

Women Poets

Coursepack featuring examples of poetry
written by women from the 17th-19th century.

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"The Prologue"

By Anne Bradstreet

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Staff and
Research Assistants at The University of Virginia, John O'Brien, Sara Brunstetter*

- [TP] -

SEVERAL POEMS

Compiled with great variety of Wit and
Learning, full of Delight;
Wherein especially is contained a compleat
Discourse, and Description of
The Four { ELEMENTS
CONSTITUTIONS,
AGES of Man,
SEASONS of the Year.
Together with an exact Epitome of
the three first *Monarchyes*
Viz, The { ASSYRIAN,
PERSIAN,
GRECIAN.

*And beginning of the Romane Common-wealth
to the end of their last King:*

With diverse other pleasant & serious *Poems* ,
By a Gentlewoman in *New-England* .
*The second Edition, Corrected by the Author,
and enlarged by an Addition of several other
Poems found amongst her Papers
after her Death.*

Boston , Printed by *John Foster* , 1678.

The Prologue

1.

TO sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean pen are too superiour things:
Or how they all, or each their dates have run
Let Poets and Historians set these forth,
My obscure Lines shall not so dim their worth.

2.

But when my wondring eyes and envious heart
Great Bartas sugar'd lines, do but read o're
Fool I do grudg the Muses did not part
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store,
A Bartas can, do what a Bartas will
But simple I according to my skill.

3.

From school-boyes tongue no rhet'rick we expect
Nor yet a sweet Consort from broken strings,
Nor perfect beauty, where's a main defect:
My foolish, broken blemish'd Muse so sings
And this to mend, alas, no Art is able,
'Cause nature, made it so irreparable.

4.

Nor can I, like that fluent sweet tongu'd Greek,
Who lisp'd at first, in future times speak plain
By Art he gladly found what he did seek

A full requital of his, striving pain

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Art can do much, but this maxime's most sure
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

5.

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on Female wits:
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'll say it's stoln, or else it was by chance.

6.

But sure the Antique Greeks were far more mild
Else of our Sexe, why feigned they those Nine
And poesy made, Calliop's own Child;
So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts Divine.
But this weak knot, they will full soon untie,
The Greeks did nought, but play the fools & lye.

7.

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are
Men have precedency and still excell,
It is but vain unjustly to wage warre;
Men can do best, and women know it well
Preheminence in all and each is yours;
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

8.

And oh ye high flown quills that soar the Skies,
And ever with your prey still catch your praise,

If e're you daigne these lowly lines your eyes
Give Thyme or Parsley wreath I ask no bayes,
This mean and unrefined ure of mine
Will make you glistring gold, but more to shine:

"To the Nightingale"

By Anne Finch

Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Students of Marymount University, James West, Amy Ridderhof

- [titlepage] -

POEMS

ON

Several Occasions, viz. .

[...] Written by the Right Honorable ANNE .

Countess of Winchelsea ,^{author} .

LONDON :

Printed by *J. B.* and sold by *W. Taylor* at the *Ship*
in *Paternoster-Row* , and *Jonas Browne* at the
Black Swan without *Temple-bar* . 1714 .

To the NIGHTINGALE, ^{nightingale} .

1 EXert thy Voice, Sweet Harbinger of Spring
2 This Moment is thy Time to Sing,
3 This Moment I attend to Praise,
4 And set my Numbers, ^{numbers} to thy Lays, ^{lays} .
5 Free as thine shall be my Song;
6 As thy Musick, short, or long.
7 Poets, wild as thee, were born,

8 Pleasing best when unconfin'd,
9 When to Please is least design'd,
10 Soothing but their Cares to rest;
11 Cares do still their Thoughts molest,
12 And still th'unhappy Poet's Breast,
13 Like thine, when best he sings, is plac'd against a Thorn.
14 She begins, Let all be still!
15 Muse, ^{muse} , thy Promise now fulfill!
16 Sweet, oh! sweet, still sweeter yet
17 Can thy Words such Accents fit,
18 Canst thou Syllables refine,
19 Melt a Sense that shall retain
20 Still some Spirit of the Brain,
21 Till with Sounds like these it join.
22 'Twill not be ! then change thy Note;
23 Let Division, ^{division} shake thy Throat.
24 Hark! Division now she tries;
25 Yet as far the Muse outflies

26 Cease then, prithee, cease thy Tune;
27 Trifler, wilt thou sing till *June*?
28 Till thy Bus'ness all lies waste,
29 And the Time of Building's past !
30 Thus we Poets that have Speech,
31 Unlike what thy Forests teach,
32 If a fluent Vein be shown
33 That's transcendent to our own,
34 Criticize, reform, or preach,
35 Or censure what we cannot reach.

Footnotes

author Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea, was born in April 1661 to Anne Haselwood and Sir William Kingsmill. At age twenty-one she was appointed maid of honor to [Mary Modena](#), the wife of the Duke of York, in the Court of Charles II. During her time in the Court, [Anne Kingsmill](#) was courted by and eventually married to Colonel Heneage Finch. In 1689, after a shift in political power, the Finches faced monetary problems and moved several times, eventually settling in Eastwell with their nephew.

As a woman writer in the [Augustan era](#), Finch was also out of place. [Barbara McGovern's 2002 critical biography of Finch](#) explores these displacements both in her life and her poetry. Finch struggled, as McGovern notes, to define her poetic identity in an era when women were excluded from the conditions that would allow them to cultivate their minds or their voices. The poet was seen as male, and publishing poetry, a masculine, public activity; for a woman to do so was, in the Augustan period, risqué and licentious (See Katherine Rogers' essay, "Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea: An Augustan Woman Writer," in [Pacheco 227](#)); Finch had to negotiate these competing cultural rules in her poetry.

Finch's poetry from 1701-1714 was wide ranging. She wrote on subjects typically allowed to be feminine, like her love for her husband, but she also wrote about public and political issues, like the succession of power in London. In 1701, Finch anonymously published "*Upon the Death of King James the Second*". Poems such as "[The Spleen](#)" and "[All is Vanity](#)" exemplify the idea of faith despite tribulation, a subject she explored often. Prior to the 1713 publication of *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions*, Finch circulated private manuscripts of her poems and gained a favorable literary reputation. For more information on women writers and manuscript circulation, see George Justice's introduction to *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800* (2002) or Margaret Ezell's *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (1999).

[Rogers emphasizes Finch's Augustan roots, highlighting her use of form](#) as well as her love poetry, satirical prose, and ideas on the relationship between man and nature (225). According to Rogers, Finch became one of the few female authors in the Augustan era to successfully master the masculine rules of the literary tradition. During the early modern period, women "frequently found themselves denied opportunities for publication and serious public reception, or had their writings denigrated and trivialized by a patriarchal literary world" ([McGovern 2](#))--as detailed in Finch's poem "The Introduction," which remained unpublished during her lifetime. Finch was able to make her voice heard by working within the masculine restraints of Augustan form.

Finch died on August 5, 1720. According to the [National Poetry Foundation](#) the first recognized modern edition of her work was released in 1903. Since the advent of feminist recovery criticism in the 1970s and 1980s, Anne Finch has gained critical acclaim; she is now regarded as one of the most important English women writers of the 18th century. The image to the right shows a [miniature watercolor portrait of Anne Finch by Peter Cross](#), housed in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

- [JW]

nightingale The nightingale is a small bird native to Europe and Asia, with a population in the United Kingdom as well as Africa. It is known for its beautiful, complex song, characterized by "a fast succession of high, low and rich notes that few other species can match," and for that reason has long been associated with poets and poetry, as poet Edward Hirsch notes in his introduction to *To a Nightingale: Poems from Sappho to Borges* . Often, the nightingale alludes to the classical myth of the [rape of Philomela](#) , whose violation is ostensibly recompensed with an unearthly beautiful song. While the nightingale is frequently invoked in lyric poetry as a feminized muse for the masculine poet to draw inspiration from, as Charles Hinnant notes in "Song and Speech in Anne Finch's 'To the Nightingale,'" Finch recasts the bird as an idealized muse for all poets, regardless of gender (504). This poem, is a significant attempt on Finch's part "to master a recurrent problem for the...female poet: how to participate in a discourse in which the poet is defined as a masculine subject" (503). [This video](#) allows you to hear a nightingale singing. The image to the right, via RSPB, shows the nightingale, *luscinia megarhynchos*.

- [TH]

numbers "Numbers" refers to the metrical quality of poetic verse; it also [metonymically](#) signifies poetry in general. In [Alexander Pope's "Epistle to Arbuthnot,"](#) he says that he "lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came" (128), suggesting that he spoke in poetic form even as a child. Poetry is associated with music because of the metrical quality of both. Finch's use of the word "set" in this line emphasizes musicality, specifically the setting of words to music (see OED "set" v1, 73.a).

- [TH]

lays According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* , a "Lay" refers to a song or story in song. Finch in this instance is seeking to create a poem that mirrors the song of the Nightingale.

- [JW]

muse According to *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology* , the Muses are "inspiring goddesses of song" who "presid[e] over the different kinds of poetry, and over the arts and sciences." In this poem, Finch positions the nightingale as her muse and rival.

- [JW]

division According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* [entry on ornamentation](#), division refers to a technique, popular in early modern music theory, characterized by dividing longer notes into a series of shorter note groupings. This is an early form of improvisation. For more information, please see "simple meter and time signatures" in the [Open Music Theory](#) textbook.

- [JW]

"Childhood"

By Anne Bradstreet

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Staff and
Research Assistants at The University of Virginia, John O'Brien, Sara Brunstetter*

- [TP] -

SEVERAL POEMS

Compiled with great variety of Wit and
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Wherein especially is contained a compleat
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The Four { ELEMENTS
CONSTITUTIONS,
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Childhood, ^{title}

1 Ah me! conceiv'd in sin, and born in sorrow,
2 A nothing, here to day, but gone to morrow.
3 Whose mean beginning, blushing cann't reveale,
4 But night and darknesse, must with shame conceal.
5 My mothers breeding sickness, ^{breeding}, I will spare;
6 Her nine months weary burden not declare.
7 To shew her bearing pangs, I should do wrong,
8 To tel that paine, which cann't be told by tongue;
9 With tears into this world I did arrive
10 My mother still did waste, as I did thrive:

11 Who yet with love, and all alacrity, ^{alacrity},
12 Spending was willing, to be spent for me;
13 With wayward cryes, I did disturb her rest;
14 Who sought still to appease me, with her brest,
15 With weary armes, she danc'd, and By, By, ^{by}, sung,
16 When wretched I (ungrate) had done the wrong!
17 When Infancy was past, my Childishnesse,
18 Did act al folly, that it could expresse.
19 My sillinesse did only take delight,
20 In that which riper age did scorn, and slight:
21 In Rattles, Bables, and such toyish fluffe.
22 My then ambitious thoughts, were low enough.
23 My high borne soule, so straitly was confin'd
24 That its own worth, it did not know, nor mind.
25 This little house of flesh, did spacious count:
26 Through ignorance, all troubles did surmount.
27 Yet this advantage, had mine ignorance,
28 Freedome from Envy, and from Arrogance,
29 How to be rich, or great. I did not carke, ^{carke};
30 A Baron or a Duke, ne'r made my mark.
31 Nor studious was, Kings favours how to buy,
32 With costly presents, or base flattery.
33 No office covered, wherein I might
34 Make strong my selfe, and turne aside weak right.
35 No malice bare, to this, or that great Peer,
36 Nor unto buzzing whisperers, gave ear.
37 I gave no hand, nor vote, for death, or life:

38 I'd nought to do, 'twixt Prince, and peoples strife., ^{authority}
39 No Statist, ^{statist} I: nor Marti'list, ^{martialist} i'th field;
40 Where e're I went, mine innocence was shield.

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41 My quarrels, not for Diadems, ^{diadem} did rise;
42 But for an Apple, Plumbe, or some such prize,
43 My stroks did cause no death, nor wounds, nor skars.
44 My little wrath did cease soon as my wars.
45 My duel was no challenge, nor did seek.
46 My foe should weltering, ^{weltering}, with his bowels reek., ^{bowels}
47 I had no Suits at law, ^{suits}, neighbours to vex.
48 Nor evidence for land, did me perplex.
49 I fear'd no stormes, nor al the windes that blows,
50 I had no ships at Sea, no fraughts, ^{fraughts} to loose.
51 I fear'd no drought, nor wet, I had no crop,
52 Nor yet on future things did place my hope.
53 This was mine innocence, but oh the seeds,
54 Lay raked up, of all the cursed weeds,
55 Which sprouted forth, in my insuing, ^{insuing} age,
56 As he can tell, that next comes on the stage.
57 But yet let me relate, before I go,
58 The sins, and dangers I am subject to.
59 From birth stayned, with Adams sinfull fact, ^{sin};
60 From thence I gan, ^{gan} to sin, as soon as act.
61 A perverse will, a love to what's forbid:
62 A serpents sting in pleasing face lay hid.
63 A lying tongue as soon as it could speak,
64 And fift Commandement, ^{fifth} do daily break.
65 Oft stubborn, peevish, sullen, pout, and cry:
66 Then nought can please, and yet I know not why.
67 As many was my sins, so dangers too:
68 For sin brings sorrow, sicknesse, death, and woe.
69 And though I misse, the tossings of the mind:
70 Yet griefs, in my fraile flesh, I still do find.

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71 What gripes of wind, mine infancy did pain?
72 What tortures I, in breeding teeth sustain?
73 What crudities, ^{crudities} my cold stomach hath bred?
74 Whence vomits, wormes, and flux, ^{flux} have issued?
75 What breaches, knocks, and falls I daily have?
76 And some perhaps, I carry to my grave.

77 Sometimes in fire, sometimes in waters fall:
78 Strangely preserv'd, yet mind it not at all.
79 At home, abroad, my danger's manifold.
80 That wonder tis, my glasse till now doth hold.
81 I've done, unto my elders I give way.
82 For 'tis but little, that a child can say., ^{little}

Footnotes

- title This poem is the first of four poems in a larger work called *Of the Four Ages of Man* .
- breeding Breeding sickness is referring to her pregnancy. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- alacrity Alacrity means cheerful readiness or willingness. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- by "By, By" is the title of a song, probably a lullaby.
- carke To cark means to labour anxiously. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- authority Bradstreet had no place in disputes between the people and the royal family. This is likely an allusion to the English Civil War, which she discussed in other poems. (Bradstreet, "A Dialogue between Old England and New; concerning their present Troubles")
- statist A statist is someone who believes that the state should control either economic or social policy, or both, to some degree. Source: Wikipedia
- martialist Martialist is another word for soldier. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- diadem This use of diadem, which is another word for crown, is likely a metonym for royalty. She did not fight for royalty as a child.
- welting To welter means to wither. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- bowels This line is likely referring to when a person's bowels empty after they die.
- suits Suits at law refers to lawsuits. Bradstreet had no legal troubles as a child.
- fraughts Fraught is equivalent to the modern word freight. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- insuing Insuing is equivalent to the modern word ensuing, meaning following. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- sin Adam's sinful fact refers to original sin from the Creation story of the Book of Genesis.
- gan 'gan is an abbreviation of "began".
- fifth Anne Bradstreet was Puritan. The Fifth Commandment refers to "Honoring thy father and mother." Source: Wikipedia
- crudities Imperfect Humours or indigestibles. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- flux Flux is an abnormally copious flowing of blood, excrement, etc. from the bowels or other organs. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

little After this, Bradstreet begins the second poem in *Of the Four Ages of Man* , "Youth."

"Old Age"

By Anne Bradstreet

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- [TP] -

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Old Age, ^{title}

1 What you have been, ev'n such have I before,
2 And all you say, say I, and something more;

3 Babes innocence, Youths wildness I have seen,
4 And in perplexed Middle-age have bin,
5 Sicknesse, dangers, and anxieties have past,
6 And on this Stage am come to act my last.
7 I have bin young, and strong, ad wise as you,
8 But now, *Bis pueri senes* , ^{bis} , is too true;
9 In every Age i've found much vanitie,
10 An end of all perfection now I see.
11 It's not my valour, honour, nor my gold,
12 My ruin'd house, now fallin can uphold;
13 It's not my Learning, Rhetorick, wit so large,
14 Now hath the power, Deaths Warfare, to discharge;
15 It's not my goodly house, nor bed of down,
16 That can refresh, or ease, if Conscience frown;
17 Nor from alliance now can I have hope,
18 But what I have done wel, that is my prop;
19 He that in youth is godly, wise, and sage,
20 Provides a staffe for to support his age.
21 Great mutations, some joyful, and some sad,
22 In this short Pilgrimage, ^{pilgrimage} I oft have had;
23 Sometimes the Heavens with plenty smil'd on me,
24 Sometimes again, rain'd al adversity;
25 Sometimes in honour, sometimes in disgrace,
26 Sometimes an abject, then again in place,
27 Such private changes oft mine eyes have seen
28 In various times of state i've also been.
29 I've seen a Kingdom flourish like a tree,
30 When it was rul'd by that Celestial she, ^{she};
31 And like a Cedar, others so surmount,
32 That but for shrubs they did themselves account;

33 Then saw I *France* , and *Holland* sav'd, *Cales* won,
34 And *Philip* , and *Albertus* , half undone, ^{undone};
35 I saw all peace at home, terror to foes,

36 But ah, I saw at last those eyes to close:
37 And then, me thought, the world at noon grew dark,
38 When it had lost that radiant Sun-like spark,
39 In midst of greifs, I saw some hopes revive,
40 (For 'twas our hopes then kept our hearts alive)
41 I saw hopes dasht, our fwwardnesse was shent,
42 And silenc'd we, by Act of Parliament, ^{act}.
43 I've seen from *Rome*, an excerable thing,
44 A plot to blow up Nobles, and their King, ^{plot};
45 I've seen signes at *Ree*, ^{Ree}, and *Cades*, ⁿ⁰⁰⁷ crost,
46 And poor *Palatinate* for ever lost.
47 I've seen a Prince, to live on onthers lands, ^{exile},
48 A Royal one, by almes from Subjects hands,
49 I've seen base men, advanc'd to great degree,
50 And worthy ones, put to extremity:
51 But not their Princes love, nor state so high;
52 could once reverse, their shameful destiny.
53 I've seen one stab'd, another loose his head, ^{head};
54 And others sly their Country, through their dread.

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55 It've seen, and so have ye, for 'tis but late,
56 The desolation, of a goodly State.
57 Plotted and acted, so that none can tell,
58 Who gave the counsel, but the Prince of hell.
59 I've seen a land unmoulded with great paine.
60 But yet may live, to see'd made up again:
61 I've seen it shaken, rent, and soak'd in blood, ^{blood},

The Irish Rebellion of 1641, which began as an attempted coup d'etat by Irish Catholic gentry who tried to seize control of the English administration in Ireland to force concessions of Catholics. The rebellion broke out October 1641 and was followed by several months of violent chaos. Source: Wikipedia

62 But out of troubles, ye may see much good,
63 These are no old weives tales, but this is truth;
64 We old men love to tell, what's done in youth.
65 But I returne, from whence I stept awry,
66 My memory is shott, and braine is dry.
67 My Almond-tree (gray haire) doth flourish now,
68 And back, once straight, begins apace to bow.
69 My grinders now are few, my sight doth faile
70 My skin is wrinkled, and my cheeks are pale.
71 No more rejoyce, at musickes pleasant noyce,
72 But do awake, at the cocks clanging voyce.
73 I cannot scent, savours of pleasant meat,

74 Nor sapors, ^{sapors} find, in what I drink or eat.
75 My hands and armes, once strong, have lost their might,
76 I cannot labour, nor I cannot fight:

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77 My comely legs, as nimble as the Roe, ^{roe} ,
78 Now stiffe and numb, can hardly creep or go.
79 My heart sometimes as fierce, as Lion hold,
80 Now trembling, and fearful, sad, and cold;
81 My golden Bowl, and silver Cord, e're long,
82 Shal both be broke, by wracking death so strong;
83 I then shal go, whence I shal come no more,
84 Sons, Nephews, leave, my death for to deplore;
85 In pleasures, and in labours, I have found.
86 That earth can give no consolation found.
87 To grease, to rich, to poore, to young, or old,
88 To mean, to noble, fearful, or to bold:
89 From King to begger, all degrees shal finde
90 But vanity, vexation of the minde;
91 Yea knowing much, the pleasant'st life of all,
92 Hath yet amongst that sweet some bitter gall.
93 Though reading others Works, doth much refresh,
94 Yet studying much, brings wearinesse to th' flesh:
95 My studies, labours, readings, all are done,
96 And my last period now e'n almost run;
97 Corruption, my Father, I do call,
98 Mother, and sisters both; the worms, that crawl,
99 In my dark house, such kindred I have store,
100 There, I shal rest, til heavens shal be no more;
101 And when this flesh that rot, and be consum'd,
102 This body, by this soul, shal be assum'd;
103 And I shal see, with these same very eyes,
104 My strong Redeemer, comming in the skies;
105 Triumph I shal, o're Sin, o're Death, o're Hel,
106 And in that hope, I bid you all farewell.

Footnotes

- title The first section of the Tenth Muse includes four long poems known as the quaternions. These are the "Four Elements", "The Four Humors of Man", "The Four Ages of Man", and "The Four Seasons." Each poem consists of a series of orations with "Old Age" being the fourth portion of the poem "The Four Ages of Man" preceded by "Childhood", "Youth", and "Middle Age" respectively. Source: Poetry Foundation
- bis Latin phrase meaning "old men are twice boys." Source: Encyclopedia Co. UK
- pilgrimage Although Bradstreet is probably using Pilgrimage as a metaphor to mean the narrator's life time, it could also be possible that she is referring to her move from England to the New England Colonies to support the Puritan cause. The ship by which she travelled docked at Salem, Massachusetts on July 22, 1630. Source: Poetry Foundation
- she Queen Elizabeth
- undone Most likely this is referencing the destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588 during which Phillip II was the ruler of Spain. He organized a huge naval expedition against Protestant England in 1588 which turned out unsuccessful and gave England a great advantage. The Spanish Armada anchored before Calais, a port city in Northern France. The vast success of Queen Elizabeth may perhaps be said to have "undone" Philip and Albertus, who was made Governor of Netherlands by Phillip II of Spain. Source: Google Books, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse* ; Wikipedia
- act In progress.
- plot The Gunpowder Plot also known as the Gunpowder Treason Plot or the Jesuit Treason, was a failed assassination attempt against King James I of England by a group of English Catholics led by Robert Catesby. The plan was to blow up the house lord during the State Opening of England's Parliament on November 5, 1605. Source: Wikipedia
- Ree Sent by King Charles I, George Villiers was the 1st Duke of Buckingham and the leader of the fleet that made an unsuccessful attempt to take the Isle de Rhe in front of La Rochelle in 1627. Source: Wikipedia
- n007 Refers to the failure of a naval expedition under the command of Sir Edward Cecil, an English military commander who sailed in 1625 to capture some Spanish treasure ships in the Bay of Cadiz. Source: Google Books, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*.
- exile The elector of Palatinate, Frederick V, spent the rest of his life in exile. Source: Wikipedia
- head King Charles I who was beheaded after 59 commissioners signed his death warrant after his trial on January 1649 proceeding the English Civil War. Source: Wikipedia
- savors Taste. Source: Oxford English Dictionary
- roe The roe deer.

"NIOBE in Distress for her Children slain by APOLLO, from Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book VI. and from a view of the Painting of Mr. Richard Wilson"

By Phillis Wheatley

Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Students of Marymount University, James West, Amy Ridderhof

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NIOBE in Distress for her Children slain by APOLLO, from *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book VI. and from a view of the Painting of Mr. *Richard Wilson*.

1 APOLLO's wrath to man the dreadful spring
2 Of ills innum'rous, tuneful goddess, sing!
3 Thou who did'st first th' ideal pencil give,
4 And taught'st the painter in his works to live,
5 Inspire with glowing energy of thought,
6 What *Wilson* painted, and what *Ovid* wrote.
7 Muse! lend thy aid, nor let me sue in vain,
8 Tho' last and meanest of the rhyming train!
9 O guide my pen in lofty strains to show
10 The *Phrygian* queen, all beautiful in woe.

11 'Twas where *Maeonia* spreads her wide domain
12 *Niobe* dwelt, and held her potent reign:
13 See in her hand the regal sceptre shine,
14 The wealthy heir of *Tantalus* divine,

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15 He most distinguish'd by *Dodonean Jove* ,
16 To approach the tables of the gods above:
17 Her grandsire *Atlas* , who with mighty pains
18 Th' ethereal axis on his neck sustains:
19 Her other gran sire on the throne on high

20 Rolls the loud-pealing thunder thro' the sky.
21 Her spouse, *Amphion* , who from *Jove* too springs,
22 Divinely taught to sweep the sounding strings.

23 Seven sprightly sons the royal bed adorn,
24 Seven daughters beauteous as the op'ning morn,
25 As when *Aurora* fills the ravish'd sight,
26 And decks the orient realms with rosy light
27 From their bright eyes the living splendors play,
28 Nor can beholders bear the flashing ray.

29 Wherever, *Niobe* , thou turn'st thine eyes,
30 New beauties kindle, and new joys arise!
31 But thou had'st far the happier mother prov'd,
32 If this fair offspring had been less belov'd:

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33 What if their charms exceed *Aurora's* teint,
34 No words could tell them, and no pencil paint,
35 Thy love too vehement hastens to destroy
36 Each blooming maid, and each celestial boy.

37 Now *Manto* comes, endu'd with mighty skill,
38 The past to explore, the future to reveal.
39 Thro' *Thebes'* wide streets *Tiresia's* daughter came,
40 Divine *Latona's* mandate to proclaim:
41 The Theban maids to hear the orders ran,
42 When thus *Maeonia's* prophetess began:

43 "Go, *Thebans!* great *Latona's* will obey,
44 "And pious tribute at her altars pay:
45 "With rights divine, the goddess be implor'd,
46 "Nor be her sacred offspring unador'd."
47 Thus *Manto* spoke. The *Theban* maids obey,
48 And pious tribute to the goddess pay.
49 The rich perfumes ascend in waving spires,
50 And altars blaze with consecrated fires;
51 The fair assembly moves with graceful air,
52 And leaves of laurel bind the flowing hair.

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53 *Niobe* comes with all her royal race,
54 With charms unnumber'd, and superior grace:
55 Her *Phrygian* garments of delightful hue,
56 Inwove with gold, refulgent to the view,
57 Beyond description beautiful she moves

58 Like heav'nly Venus, 'midst her smiles and loves:
59 She views around the supplicating train,
60 And shakes her graceful head with stern disdain,
61 Proudly she turns around her lofty eyes,
62 And thus reviles celestial deities:
63 "What madness drives the *Theban* ladies fair
64 "To give their incense to surrounding air?
65 "Say why this new sprung deity preferr'd?
66 "Why vainly fancy your petitions heard?
67 "Or say why *Coeus'* offspring is obey'd,
68 "While to my goddessship no tribute's paid?
69 "For me no altars blaze with living fires,
70 "No bullock bleeds, no frankincense transpires,
71 "Tho' *Cadmus'* palace, not unknown to fame,
72 "And *Phrygian* nations all revere my name.

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73 "Where'er I turn my eyes vast wealth I find.
74 "Lo! here an empress with a goddess join'd.
75 "What, shall a *Titaness* be deify'd,
76 "To whom the spacious earth a couch deny'd?
77 "Nor heav'n, nor earth, nor sea receiv'd your queen,
78 "Till pitying *Delos* took the wand'rer in.
79 "Round me what a large progeny is spread!
80 "No frowns of fortune has my soul to dread.
81 "What if indignant she decrease my train
82 "More than *Latona's* number will remain?
83 "Then hence, ye *Theban* dames, hence haste away,
84 "Nor longer offrings to *Latona* pay?
85 "Regard the orders of *Amphion's* spouse,
86 "And take the leaves of laurel from your brows."
87 *Niobe* spoke. The *Theban* maids obey'd,
88 Their brows unbound, and left the rights unpaid.

89 The angry goddess heard, then silence broke
90 On *Cynthus'* summit, and indignant spoke;

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91 "*Phoebus!* behold, thy mother in disgrace,
92 "Who to no goddess yields the prior place
93 "Except to *Juno's* self, who reigns above,
94 "The spouse and sister of the thund'ring *Jove* .
95 "*Niobe* , sprung from *Tantalus* , inspires
96 "Each *Theban* bosom with rebellious fires;
97 "No reason her imperious temper quells,
98 "But all her father in her tongue rebels;

99 "Wrap her own sons for her blaspheming breath,
100 "Apollo! wrap them in the shades of death."
101 *Latona* ceas'd, and ardent thus replies
102 The God, whose glory decks th' expanded skies.

103 "Cease thy complaints, mine be the task assign'd
104 "To punish pride, and scourge the rebel mind."
105 This *Phoebe* join'd. -- They wing their instant flight;
106 *Thebes* trembled as th' immortal pow'rs alight.

107 With clouds incompass'd glorious *Phoebus* stands;
108 The feather'd vengeance quiv'ring in his hands.

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110 Near *Cadmus'* walls a plain extended lay,
111 Where *Thebes'* young princes pass'd in sport the day:
112 There the bold coursers bounded o'er the plains,
113 While their great masters held the golden reins.
114 *Ismenus* first the racing pastime led,
115 And rul'd the fury of his flying steed.
116 "Ah me," he sudden cries, with shrieking breath,
117 While in his breast he feels the shaft of death;
118 He drops the bridle on his courser's mane,
119 Before his eyes in shadows swims the plain,
120 He, the first-born of great *Amphion's* bed,
121 Was struck the first, first mingled with the dead.

122 Then didst thou, *Sipylos*, the language hear
123 Of fate portentous whistling in the air:
124 As when th' impending storm the sailor sees
125 He spreads his canvas to the fav'ring breeze,

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126 So to thine horse thou gav'st the golden reins,
127 Gav'st him to rush impetuous o'er the plains:
128 But ah! a fatal shaft from *Phoebus'* hand
129 Smites through thy neck, and sinks thee on the sand.

130 Two other brothers were at *wrestling* found,
131 And in their pastime claspt each other round:
132 A shaft that instant from *Apollo's* hand
133 Transfixt them both, and stretcht them on the sand:
134 Together they their cruel fate bemoan'd,
135 Together languish'd, and together groan'd:
136 Together too th' unbodied spirits fled,
137 And sought the gloomy mansions of the dead.

138 *Alphenor* saw, and trembling at the view,
139 Beat his torn breast, that chang'd its snowy hue.
140 He flies to raise them in a kind embrace;
141 A brother's fondness triumphs in his face:
142 *Alphenor* fails in this fraternal deed,
143 A dart dispatch'd him (so the fates decreed:)

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144 Soon as the arrow left the deadly wound,
145 His issuing entrails smoak'd upon the ground.

146 What woes on blooming *Damasichon* wait!
147 His sighs portend his near impending fate.
148 Just where the well-made leg begins to be,
149 And the soft sinews form the supple knee,
150 The youth sore wounded by the *Delian* god
151 Attempts t' extract the crime-avenging rod,
152 But, whilst he strives the will of fate t' avert,
153 Divine *Apollo* sends a second dart;
154 Swift thro' his throat the feather'd mischief flies,
155 Bereft of sense, he drops his head, and dies.

156 Young *Ilioneus* , the last, directs his pray'r,
157 And cries, "My life, ye gods celestial! spare."
158 *Apollo* heard, and pity touch'd his heart,
159 But ah! too late, for he had sent the dart:
160 Thou too, O *Ilioneus* , art doom'd to fall,
161 The fates refuse that arrow to recal.

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162 On the swift wings of ever-flying *Fame*
163 To *Cadmus'* palace soon the tidings came:
164 *Niobe* heard, and with indignant eyes
165 She thus express'd her anger and surprize:
166 "Why is such privilege to them allow'd?
167 "Why thus insulted by the *Delian* god?
168 "Dwells there such mischief in the pow'rs above?
169 "Why sleeps the vengeance of immortal *Jove*? "
170 For now *Amphion* too, with grief oppress'd,
171 Had plung'd the deadly dagger in his breast.
172 *Niobe* now, less haughty than before,
173 With lofty head directs her steps no more.
174 She, who late told her pedigree divine,
175 And drove the *Thebans* from *Latona's* shrine,
176 How strangely chang'd! -- yet beautiful in woe,
177 She weeps, nor weeps unpity'd by the foe.

178 On each pale corse the wretched mother spread
179 Lay overwhelm'd with grief, and kiss'd her dead,
180 Then rais'd her arms, and thus, in accents slow,
181 "Be sated cruel *Goddess!* with my woe;

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182 "If I've offended, let these streaming eyes,
183 "And let this sev'nfold funeral suffice:
184 "Ah! take this wretched life you deign'd to save,
185 "With them I too am carried to the grave.
186 "Rejoice triumphant, my victorious foe,
187 "But show the cause from whence your triumphs flow?
188 "Tho' I unhappy mourn these children slain,
189 "Yet greater numbers to my lot remain."
190 She ceas'd, the bow-string twang'd with awful sound,
200 Which struck with terror all th' assembly round,
201 Except the queen, who stood unmov'd alone,
202 By her distresses more presumptuous grown.
203 Near the pale corpses stood their sisters fair
204 In sable vestures and dishevell'd hair;
205 One, while she draws the fatal shaft away,
206 Faints, falls, and sickens at the light of day.
207 To sooth her mother, lo! another flies,
208 And blames the fury of inclement skies,
209 And, while her words a filial pity show,
210 Struck dumb -- indignant seeks the shades below.

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211 Now from the fatal place another flies,
212 Falls in her flight, and languishes, and dies.
213 Another on her sister drops in death;
214 A fifth in trembling terrors yields her breath;
215 While the sixth seeks some gloomy cave in vain,
216 Struck with the rest, and mingl'd with the slain.

217 One only daughter lives, and she the least;
218 The queen close clasp'd the daughter to her breast:
219 "Ye heav'nly pow'rs, ah spare me one," she cry'd,
220 "Ah! spare me one," the vocal hills reply'd:
221 In vain she begs, the *Fates* her suit deny,
222 In her embrace she sees her daughter die.

223 *, ^{auth1} "The queen of all her family bereft,
224 "Without or husband, son, or daughter left,
225 "Grew stupid at the shock. The passing air
226 "Made no impression on her stiff'ning hair.

227 "The blood forsook her face: amidst the flood
228 "Pour'd from her cheeks, quite fix'd her eye-balls stood.
229 "Her tongue, her palate both obdurate grew,
230 "Her curdled veins no longer motion knew;
231 "The use of neck, and arms, and feet was gone,
232 "And ev'n her bowels hard'ned into stone:
233 "A marble statue now the queen appears,
234 "But from the marble steal the silent tears."

Footnotes

auth1 This Verse to the End is ther Work of another Hand. [Wheatley's note.]

"Against Pleasure"

By Katherine Philips

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Staff and
Research Assistants at The University of Virginia, John O'Brien, Sara Brunstetter*

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Against Pleasure. Set by Dr. Coleman.

1.

1 There's no such thing as pleasure here,
2 'Tis all a perfect cheat,

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3 Which does but shine and disappear,
4 Whose charm is but deceit:
5 The empty bribe of yielding souls,
6 Which first betrays, and then controls.

2.

7 'Tis true, it looks at distance fair,
8 But if we do approach,
9 The fruit of Sodom, ^{Sodom} will impair,
10 And perish at a touch;
11 It being than in fancy less,
12 And we expect more than possess.

3.

13 For by our pleasure we are cloy'd, ^{Cloyed}
14 And so desire is done;
15 Or else, like rivers, they make wide
16 The channels where they run;
17 And either way true bliss destroys,
18 Making us narrow, or our joys.

4.

19 We covet pleasure easily,
20 But ne'er true bliss possess;
21 For many things must make it be,
22 But one may make it less.
23 Nay, were our state as we would choose it,
24 'Twould be consumed by fear to lose it.

5.

25 What art thou, then, thou wingèd air,
26 More weak and swift than fame?
27 Whose next successor is despair,
28 And its attendant shame.

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29 Th' experienced prince then reason had
30 Who said of Pleasure, — "It is mad."

Footnotes

Sodom In the biblical account, Sodom was a city destroyed by God for the wickedness of its inhabitants (Oxford English Dictionary).

Cloyed Cloyed refers to being made weary by something that was initially pleasurable or sweet.

"On IMAGINATION"

By Phillis Wheatley

Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Students of Marymount University, James West, Amy Ridderhof

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On IMAGINATION.

1 THY various works, imperial queen, we see,
2 How bright their forms! how deck'd with pomp by thee!
3 Thy wond'rous acts in beauteous order stand,
4 And all attest how potent is thine hand.

5 From *Helicon's* refulgent heights attend,
6 Ye sacred choir, and my attempts befriend:
7 To tell her glories with a faithful tongue,
8 Ye blooming graces, triumph in my song.

9 Now here, now there, the roving *Fancy* flies,
10 Till some lov'd object strikes her wand'ring eyes,
11 Whose silken fetters all the senses bind,
12 And soft captivity involves the mind.

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13 *Imagination!* who can sing thy force?
14 Or who describe the swiftness of thy course?
15 Soaring through air to find the bright abode,
16 Th' empyreal palace of the thund'ring God,
17 We on thy pinions can surpass the wind,
18 And leave the rolling universe behind:
19 From star to star the mental optics rove,
20 Measure the skies, and range the realms above.
21 There in one view we grasp the mighty whole,
22 Or with new worlds amaze th' unbounded soul.

23 Though *Winter* frowns to *Fancy's* raptur'd eyes
24 The fields may flourish, and gay scenes arise;
25 The frozen deeps may break their iron bands,

26 And bid their waters murmur o'er the sands.
27 Fair *Flora* may resume her fragrant reign,
28 And with her flow'ry riches deck the plain;
29 *Sylvanus* may diffuse his honours round,
30 And all the forest may with leaves be crown'd:

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31 Show'rs may descend, and dews their gems disclose,
32 And nectar sparkle on the blooming rose.

33 Such is thy pow'r, nor are thine orders vain,
34 O thou the leader of the mental train:
35 In full perfection all thy works are wrought,
36 And thine the sceptre o'er the realms of thought.
37 Before thy throne the subject-passions bow,
38 Of subject-passions sov'reign ruler Thou;
39 At thy command joy rushes on the heart,
40 And through the glowing veins the spirits dart.

41 *Fancy* might now her silken pinions try
42 To rise from earth, and sweep th' expanse on high;
43 From *Tithon's* bed now might *Aurora* rise,
44 Her cheeks all glowing with celestial dies,
45 While a pure stream of light o'erflows the skies.
46 The monarch of the day I might behold,
47 And all the mountains tipt with radiant gold,

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48 But I reluctant leave the pleasing views,
49 Which *Fancy* dresses to delight the *Muse*;
50 *Winter* austere forbids me to aspire,
51 And northern tempests damp the rising fire;
52 They chill the tides of *Fancy's* flowing sea,
53 Cease then, my song, cease the unequal lay.

"To the Ladies"

By Mary Chudleigh

Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup by Students and Staff of Marymount University

- [TP] -

POEMS
ON
Several Occasions.
BY THE
LADY CHUDLEIGH , ^{author}
The THIRD Edition, Corrected.

London:
Printed for BERNARD LINTOT, at the *Cross-Keys* between the *Temple-Gates* . MDCCXXII.

To the Ladies.

1 Wife and Servant are the same,
2 But only differ in the Name:
3 For when that fatal Knot is ty'd,
4 Which nothing, nothing can divide, ^{divorce}:
5 When she the word obey has said,
6 And Man by Law, ^{couverture} supreme has made,
7 Then all that's kind is laid aside,
8 And nothing left but State and Pride:
9 Fierce as an Eastern Prince, ^{eastern-prince} he grows,
10 And all his innate Rigor shows:
11 Then but to look, to laugh, or speak,
12 Will the Nuptial Contract break.
13 Like Mutes, ^{mutes} she Signs alone must make,
14 And never any Freedom take, ^{freedom}:
15 But still be govern'd by a Nod,
16 And fear her Husband as her God:
17 Him still must serve, him still obey,
18 And nothing act, and nothing say,
19 But what her haughty Lord thinks fit,
20 Who with the Pow'r, has all the Wit.
21 Then shun, oh! shun that wretched State, ^{state},
22 And all the fawning Flatt'ners hate:
23 Value your selves, and Men despise,
24 You must be proud, if you'll be wise.

Footnotes

- author Mary Chudleigh was a poet and early feminist, friends with women like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Mary Astell. She is most well-known for her long poem *The Ladies Defense* (1701), published in response to John Sprint's *The Bride-Woman's Counsellor*, a marriage sermon he delivered in 1699 expounding on the duty of wives to their husbands. Chudleigh was a devout Anglican, and had no formal education (women were not usually formally educated for a century more), but she was self-taught and read widely. In her late teens, she married Sir George Chudleigh, a Baronet. He was an overbearing husband, and scholars suggest that her own experience was an influence for her writing. However, he did allow her to publish her work, which was not common for women of her stature. To read more about anonymity and women writers, see [Greg Buzwell's short essay at the British Library](#). Chudleigh bore six children with her husband.
- [TH]
- divorce Until the middle of the nineteenth century, with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857, English society was essentially divorceless; members of the gentility and the aristocracy typically married for life. The only way to secure a divorce was through a very expensive Private Act of Parliament; between 1700 and 1857, fewer than 325 parliamentary divorces were granted in England. Almost all were initiated by men, and it was only granted for adultery. Women could only seek divorce if the adultery were accompanied by extreme cruelty. Those granted to women could be counted on one hand. As a result, there were many unhappy marriages, and literature focused on choosing the right mate was popular. Those in the lower classes (and sometimes those in the growing middle classes) had more flexibility, often simply agreeing among themselves to leave each other or through the practice of "wife selling." To read more about the history of divorce, see [Amanda Foreman's "The Heartbreaking History of Divorce" for *The Smithsonian Magazine*](#).
- [TH]
- couvverture Upon marriage, a woman became a "femme couverte"; her legal identity was subsumed into (or "covered by") her husband's, and she was no longer able to take on debt, own property, or engage in contracts. Unmarried women and widows could. To read more about this doctrine of *couvverture*, which was only modified in the late 19th century, see [Wikipedia](#). It is worth noting that, in the US, it was only in 1974 (with the passage of the Equal Credit Opportunity Act) that women could open bank accounts or apply for credit without needing a male co-signer. In the UK, a similar law was passed in 1975.
- [TH]
- eastern-prince The Ottoman Empire was the largest empire in the world, spanning the 13th through the 20th centuries. As Emily Kugler notes in *Sway of the Ottoman Empire on English Identity in the Long Eighteenth Century* (2012), the English in the eighteenth century depicted the Ottoman world as powerful, moreso than the English themselves, whose empire was growing and would reach its height in the 19th century. Hence, Chudleigh here uses the "eastern prince" as an image of unchecked power. This is exacerbated by perceived differences in personal and political liberties between the English and the Turkish subject, and especially the female subject.

- [TH]

mutés For an interesting discussion of the "mute" in the Turkish Ottoman Court, see "[Signing in the Seraglio](#)," by M. Miles.

- [TH]

freedom Chudleigh is drawing on the image of the [Turkish seraglio](#) as a site of female confinement and sexual enslavement. In British literature, the trope of the English captive seeking to regain their "native" or natural/innate liberties takes shape "against a detailed representation of the Orient as debased and despotic" (Snader, "[The Oriental Captivity Narrative andn Early English Fiction](#)" 268). Note that Chudleigh refers, in an earlier line, to the husband's "innate Rigor." To read more about the way the West viewed the Ottoman Empire as tyrannical and despotic, especially when it comes to the image of women, see "[From Tyranny to Despotism: The Enlightenment's Unenlightened Image of the Turks](#)" by Asli Çirakman.

- [TH]

state The "state" of marriage.

- [TH]