anthology).

¹⁴² *amain* with full force.

¹⁴³ All these offices and the title 'earl' would have placed Gaveston above all the other nobles in the realm: *Lord High Chamberlain* the most important officer in the King's household. *Chief Secretary* manager of the King's correspondence and personal as well as government business.

¹⁴⁴ *nectar* The fabled drink of the classical gods; consuming it could confer immortality.

111

O sacred Bounty, mother of content,
 Prop of renown, the nourisher of arts,
 The crown of hope, the root of good event,
 The trump of fame, the joy of noble hearts,¹⁴⁵
 Grace of the Heavens, divinity in nature,
 Whose excellence doth so adorn the creature!

112

He gives his niece in marriage unto me,¹⁴⁶
 Of royal blood, for beauty past compare;
 Born of his sister was this Bellamy,
 Daughter to Gilbert, thrice-renownèd Clare,
 Chief of his house the Earl of Gloucester,
 For princely worth that never had his peer.

113

Like Heaven-dyed Andromeda the fair,¹⁴⁷
 In her embroidered mantle richly dight,¹⁴⁸
 With starry train enthronised in the air,
 Adorns the welkin with her glittering light.¹⁴⁹
 Such one she was, which in my bosom rested,
 With whose dear love, my youthful years were feasted.¹⁵⁰

114

As when fair Ver dight in her flow'ry rail,¹⁵¹
 In her new-coloured livery decks the earth,
 And glorious Titan spreads his sun-shine veil,¹⁵²
 To bring to pass her tender infant's birth:
 Such was her beauty which I then possessed,
 With whose embracings all my youth was blessed.

115

Whose purest thoughts and spotless chaste desire,
 To my affections still so pleasing were,
 Never yet touched with spark of Venus' fire,¹⁵³

¹⁴⁵ *trump* trumpet.

¹⁴⁶ *his niece* Lady Margaret de Clare.

¹⁴⁷ *Andromeda* famously lovely princess of Ethiopia, whose beauty led her mother to boast that Andromeda was fairer than Poseidon's daughters. Incensed, Poseidon sent a sea monster to destroy her father's kingdom, which could only be placated by the sacrifice of Andromeda; she was rescued by the hero Perseus.

¹⁴⁸ *dight* dressed, adorned.

¹⁴⁹ *welkin* sky, heavens.

¹⁵⁰ *dear* 1596: sweet

¹⁵¹ *Ver* spring. *rail* garment.

¹⁵² *Titan* See n28.

As but her breast I thought no Heaven but there:
 To none more like than fair Idea she,¹⁵⁴
 The very image of all chastity.¹⁵⁵

116
 O Chastity, thou gift of blessèd souls,¹⁵⁶
 Comfort in death, a crown unto the life,
 Which all the passions of the mind controls
 Adorns the maid, and beautifies the wife,
 That grace, the which nor death nor time attaints,
 Of earthly creatures making heavenly saints!

117
 O Virtue, which no Muse can poetize,
 Fair Queen of England which with thee doth rest,
 Which thy pure thoughts do only exercise,
 And is impressèd in thy royal breast,
 Which in thy life deciphered is alone,
 Whose name shall want a fit epitheton.¹⁵⁷

118
 The heavens now seem to frolic at my feast,
 The stars as handmaids, serving my desires;
 Now love full-fed with beauty takes his rest,
 To whom content for safety thus retires.
 The ground was good, my footing passing sure,¹⁵⁸
 My days delightsome, and my life secure.

119
 Lo, thus ambition creeps into my breast,
 Pleasing my thoughts with this imperious humour,¹⁵⁹
 And with this devil being once possessed,
 Mine ears are filled with such a buzzing rumour,
 As only pride my glory doth await,
 My senses soothed with every self-conceit.

¹⁵³ *Venus' fire* sexual lust or desire.

¹⁵⁴ *Idea* In 1593, Drayton published a collection of nine pastoral eclogues called *Idea: The Shepherds Garland* and in 1594 a sequence of 51 sonnets titled *Idea's Mirror*.

¹⁵⁵ *The ... chastity* 1596: The perfect image of pure chastity.

¹⁵⁶ *thou* corrected from 'that' in 1594 edition.

¹⁵⁷ *epitheton* epithet.

¹⁵⁸ *passing* i.e., surpassingly.

¹⁵⁹ *humour* See n77.

120

Self-love, pride's thirst, unsatisfied desire,
 A flood that never yet had any bounds,
 Time's pestilence, thou state-consuming fire,
 A mischief which all commonweals confounds,¹⁶⁰
 O plague of plagues, how many kingdoms rue thee,
 O happy empires that yet never knew thee!

121

And now revenge which had been smothered long,
 Like piercing lightning flasheth from mine eyes;
 This word could sound so sweetly on my tongue,
 And with my thoughts such stratagems devise,
 Tickling mine ears with many a pleasing story,
 Which promised wonders and a world of glory.

122

For now began the bloody-raining broils¹⁶¹
 Between the barons of the land and me,
 Labouring the state with Ixion-endless toils¹⁶²
 Twixt my ambition and their tyranny,
 Such was the storm this deluge first begun,
 With which this isle was after overrun.

[...]

128

His presence graced whate'er I went about,¹⁶³
 His chief content was that which likèd me;¹⁶⁴
 Whate'er I did, his power still bore me out,¹⁶⁵
 And where I was, there evermore was he.
 By birth my sovereign, but by love my thrall,¹⁶⁶
 'King Edward's idol' all men did me call.

129

Oft he would set his crown upon my head,
 And in his chair sit down upon my knee,

¹⁶⁰ *commonweals* nations, states. *confounds* reduces to chaos or disorder.

¹⁶¹ *broils* quarrels, dissensions.

¹⁶² *Labouring ... Ixion-endless toils* For attempting to seduce Jove's wife, Ixion was condemned to Hades, where he was fixed to an eternally-revolving wheel of fire.

¹⁶³ *His* King Edward II's.

¹⁶⁴ *His ... me* 1596: Best pleased with that which most contented me.

¹⁶⁵ *bore me out* supported me.

¹⁶⁶ *thrall* slave.

And when his eyes with love were fully fed,
 A thousand times he sweetly kissèd me.
 When did I laugh and he not seen to smile?
 If I but frowned, he silent all the while.

[When Edward goes off to France to marry Isabella, daughter of Philip, king of France, he makes Gaveston lord-protector of England in his absence. Gaveston prepares a lavish spectacle to welcome Edward back along with his new queen and many visiting French peers.]

141
 Thus when these gallant companies were met,
 The King here present with his lovely Queen,
 And all the nobles in due order set,¹⁶⁷
 To hear and see what could be heard or seen:
 Lo, here that kindness easily is descried,
 That faithful love which he nor I could hide.

142
 Even like as Castor when a calm begins,
 Beholding then his starry-tressed brother,
 With mirth and glee these swan-begotten twins
 Presaging joy, the one embrace the other:¹⁶⁸
 Thus one the other in our arms we fold,
 Our breasts for joy our hearts could scarcely hold.

143
 Or like the nymph beholding in a well
 Her dearest love, and wanting words to woo him,¹⁶⁹
 About his neck with clippèd arms she fell,¹⁷⁰
 Where by her faith the gods conjoined her to him.¹⁷¹
 Such was the love which now by signs we break,
 When joy had tied our tongues, we could not speak.

144
 Thus arm in arm towards London on we rid,
 And like two lambs we sport in every place,

¹⁶⁷ *And ... set* 1596: The Noblemen in comely order set

¹⁶⁸ *Even ... other* For 'Castor and Pollux,' see Glossary (print anthology). See also n229, and stanzas 40, 190, and 238.

¹⁶⁹ *wanting* lacking.

¹⁷⁰ *clipped* embracing.

¹⁷¹ *Or like ... him* For the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis, see 'Hermaphroditus,' Glossary (print anthology). The word 'hermaphrodite,' naming a person who has both male and female sexual organs, derives from this myth.

Where neither joy nor love could well be hid
 That might be sealed with any sweet embrace,
 So that his Queen might by our kindness prove,¹⁷²
 Though she his wife, yet I alone his love.

145

The barons now ambitious at my reign,
 As one that stood betwixt them and the sun,
 They underhand pursue me with disdain,
 And play the game which I before had won,
 And malice now so hard the bellows blew,
 That through mine ears the sparks of fire flew.

146

Where in revenge, the triumphs they devised
 To entertain the King with wondrous cost,
 Were by my malice suddenly surprised,
 The charge, their summons, and their honours lost,
 Which in their thoughts revenge so deeply raised,
 As with my blood they vowed should be appeased.

[...]

149

Thus as a plague unto the government,
 A very scourge to the nobility,
 The cause of all the commons' discontent,¹⁷³
 The image of all sensuality,
 I was reproached openly of many,
 Hated of all, not pitied now of any.

150

And as a vile misleader of the King,
 A wasteful spender of his coin and treasure,
 A secret thief of many a sacred thing,
 A cormorant in whom was never measure,¹⁷⁴
 I seemed hateful now in all men's eyes,
 Buzzing about me like a swarm of flies.

[Light-footed mischief, messenger of death,
 Sharp spur of vengeance, piercing edge of hate,

¹⁷² *prove* 'experience,' but also 'acknowledge.'

¹⁷³ *commons* 'the common people's.'

¹⁷⁴ *cormorant* a sea-bird with an ancient reputation for gluttony and insatiable voracity.

Blood-poisoning plague, repiner at our breath,
 Thou foul infector of all humane state,
 Post to destruction running on with us,
 Night-haunting ghost, our evil Genius.

[O foul foreteller of my fouler fall,
 Still-following fury, never-pitying fiend,
 Of my destruction only principal,
 Curse of our birth, and curser of our end,
 Our frailty's scourge, our vice's purgatory,
 Thou fatal worker of our fatal story.]¹⁷⁵

151

Like as a cloud, foul, dark, and ugly black,
 Threat'ning the earth with tempest every hour,
 Now broken with a fearful thunder-crack,
 Straight poureth down his deep earth-drenching show'r,
 Thus for their wrongs now rise they up in arms,
 Or to revenge, or to amend their harms.¹⁷⁶

152

The King, perceiving how the matter stood,
 Himself, his crown, in this extremity,
 And how the barons thirsted for my blood,
 And seeing now there was no remedy,
 That I some vile, untimely death must die,
 Or thus must be exiled presently,

153

A thousand thoughts he hammereth in his head,
 Thinking on this, and now again on that;
 As one device is come, another fled,¹⁷⁷
 Some thing he would, and now he knows not what.
 To help me now, a thousand means he forgeth,
 Whilst still with sighs his sorrows he disgorgeth.

154

And for I was his very soul's delight,
 He thought on this, the only way at last,
 In Ireland to hide me out of sight,
 Until these storms were over-blown and past,
 And in mean time t'appease the barons' hate,

¹⁷⁵ In the 1596 edition, these two additional stanzas are numbered 156 and 157.

¹⁷⁶ *Or ... or* i.e., either ... or.

¹⁷⁷ *device* idea, solution.

And so reduce me to my former state.

155¹⁷⁸

And to give place unto the barons' rage,
Which flamed like a burning, quenchless brand,
Which nought but my exile could now assuage,
He sends me post away to Ireland:¹⁷⁹

And to eschew all danger by the way,
Me safely guarded thither doth convey.

[...]

158

He wanted words t'express what he sustained,¹⁸⁰
Nor could I speak to utter half my wrong;
To show his grief, or where I most was pained,
The time too short, the tale was all too long;
I took my leave with sighs when forth I went,
He streams of tears unto my farewell sent.

159

But sending looks, ambassadors of love,¹⁸¹
Which as our posts could go and soon retire,
By whose quick motion we alone might prove,
Our equal love did equal like desire:
And that the fire in which we both did burn,
Was easily quenched in hope of safe return.¹⁸²

[O hope, how cunning with our cares to gloze,¹⁸³
Grief's breathing point, the truce man to desire,¹⁸⁴
The rest in sighs, the very thoughts repose,
As thou art mild, oh, wert thou not a liar,
Fair speaking flattery, subtle soothing guile,
Ah, now in thee our sorrows sweetly smile.]¹⁸⁵

¹⁷⁸ Deleted from the 1596 edition.

¹⁷⁹ *post* in all haste, immediately.

¹⁸⁰ *wanted* lacked. *sustained* experienced, laboured under.

¹⁸¹ *But sending* 1596: Dispatching.

¹⁸² *easily* 1596: sooner.

¹⁸³ *gloze* veil, palliate, explain away; perhaps, simply, 'cover over.'

¹⁸⁴ *truce man* probably, 'trouchman' (interpreter or translator).

¹⁸⁵ In the 1596 edition, this additional stanza is numbered 166.

160

Like to a vessel with a narrow vent,
 Which is filled up with liquor to the top,
 Although the mouth be ever eminent,¹⁸⁶
 Yet is it seen not to distil a drop,
 Even so our breasts, brim-full with pensive care,
 Stopping our tongues, with grief we silent are.

161

But when my want gave breath unto his moan,¹⁸⁷
 And that his tears had now untied his tongue,
 With dreary sighs all now clean over-blown,¹⁸⁸
 Which earst (like fountains) in abundance sprung,
 Unto himself, he thus complains his grief,
 Sith now the world could yield him no relief.¹⁸⁹

[...]

168¹⁹⁰

“It rather fits a villain than a state,¹⁹¹
 To have his love on others’ likings placed,
 Or set his pleasures at so base a rate,
 To see the same by every slave disgraced;
 A King should ever privilege his pleasure,
 And make his peers esteem it as their treasure.¹⁹²

169

“Then raise thy thoughts, and with thy thoughts thy love!
 Kings want no means t’accomplish what they would;
 If one do fail, yet other may’st thou prove;
 It shames a King, to say, ‘If that I could.’
 Let not thy love such crosses then sustain,
 But raise him up, and call him home again.

170

“Sweet Gaveston, whose praise the angels sing,
 May’st thou assure thee of my love the while?
 Or what may’st thou imagine of thy King,

¹⁸⁶ *ever eminent* 1596: after downward bent.

¹⁸⁷ *want* absence.

¹⁸⁸ *all now clean* 1596: dispersed and

¹⁸⁹ *Sith* since, seeing that.

¹⁹⁰ Edward laments Gaveston’s banishment.

¹⁹¹ *villain* a lowly labourer. *state* monarch; ruler.

¹⁹² *peers* nobility.

To let thee live in yonder brutish isle?
 My dear, a space this weary world prolong;¹⁹³
 He lives that can and shall revenge thy wrong.”

171

Thus like a man grown lunatic with pain,
 Now in his torments casts him on his bed,
 Then out he runs into the fields again,
 And on the ground doth rest his troubled head.
 With such sharp passions is the King possessed,
 Which day nor night doth let him take his rest.

172

As lion-skinned Alcides, when he lost
 His lovely Hylas on his way from Thrace,
 Follows the quest through many an unknown coast,
 With plaints and out-cries, wearying every place,¹⁹⁴
 Thus lovely Edward fills each place with moan,
 Wanting the sight of his sweet Gaveston.

[Edward sends Gaveston into ‘exile,’ making him governor of Ireland, and sponsoring his expenses. Gaveston sets up court in Dublin, “attended as if I had been another king.” The barons, far from being appeased, become more incensed over Edward’s increased spending on Gaveston, and agree to allow Gaveston to return to England, as the lesser of two evils.]

190

My whistling sails make music with the wind,
 The boist’rous waves do homage to mine eyes,
 The brutish sort of Eol’s imps seem kind,¹⁹⁵
 And all the clouds abandoning the skies.
 Now lovely Leda’s egg-born twins appear;¹⁹⁶
 Towards Albion’s clives fair Fortune guides my steer.¹⁹⁷

191

The King is come to Chester, where he lies,
 The court preparèd to receive me there

¹⁹³ *a space ... prolong* i.e., for a little while prolong your presence in this tiresome world.

¹⁹⁴ *As lion-skinned Alcides ... place* For the story of Hercules (also known as Alcides) and his beloved, the beautiful youth Hylas, see ‘Hercules and Hylas,’ Glossary, print anthology.

¹⁹⁵ *Eol’s imps* the offspring of Aeolus, god of the winds (thus, the four winds of the world).

¹⁹⁶ *Leda’s ... appear* See ‘Castor and Pollux’ (the Gemini), Glossary (print anthology). See also n229, and stanzas 40, 142, and 238.

¹⁹⁷ *clives* cliffs.

In all the pomp that wit could well devise,
 As since that time was seldom seen elsewhere.
 Where setting once my dainty foot on land,
 He thought him blest that might but kiss my hand.

192

In pleasures there we spend the nights and days,
 And with our revels entertain the time,
 With costly banquets, masques, and stately plays,
 Painting our loves in many a pleasing rhyme.
 With rarest music, and sweet-tuned voices,
 (In which the soul of man so much rejoices.)

193

Like as the famous, brave Egyptian Queen,¹⁹⁸
 Feasted the Roman, great Mark Anthony,
 With pearl-dissolved carouses, seldom seen,¹⁹⁹
 Served all in vessel of rich ivory:
 Such was the sumptuous banquets he prepared,
 In which no cost or curious thing was spared.²⁰⁰

194

Or like the Trojan Priam, when as he
 Beheld his long-lost son return to Troy,²⁰¹
 Triumphant now in all his jollity,
 Proud Ilion smokes with th'orgies of his joy,²⁰²
 Such are our feasts and stately triumphs here,
 Which with applauses, sound in every ear.

195

Departing thence from Chester's pleasant side,
 Towards London now we travel with delight,
 Where every city likewise doth provide
 To entertain us with some pleasing sight:
 'Till all our train at length to London comes,
 Where naught is heard, but trumpets, bells and drums.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ *brave* splendid.

¹⁹⁹ *pearl-dissolved carouses* Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* recounts the story of how Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, bet her lover Mark Anthony that she could consume 10,000,000 sesterces at a single banquet; she dissolved two priceless pearls in a cup of vinegar and drank it.

²⁰⁰ *curious* artistically or exquisitely prepared.

²⁰¹ *Or ... Troy* See 'Paris,' Glossary (print anthology).

²⁰² *Ilion* the city-state of Troy.

²⁰³ *naught* nothing.

196

As when Paullus Aemilius entered Rome,
 And like great Jove in star-like triumph came,
 Honoured in purple by the Senate's doom,²⁰⁴
 Laden with gold, and crownèd with his fame,
 Such seems our glory now in all men's eyes,
 Our friendship honoured with applaudities.²⁰⁵

197

Or when old Philip's time-still-wondered son,
 In his world's conquest surfeiting with spoils,
 The scourge of kings, returns to Babylon,
 To sport and banquet after all his toils,²⁰⁶
 Such is our glory in our London court,
 Where to all nations daily make resort.

[Gaveston's pride and sensual excess triggers anew the barons' rage and determination to get rid of him.]

209

And now broke out that execrable rage,
 Which long before had boiled in their blood,
 Which neither time nor reason could assuage,
 But like to men grown lunatic and wood,²⁰⁷
 My name and fame, they seek to scandalize,
 And root the same from all posterities.

210

They all affirm my mother was a witch,
 A filthy hag, and burnt for sorcery,
 And I her son, and fitting with her pitch,²⁰⁸
 She had bequeathed her damnèd art to me.
 This rumor in the people's ears they ring,
 That (for my purpose) I bewitched the King.

²⁰⁴ *As when ... doom* Lucius Aemilius Paullus Macedonicus (c. 229-160 BCE), Roman general and consul, whose victory over the Macedonians was celebrated in a magnificent triumph (ritual procession) through the streets of Rome. *doom* judgement.

²⁰⁵ *applaudities* applause.

²⁰⁶ *Or when ... toils* Alexander III, king of Macedon (Alexander the Great, 356-323 BCE), son of Philip II of Macedon. According to Plutarch, during Alexander's expeditions into India, he returned to Babylon to rest and recreate himself; Alexander was known for his sometimes excessive indulgence in alcohol and his love of sybaritic luxury.

²⁰⁷ *wood* mad.

²⁰⁸ *pitch* blackness; evil.

211

They say, that I conveyed beyond the sea,
 The table and the tressels all of gold,²⁰⁹
 King Arthur's relics, kept full many a day,
 The which to Windsor did belong of old.
 In whose fair margent (as they did surmise),²¹⁰
 Merlin engravèd many prophecies.

212

Some slanderous tongues, in spiteful manner said,
 That here I lived in filthy sodomy,
 And that I was King Edward's Ganymed,
 And to this sin he was enticed by me.
 And more, (to wreak their spiteful deadly teen),²¹¹
 Report the same to Isabel the Queen.

[With the support of the Pope, the barons force Edward to once again exile Gaveston; his reaction after swearing to do so "upon the Holy Sacrament" is excessive.]

220

He takes his crown, and spurns it at his feet,
 His princely robes he doth in pieces tear,
 He straight commands the Queen out of his sight,
 He tugs and rents his golden-tressèd hair.
 He beats his breast, and sighs out piteous groans,
 Spending the day in tears, the night in moans.

221

Like as the furious Paladine of France,
 Forsaken of Angelica the fair,²¹²
 So like a bedlam in the fields doth dance,²¹³
 With shouts and clamors, filling all the air,
 Tearing in pieces whatsoe'er he caught,²¹⁴

²⁰⁹ *table and the tressels* 'Tressels' are supports on which a board can be laid to be used as a table. *all of* 1596:
 of pure

²¹⁰ *margent* the edge of the table.

²¹¹ *teen* wrath.

²¹² *Like ... the fair* In Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532; English trans., 1591), Angelica, daughter of the Great Khan of Cathay is the beloved of the knight Orlando (*the Paladine of France*); he runs mad when he finds she has chosen another knight instead of him.

²¹³ *bedlam* madman.

With such a fury is the King distraught.

222

Or when the woeful Thrace-born Hecuba,
Saw Troy on fire, and Priam's fatal doom,
Her sons all slain, her dear Polixina,
There sacrificed on Achilles' tomb,²¹⁵
E'en like a boar, her angry tusks doth whet,
Scratching and biting all that e'er she met.

223

With fearful visions frighted in his bed,
Which seems to him a very thorny brake,²¹⁶
With ugly shapes which way he turns his head,
And when from sleep he ever doth awake,
He then again with weeping mournful cries,
In grief of soul, complains his miseries.

224

He wants disgesture, and refrains his rest,²¹⁷
His eyes o'er-watchèd like eclipsèd suns,
With bitter passions is his soul oppressed,
And through his eyes, his brain dissolvèd runs.
And after silence, when with pain he speaks,
A sudden sigh his speech in sunder breaks.

225

He starteth up, and Gaveston doth call,
Then stands he still, and looks upon the ground,
Then like one in an *epileps* doth fall,²¹⁸
As in a *spasmo*, or a deadly sound;²¹⁹
Thus languishing in pain, and ling'ring ever,
In the *symptoma* of his pining fever.²²⁰

²¹⁴ *whatsoe'er* whatsoever.

²¹⁵ *Or ... tomb* The outcome of the Greeks' sacking of Troy: Hecuba, wife of King Priam of Troy, saw not just her city burned, but Priam killed, and their daughter Polixina sacrificed on the tomb of the Greek hero, Achilles, earlier killed in battle.

²¹⁶ *brake* See n100.

²¹⁷ *wants digesture* lacks digestion.

²¹⁸ *epileps* epileptic fit.

²¹⁹ *spasmo* experiencing spasms or involuntary seizures. *sound* i.e., swoon, faint.

²²⁰ *symptoma* symptoms.

226

Like to a flower that droopeth in a frost,
 Or as a man in a consumption pining,²²¹
 Stained like a cloth that hath his colour lost,
 Or poets-worn laurel when she is declining,²²²
 Or like a peacock washèd in the rain,
 Trailing adown his starry-eyèd train.

[Gaveston's exile in Belgium does not last long; in secret communication with Edward, Gaveston returns disguised to England.]

233

And still relying on King Edward's love,
 To whom before my life had been so dear,
 Whose constancy my fortune made me prove;
 And to my brother, earl of Gloucester,
 And to my wife, who laboured tooth and nail,
 My abjuration how she might appeal.

234

I now embark me in a Flemish hoy,²²³
 Disguisèd in the habit of a muff,²²⁴
 Attended thus with neither man nor boy,
 But on my back a little bag of stuff:
 Like to a soldier that in camp of late,
 Had been employed in service with the state.

235

And safely landed on this blessèd shore,
 Towards Windsor thus disguised I took my way,
 Whereas I had intelligence before,
 My wife remained, and there my Edward lay.
 My dearest wife, to whom I sent my ring,
 Who made my coming known unto the King.

236

As when old-youthful Aeson in his glass,
 Saw from his eyes the cheerful lightning sprung,

²²¹ *consumption pining* wasting away (*pining*) from a disease characterized by the slow decline of the body (weight loss, etc.)

²²² *declining* wilting.

²²³ *hoy* small passenger and cargo vessel, used only for short distances.

²²⁴ *muff* foreigner (specifically, a German or Swiss).

When as art-spell Medea brought to pass,
 By herbs and charms, again to make him young,²²⁵
 Thus stood King Edward, ravished in the place,
 Fixing his eyes upon my lovely face.

237

Or as Muse-marvel Hero, when she clips,²²⁶
 Her dear Leander's billow-beaten limbs,
 And with sweet kisses seizeth on his lips,
 When for her sake deep Hellespont he swims,²²⁷
 Might by our tender-dear embracings prove,²²⁸
 Fair Hero's kindness and Leander's love.

238

Or like the twofold-twinne'd Gemini,²²⁹
 In their star-gilded girdle strongly tied,
 Chained by their saffron tresses in the sky,
 Standing to guard the sun-coach in his pride.
 Like as the vine, his love the elm embracing,²³⁰
 With nimble arms, our bodies interlacing.

[O blinded reason, reasoning in this,
 Unruly will of unrul'd appetite!
 Could our discretion moderate our bliss,
 It might more easily moderate their spite;
 But we are carried with the winds away,
 Too violent the gulf of our decay.

[O wondrous love, were there a mean in thee,²³¹
 Reason might understand what thou dost mean,²³²
 But for thou wouldst not comprehended be,
 Our understanding thou dost but disdain,
 Thou mind-transforming monster, monstrous ill,
 Which hating saves, but cherishing doth kill.

²²⁵ *As when ... young* Father of the hero Jason, Aeson was restored to youth at the request of his son, who had brought the sorceress Medea back with him after his successful quest for the Golden Fleece.

²²⁶ *Muse-marvel* unclear; perhaps Hero amazes the Muses? *clips* embraces.

²²⁷ *Or ... swims* For the myth, see 'Hero and Leander,' Glossary (print anthology).

²²⁸ *Might by our tender-dear* 1596: Thus we by tender-dear

²²⁹ *twinned* either 'twinned,' referring to Castor and Pollux's (the Gemini's) mortal birth as twin brothers, or 'twined' (entwined or embraced), a posture in which the loving pair are often depicted. On the Gemini, see Glossary (print anthology); see also stanzas 40, 142, and 190.

²³⁰ The *vine* twined about the *elm* tree is a common image of marital devotion and support in the period. But cf. n51.

²³¹ *mean* moderation; a middle path between excess and absence.

²³² *mean* intend.

[But all thy mean, fond love, is in extremes.
 Thy heed is rashness, thy forecast thy fall,
 Thy wit is folly and thy hopes are dreams,
 Thy counsel madness, and thy rule is thrall;²³³
 And only this, thou art not what thou art,
 And of thyself, thou art not any part.]²³⁴

239

The barons hearing how I was arrived,
 And that my late abjurement naught prevailed,
 By my return, of all their hope deprived,
 Their bedlam rage no longer now concealed,²³⁵
 But as hot coals once puffed with the wind,
 Into a flame outbreking by their kind.

[The barons take up arms and civil war is the consequence; Edward and Gaveston are separated and Gaveston is captured by the barons.]

256

The King, now hearing how I was arrested,
 And knew my quarrel cause of all this strife,
 He writes, he sends, he sues, he now requested,
 Using all means he could to save my life,
 With vows and oaths, that all should be amended,
 If that my death alone might be suspended.

257

And being brought to Dedington at last,
 By Aymer Valence, Earl of Pembroke then,²³⁶
 Who towards King Edward rode in all the hast,
 And left me guarded safely by his men.
 This gentle Earl with mere compassion moved,
 For Edward's sake, whom he so dearly loved.

258

But now Guy Beauchamp, whom I fearèd still,
 The Earl of Warwick, whom I callèd 'cur,'
 Having fit time to execute his will,

²³³ *thrall* enslavement.

²³⁴ 1596 inserts these three additional stanzas here, numbered 258-260.

²³⁵ *bedlam* insane, beyond reason.

²³⁶ *Aymer Valence* Aymer de Valence, 11th earl of Pembroke (d. 1324), soldier and courtier; he served in Flanders and Scotland; Edward II appointed him keeper of Scotland in 1307, and he was a loyal supporter of the king.

The fox thus caught, he vows to tear my fur.
 And he for whom so oft he set the trap,
 By good ill luck is fall'n into his lap.

259

This bloody Beauchamp, (I may term him so
 For this was he that only sought my blood),
 Now at the up-cast of mine overthrow,
 And on the chance whereon my fortune stood,
 To Dedington he came, where as I lay,²³⁷
 And by his force, he took me thence away.²³⁸

260

To Warwick thus along he doth me bring,²³⁹
 And keeps me guarded in the castle there,²⁴⁰
 And doubting now my succour from the King,²⁴¹
 He raiseth up the power of Warwickshire.
 Thus from the town, to Blacklow I was led,²⁴²
 And on a scaffold there, I lost my head.

261

Lo, here the point and sentence of my time,²⁴³
 My life's full stop, my last catastrophe,²⁴⁴
 The stipend of my death-deservèd crime,
 The scene that ends my woeful tragedy.
 My latest *vale*, knitting my conclusion,²⁴⁵
 Mine utter ruin, and my fame's confusion.²⁴⁶

262

Like as Adonis wounded with the boar,
 From whose fresh hurt the life-warm blood doth spin,
 Now lieth wallowing in his purple gore,
 Staining his fair and alabaster skin:²⁴⁷

²³⁷ *To ... lay* 1596: To Dedington by night came, where I lay

²³⁸ *force* 1596: power

²³⁹ *along* 1596: fast bound.

²⁴⁰ *And keeps me guarded in* 1596: Imprisoning me within

²⁴¹ *doubting* suspecting. *succour* aid, rescue.

²⁴² *Thus from the town* 1596: By whom forthwith

²⁴³ *point* conclusion, completion, end. *sentence* authoritative, final judgement (perhaps, also, the moral lesson to be learned from his fall or end).

²⁴⁴ *full stop* the single point or dot used to mark the end of a sentence; terminal punctuation mark. *catastrophe* in a play, the action or shift in the developing action that produces the conclusion or final action; final event, disastrous end.

²⁴⁵ latest *vale* last farewell (vale: Latin, 'farewell'). *vale* 1596: farewell

²⁴⁶ *fame's* reputation's.

My headless body in the blood is left,
Now lying breathless, and of life bereft.²⁴⁸

[...]

264

My soul now in the Heavens' eternal glass,
Beholds the scars and botches of her sin,²⁴⁹
How filthy, ugly, and deformed she was,
The loathsome dunghill that she wallowed in,
Her pure Creator sitting in his glory,
With eyes of justice to peruse her story.

265

Like as a stag at bay amongst the hounds,
The bloody mot still sounding in his ears,²⁵⁰
Feeling his breath diminish by his wounds,
Pours down his gummy, life-preserving tears;
Even thus my soul, now baited by my sin,²⁵¹
Consuming, shows the sorrow she is in.

266

Thus comfortless, forsaken and alone,
All worldly things unstable and unsure,
By true contrition flies to him alone,²⁵²
In whose compare, the heavens are most impure.
By whose just doom, to blessed souls revealed,²⁵³
She gets her passport to Elysia sealed.²⁵⁴

267

And by repentance finds a place of rest,
Where passing to the fair Elysian plain,
She is allowed her room amongst the blest,
In those ambrosian shadows to remain.²⁵⁵
Till summoned thus by Fame, she is procured,
To tell my life that hath been thus obscured.²⁵⁶

²⁴⁷ *Like ... skin* For Adonis, see 'Venus and Adonis,' Glossary (print anthology).

²⁴⁸ *of life* 1596: of all life

²⁴⁹ *botches* lesions, ulcers.

²⁵⁰ *mot* blast of a hunting horn or bugle.

²⁵¹ *baited* worried, set upon, tormented.

²⁵² *to him alone* 1596: unto his throne.

²⁵³ *doom* judgement.

²⁵⁴ *Elysia* i.e., Elysium, the classical haven of the blessed dead. *Elysia* 1596: his mercy

²⁵⁵ *ambrosian* sweet-smelling (like the food of the classical gods).

²⁵⁶ *that ... obscured* 1596: which hath been long obscured.

268

This monster now, this many-headed beast,
 The people, more inconstant than the wind,
 Who in my life, my life did so detest,
 Now in my death, are of another mind:
 And with the fountains from their tearful eyes,
 Do honour to my latest obsequies.

269

Star-holding heaven hath shut up all her light,
 Nature become a stepdam to her own,
 The mantled trouch-man of the raven-hued night,²⁵⁷
 In mournful sables clad the horizon.
 The sky-born planets seeming to conspire,
 Against the air, the water, earth, and fire.

270

Pearl-pavèd Avon, in her streamful course,
 With heavy murmur floating on the stones,
 Moved with lament to pity and remorse,
 Attempering sad music to my moans,
 Tuning her billows to Zephyrus' breath,²⁵⁸
 In wat'ry language doth bewail my death.

271

Oak-shadowed Arden, filled with bellowing cries,
 Resounding through her holts and hollow grounds,²⁵⁹
 To which the echo ever-more replies,
 And to the fields sends forth her hideous sounds,
 And in her silvan, rude, untuned songs,²⁶⁰
 Makes birds and beasts for to express my wrongs.

272

The heaven-dyed flowers in this happy clime,
 Mantling the meadows in their summer's pride,
 As in the woeful, frosty winter time,
 Drooping with faintness, hold their heads aside.
 The boist'rous storms despoil the greenest greves,²⁶¹
 Stripping the trees stark naked of their leaves.

²⁵⁷ *trouch-man* probably an error for 'torch-man' (metaphorically, the moon?).

²⁵⁸ *Zephyrus* god of the winds.

²⁵⁹ *holts* copses, groves.

²⁶⁰ *rude* unsophisticated.

²⁶¹ *greves* i.e., groves.

273

Death clad in liveries of my lovely cheeks,
 Laid in those beds of lilies and of roses,²⁶²
 Amazed with marvel, here for wonders seeks,
 Where he alone a paradise supposes,
 Grew malcontent, and with himself at strife,
 Not knowing now if he were death or life.

274

And shutting up the casements of those lights,
 Which like two suns so sweetly went to rest,
 In those fair globes he saw those heavenly sights,
 In which alone he thought him only blest.
 Cursing himself, who had deprived breath
 From that which thus could give a life in death.

275

With paleness touching that fair rubied lip,
 Now waxing purple, like Adonis' flower,²⁶³
 Where ivory walls those rocks of coral keep,
 From whence did flow that nectar-streaming shower,
 There earth-pale Death refreshed his tired limbs,
 Where Cupid bathed him in those crystal brims.

276

And ent'ring now into that house of glory,
 That temple with sweet odours long perfumed,
 Where Nature had engraved many a story
 In letters which by death were not consumed.
 Accursèd now, his cruelty he cursed,
 That Fame should live, when he had done his worst.

277

Now when the King had notice of my death,
 And that he saw his purpose thus prevented,²⁶⁴
 In grievous sighs he now consumes his breath,
 And into tears his very eyes relented,
 Cursing that vile and mercy-wanting age,
 And breaks into this passion in his rage:

²⁶² *lilies and roses* Traditionally, the lily and the rose are emblems of the white and red of the Petrarchan mistress' perfect complexion.

²⁶³ *Adonis' flower* the anemone; unable to prevent his death, Venus turned her mortal beloved into this flower. For Adonis, see 'Venus and Adonis,' Glossary (print anthology).

²⁶⁴ *his purpose* i.e., to rescue Gaveston from execution.

278

“O heavens,” quoth he, “lock up the living day;
 Cease, sun, to lend the world thy glorious light;
 Stars, fly your course, and wander all astray;
 Moon, lend no more thy silver shine by night;
 Heavens, stars, sun, moon, conjoin you all in one,
 Revenge the death of my sweet Gaveston!

279

“Earth, be thou helpless in thy creatures’ birth;
 Sea, break thou forth from thy immurèd bound;
 Air, with thy vapours poison thou the earth;
 Wind, break thy cave, and all the world confound.²⁶⁵
 Earth, sea, air, wind, conjoin you all in one,
 Bewail the death of my sweet Gaveston!²⁶⁶

280

“You savage beasts, that haunt the way-less woods,
 You birds delighted in your silvan sound,²⁶⁷
 You scaly fish, that swim in pleasant floods,
 You heartless worms that creep upon the ground,
 Beasts, birds, fish, worms, each in your kind alone,
 Revenge the death of my sweet Gaveston!²⁶⁸

281

“Fair meadows, be you withered in the prime;²⁶⁹
 Sun-burnt and bare, be all the goodly mountains;
 Groves, be you leaveless in the summertime;
 Pitchy and black be all the crystal fountains;
 All things on earth, each in your kind alone,
 Revenge the death of my sweet Gaveston!²⁷⁰

282

“You damned Furies, break your Stygian cell,²⁷¹
 You wand’ring spirits, in water, earth, and air,
 Lead-boiling ghosts that live in lowest Hell,

²⁶⁵ *Wind*, ... *confound* referring to the myth of Aelous, god of the winds, who restrained the winds from ravaging the earth, by keeping them confined in a cave. *confound* throw into chaos or utter disorder.

²⁶⁶ *Bewail* 1596: Revenge

²⁶⁷ *silvan* woodland.

²⁶⁸ *Revenge* 1596: Bewail

²⁶⁹ *prime* spring.

²⁷⁰ *Revenge* 1596: Bewail

²⁷¹ The *Furies*, also called the Erinyes, were the Greek spirits of vengeance, who were especially thought to punish taboo crimes within a family, such as the murder of a parent. *Stygian* hellish.

Gods, devils, men, unto mine aid repair!
 Come all at once, conjoin you all in one,
 Revenge the death of my sweet Gaveston!

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“Eyes, never sleep until you see revenge;
 Head, never rest until thou plot revenge;
 Heart, never think but tending to revenge;
 Hands, never act but acting deep revenge.
 Just-dooming heavens, revenge me from above,
 That men unborn may wonder at my love.

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“You peerless poets of ensuing times,
 Chanting heroic, angel-tuned notes,
 Or humble pastors nectar-filled lines,²⁷²
 Driving your flocks with music to their cotes,²⁷³
 Let your high-flying Muses still bemoan,
 The woeful end of my sweet Gaveston!”

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My earth-pale body now embalmed with tears,
 To famous Oxford solemnly conveyed,
 There buried by the ceremonious friars,
 Where for my soul was many a trental said.²⁷⁴
 With all those rites my obsequies behoved,²⁷⁵
 Whose blind devotion, time and truth reproved.²⁷⁶

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But ere two years were out and fully dated,
 This gracious King who still my fame respected,
 My wasted bones to Langley thence translated,²⁷⁷
 And over me a stately tomb erected.
 Which world-devouring Time hath now outworn,
 As but for letters were my name forlorn.²⁷⁸

²⁷² *pastors* shepherds.

²⁷³ *cotes* enclosures.

²⁷⁴ *trental* a group of thirty requiem masses (masses said for the repose of a deceased person's soul).

²⁷⁵ *behoved* befitted, were appropriate for.

²⁷⁶ *Whose ... reproved* a reference to the later English Reformation, when prayers and masses for the dead were rejected as idolatrous Catholic ‘superstition,’ and as being without Scriptural foundation.

²⁷⁷ *Langley* the Dominican priory at Langley, Hertfordshire.

²⁷⁸ *As ... forlorn* i.e., in the same way that my very name would now be forgotten if it were not for written texts (*letters*).

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My ghost now hence to anchor shall repair,
 Where once the same appeared unto thee,
 And unto chaste Idea tell my care,
 A sacrifice both for thyself and me,
 In whose sweet bosom all the Muses rest,
 In whose aspect our clime is only blest.

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Thus having told my dreary doleful tale,
 My time expired, I now return again,
 Where Charon's barge hoist with a merry gale,
 Shall land me on the fair Elysian plain,
 Where, on the trees of never-dying fame,
 There will I carve Idea's sacred name.

[...]

Divers²⁷⁹ have been the opinions of the birth and first rising of Gaveston, (amongst the writers of these latter times), some omitting things worthy of memory, some inferring things without probability, disagreeing in many particulars, and cavilling in the circumstances of his sundry banishments; which hath bred some doubt amongst those who have but slightly run over the history of his fortune, seeing every man rove[s] by his own aim in this confusion of opinions, although most of them concluding, in general, of his exceeding credit with the King, of the manner of his death, and of the pomp²⁸⁰ wherein he lived. Except some of those writers who lived in the time of Edward II, wherein he only flourished, or immediately after, in the golden reign of Edward III, when as yet his memory was fresh in every man's mouth: whose authorities (in mine opinion) can hardly be reprov'd of any, the same being within the compass of possibility, and the authors' names extant, avouching what they have written, on whom I only relied in the plot of my history, having recourse to some especial collections, gathered by the industrious labours of John Stow, a diligent chronigrapher²⁸¹ of our time, a man very honest, exceeding painful,²⁸² and rich in the antiquities of this Isle: yet omitting some small things of no moment, fearing to make his tragedy more troublesome amongst so many currents as have fallen out in the same, framing myself to fashion a body of a history without maim or deformity. Which if the same be accepted thankfully, as I offer it willingly, in contenting you, I only satisfy myself.

M.D.

²⁷⁹ *Divers* Varied.

²⁸⁰ *pomp* luxury, magnificence.

²⁸¹ *John Stow* (1515-1605), historian, author of the *Chronicles of England* (1580; later titled *Annales*) and *Survey of London* (1598; 2nd. edn., 1603). *chronigrapher* writer of chronicles or histories.

²⁸² *painful* careful, attentive, painstaking in his work.