CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (1564-1593), POET AND PLAYWRIGHT. For a brief biography of Marlowe and selections from some of his other works, see the print anthology.

FROM DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE (1594)

ACT I, SCENE I (ll. 1-53)

_Here the curtains draw; there is discovered JUPITER dandling GANYMEDE upon his knee, and HERMES lying asleep._

JUPITER.  
Come, gentle Ganymede, and play with me;  
I love thee well, say Juno what she will.

GANYMEDÉ.  
I am much better for your worthless love,  
That will not shield me from her shrewish blows!  
Today, whenas I filled into your cups,  
And held the cloth of pleasance whiles you drank,  
She reached me such a rap for that I spilled,  
As made the blood run down about mine ears.

JUPITER.  
What, dares she strike the darling of my thoughts?  
By Saturn’s soul, and this earth-threatening hair,  
That shaken thrice makes Nature’s buildings quake,  
I vow, if she but once frown on thee more,  
To hang her, meteor-like, ’twixt heaven and earth,  
And bind her, hand and foot, with golden cords,  
As once I did for harming Hercules!2

GANYMEDÉ.  
Might I but see that pretty sport a-foot,  
Oh, how would I with Helen’s brother laugh,3  
And bring the gods to wonder at the game!  
Sweet Jupiter, if e’er I pleased thine eye,  
Or seemed fair, walled-in with eagle’s wings,4

1 cloth of pleasance fine gauzelike fabric, serving as a napkin.  
2 As … Hercules Jupiter punished Juno for jealously attempting to kill Jupiter’s son Hercules (whom he had produced with the mortal woman Alcmene); Juno had sent two snakes to kill Hercules in his cradle, but he strangled them.  
3 Helen’s brother See ‘Castor and Pollux,’ Glossary (print anthology).  
4 walled-in with eagle’s wings See ‘Jove and Ganymede,’ Glossary (print anthology).
Grace my immortal beauty with this boon,\(^5\)
And I will spend my time in thy bright arms.

**JUPITER.**

What is’	sweet wag, I should deny thy youth?\(^6\)
Whose face reflects such pleasure to mine eyes,
As I, exhaled with thy fire-darting beams,
Have oft driven back the horses of the night,
Whenas they would have haled thee from my sight.\(^7\)
Sit on my knee, and call for thy content,
Control proud Fate, and cut the thread of Time:\(^8\)
Why, are not all the gods at thy command,
And heaven and earth the bounds of thy delight?
Vulcan shall dance to make thee laughing sport,\(^9\)
And my nine daughters sing when thou art sad;\(^10\)
From Juno’s bird I’ll pluck her spotted pride,\(^11\)
To make thee fans wherewith to cool thy face,
And Venus’ swans shall shed their silver down,
To sweeten out the slumbers of thy bed;
Hermes no more shall show the world his wings,\(^12\)
If that thy fancy in his feathers dwell,
But, as this one, I’ll tear them all from him,

*(Plucks a feather from HERMES’ wings.)*

Do thou but say, ‘their colour pleaseth me.’
Hold here, my little love, these linked gems,

*(Gives jewels)*

My Juno wore upon her marriage-day,
Put thou about thy neck, my own sweetheart,
And trick thy arms and shoulders with my theft.\(^13\)

**GANYMED.**

I would have a jewel for mine ear,

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\(^5\) *boon*: request, favour.
\(^6\) *wag*: mischievous boy (term of endearment).
\(^7\) *haled*: dragged.
\(^8\) **cut the thread of Time**: The three Fates dictated the length, scope and nature of a person’s life: Lachesis assigns the nature of a person’s life; Clotho spins the thread of life; and Atropos cuts the thread (dictates the moment and nature of a person’s death).
\(^9\) *Vulcan*: crippled god of the forge; husband of Venus.
\(^10\) *nine daughters*: the nine Muses, those semi-divine patrons of the arts and sciences.
\(^11\) *Juno’s bird*: the peacock.
\(^12\) *Hermes*: the winged messenger of the gods.
\(^13\) *trick*: deck out, adorn.
And a fine brooch to put in my hat,
And then I’ll hug with you an hundred times.

JUPITER.
And shalt have, Ganymede, if thou wilt be my love.

Enter VENUS.

VENUS.
 Ay, this is it: you can sit toying there,
And playing with that female wanton boy,
While my Aeneas wanders on the seas,14
And rests a prey to every billow’s pride.

[…]

14 Aeneas  Hero of Virgil’s epic about the founding of the Roman Empire. Marlowe’s play concerns an episode from the Aeneid, where Aeneas meets and falls in love with Dido, queen of Carthage. Abandoning her in order to fulfill his destiny and take the remnants of the Trojan people to Italy, Aeneas causes Dido’s suicide.