

Henry King (1592-1669), "The Exequy" [on his wife, Anne]

Accept, thou Shrine of my dead Saint,  
Instead of Dirges, this complaint;  
And for sweet flowres to crown thy hearse,  
Receive a strew of weeping verse  
From thy griev'd friend, whom thou might'st see  
Quite melted into tears for thee.

Dear loss! since thy untimely fate  
My task hath been to meditate  
On thee, on thee; thou art the book,  
The library whereon I look, 10  
Though almost blind. For thee (lov'd clay)  
I languish out not live the day,  
Using no other exercise  
But what I practise with mine eyes;  
By which wet glasses I find out  
How lazily time creeps about  
To one that mourns; this, onely this  
My exercise and bus'ness is;  
So I compute the weary houres  
With sighs dissolved into showres. 20

Nor wonder if my time go thus  
Backward and most preposterous;  
Thou hast benighted me, thy set  
This Eve of blackness did beget,  
Who was't my day, (though overcast  
Before thou had'st thy Noon-tide past)  
And I remember must in tears,  
Thou scarce had'st seen so many years  
As Day tells houres. By thy clear Sun 30  
My love and fortune first did run;  
But thou wilt never more appear  
Folded within my Hemisphere,  
Since both thy light and motion  
Like a fled Star is fall'n and gone,  
And 'twixt me and my soules dear wish  
An earth now interposed is,  
Which such a strange eclipse doth make  
As ne'er was read in Almanake.

I could allow thee for a time  
To darken me and my sad Clime, 40  
Were it a month, a year, or ten,  
I would thy exile live till then;  
And all that space my mirth adjourn,  
So thou wouldst promise to return;  
And putting off thy ashy shrowd,  
At length disperse this sorrows cloud.

But woe is me! the longest date  
Too narrow is to calculate  
These empty hopes; never shall I  
Be so much blest as to descry 50  
A glimpse of thee, till that day come  
Which shall the earth to cinders doome,  
And a fierce Feaver must calcine  
The body of this world like thine,  
(My Little World!) that fit of fire  
Once off, our bodies shall aspire  
To our soules bliss; then we shall rise  
And view our selves with cleerer eyes  
In that calm Region, where no night  
Can hide us from each others sight. 60

Mean time, thou hast her, earth; much good  
May my harm do thee. Since it stood  
With Heaven's will I might not call  
Her longer mine, I give thee all  
My short-liv'd right and interest  
In her, whom living I lov'd best;  
With a most free and bounteous grief,  
I give thee what I could not keep.  
Be kind to her, and prithee look 70  
Thou write into thy Dooms-day book  
Each parcel of this Rarity  
Which in thy Casket shrin'd doth ly;  
See that thou make thy reck'ning streight,  
And yield her back again by weight;  
For thou must audit on thy trust  
Each graine and atome of this dust,  
As thou wilt answer *Him* that lent,  
Not gave thee my dear Monument.

So close the ground, and 'bout her shade  
Black curtains draw, my *Bride* is laid. 80

Sleep on my *Love* in thy cold bed  
Never to be disquieted!  
My last good night! Thou wilt not wake  
Till I thy fate shall overtake;  
Till age, or grief, or sickness must  
Marry my body to that dust  
It so much loves; and fill the room  
My heart keeps empty in thy Tomb.  
Stay for me there; I will not faile 90  
To meet thee in that hollow Vale.  
And think not much of my delay;  
I am already on the way,  
And follow thee with all the speed

Desire can make, or sorrows breed.  
Each minute is a short degree,  
And ev'ry houre a step towards thee.  
At night when I betake to rest,  
Next morn I rise neerer my West  
Of life, almost by eight houres saile,  
Then when sleep breath'd his drowsie gale. 100

Thus from the Sun my Bottom steers,  
And my dayes Compass downward bears;  
Nor labour I to stemme the tide  
Through which to *Thee* I swiftly glide.

'Tis true, with shame and grief I yield,  
Thou like the *Vann* first took'st the field,  
And gotten hast the victory  
In thus adventuring to dy  
Before me, whose more years might crave  
A just precedence in the grave. 110  
But heark! My Pulse like a soft Drum  
Beats my approach, tells *Thee* I come;  
And slow howere my marches be,  
I shall at last sit down by *Thee*.

The thought of this bids me go on,  
And wait my dissolution  
With hope and comfort, *Dear* (forgive  
The crime) I am content to live  
Divided, with but half a heart,  
Till we shall meet and never part. 120