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JOHN DONNE
Poetry and Prose

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1967
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.

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'hydroteique earth hath drunk,
Whither, as to the beds-feet, life is shrunkne,
Dead and entr'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,

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 1622; others, with more justice, hold that it refers to the
death of Donne's wife in 1677.
1.3 flask: containers for gunpowder. The reference is to the stars.
1.4 squibs: firecrackers.
1.6 balme: a preservative substance believed to exist in all organic bodies.
The line suggests the ancient belief that the earth is an organism.
1.7 Whither . . shrunke: probably a reference to a dying man's tend-
ency 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, darkness, death; things which are not

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,
Life, soule, forme, spirit, whence they beeing have;
  I, by loves limbecke, am the grave
Of all, that's nothing. Of a flood
Have wee two wept, and so
Drown'd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow
To be two Chaoses, 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,
  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,
Enjoy your summer all;

1.1.4 expresse: press out.
1.1.5 quintessenes: refers, as in "Loves Growth," to the fifth element held to be present in all matter.
1.2.1 limbecke: alembic, alchemical resort for distilling.
1.2.9 Elixer: general panacea sought by the alchemists.
1.3.3 plants . . . detest: plants choose their sustenance and some stones have magnetic qualities.
1.3.4 all . . . invest: All existing things have some distinguishing qualities.
1.3.9 Goat: both the zodiacal sign of Capricorn and a traditional figure of lust.

Since shee enjoys her long nights festival,
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
Pity 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,
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 be my love,
And wee will some new pleasures prove
Of golden sands, and chrestall brookes,
With silken lines, and silver hookes.

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

1.44 Vigill . . . Eve: along with "festival," are terms associated with the celebration of a saint's day.
1.6 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."