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JOHN DONNE  
*Poetry and Prose*

Edited by FRANK J. WARNKE

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Keepe it, for then 'tis none of mine.

Yet send me back my heart and eyes,  
That I may know, and see thy lyes,  
And may laugh and joy, when thou  
Art in anguish  
And dost languish  
For some one  
That will none,  
Or prove as false as thou art now.

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A NOCTURNALL UPON

S. LUCIES DAY,

BEING THE SHORTEST DAY

Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes,  
*Lucies*, who scarce seaven houres herself unmaskes,  
The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks  
Send forth light squibs, no constant rayes;  
The worlds whole sap is sunke:  
The generall balme th'hydroptique earth hath drunk,  
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunke,  
Dead and enterr'd; yet all these seeme to laugh,  
Compar'd with mee, who am their Epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers bee  
At the next world, that is, at the next Spring:  
For I am every dead thing,

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*A Nocturnall upon S. Lucies Day:* St. Lucy's day fell on December 13 in the old calendar in use in Donne's time. Some scholars believe that the poem was occasioned by the serious illness of the Countess of Bedford in 1612; others, with more justice, hold that it refers to the death of Donne's wife in 1617.

*l.3 flasks:* containers for gunpowder. The reference is to the stars.

*l.4 squibs:* firecrackers.

*l.6 balme:* a preservative substance believed to exist in all organic bodies. The line suggests the ancient belief that the earth is an organism.

*l.7 Whither . . . shrunke:* probably a reference to a dying man's tendency to huddle toward the foot of his bed.

In whom love wrought new Alchimie.  
 For his art did expresse  
 A quintessence even from nothingnesse,  
 From dull privations, and leane emptinesse:  
 He ruin'd mee, and I am re-begot  
 Of absence, darknesse, death; things which are not

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,  
 Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have; 20  
 I, by loves limbecke, am the grave  
 Of all, that's nothing. Oft a flood  
 Have wee two wept, and so  
 Drownd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow  
 To be two Chaosses, when we did show  
 Care to ought else; and often absences  
 Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)  
 Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown;  
 Were I a man, that I were one, 30  
 I needs must know; I should preferre,  
 If I were any beast,  
 Some ends, some means; Yea plants, yea stones detest,  
 And love; All, all some properties invest;  
 If I an ordinary nothing were,  
 As shadow, a light, and body must be here.

But I am None; nor will my Sunne renew.  
 You lovers, for whose sake, the lesser Sunne  
 At this time to the Goat is runne  
 To fetch new lust, and give it you, 40  
 Enjoy your summer all;

l.14 *expresse*: press out.

l.15 *quintessence*: refers, as in "Loves Growth," to the fifth element held to be present in all matter.

l.21 *limbecke*: alembic, alchemical retort for distilling.

l.29 *Elixer*: general panacea sought by the alchemists.

l.33 *plants . . . detest*: plants choose their sustenance and some stones have magnetic qualities.

l.34 *all . . . invest*: All existing things have some distinguishing qualities.

l.39 *Goat*: both the zodiacal sign of Capricorn and a traditional figure of lust.

Since shee enjoyes her long nights festivall,  
 Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call  
 This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this  
 Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

### WITCHCRAFT BY A PICTURE

I fixe mine eye on thine, and there  
 Pitty my picture burning in thine eye,  
 My picture drown'd in a transparent teare,  
 When I looke lower I espie;  
 Hadst thou the wicked skill  
 By pictures made and mard, to kill,  
 How many wayes mightst thou performe thy will?

But now I have drunke thy sweet salt teares,  
 And though thou poure more I'll depart;  
 My picture vanish'd, vanish feares, 10  
 That I can be endamag'd by that art;  
 Though thou retaine of mee  
 One picture more, yet that will bee,  
 Being in thine owne heart, from all malice free.

### THE BAITE

Come live with mee, and bee my love,  
 And wee will some new pleasures prove  
 Of golden sands, and christall brookes,  
 With silken lines, and silver hookes.

There will the river whispering runne  
 Warm'd by thy eyes, more than the Sunne.  
 And there the'inamor'd fish will stay,  
 Begging themselves they may betray.

l.44 *Vigill . . . Eve*: along with "festivall," are terms associated with the celebration of a saint's day.

l.6 *By . . . kill*: The reference is to the reputed practice of witches—killing a person by destroying his picture.

*The Baite*: This poem is a parody of Christopher Marlowe's well-known lyric, "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."