1.  (From Hero and Leander)

His body was as straight as Circe's wand;
Jove might have sipped out nectar from his hand.
Even as delicious meat is to the taste,
So was his neck in touching, and surpassed
The white of Pelops' shoulder: I could tell ye
How smooth his breast was and how white his belly;
And whose immortal fingers did imprint
That heavenly path with many a curious dint
That runs along his back; but my rude pen
Can hardly blazon forth the loves of men,
Much loss of powerful gods.

Christopher Marlowe.

2.  Lament of Ahania

Where is my golden palace,
Where my ivory bed?
Where the joy of my morning hour?
Where the sons of eternity singing
To awake bright Utizen, my king,
To arise to the mountain sport,
To the bliss of eternal valleys;
To awake my king in the morn.
To embrace Ahania's joy
On the breadth of his open bosom?
From my soft cloud of dew to fall
In showers of life on his harvests,
When he gave my happy soul
To the sons of eternal joy,
When he took the daughters of life
Into my chambers of love.

William Blake.

(From Crashaw's On a Prayer-Book Sent to Mrs. M.R.)

Dear soul be strong!
Mercy will come ere long
And bring his bosom fraught with blessings,
Flowers of never fading graces.
To make immortal dressings
For worthy souls, whose wise embraces
Store up themselves for Him, who is alone
The spouse of virgins and the Virgin's Son.
But if the noble Bridegroom, when He come,
Shall find the loitering heart from home;
Leaving her chaste abode
To gad abroad
Among the gay mates of the god of flies;
To take her pleasure, and to play,
And keep the devil's holiday;
To dance in the sunshine of some smiling
But beguiling
Sphere of sweet and sugared lies;
Some slippery pair
Of false, perhaps as fair,
Flattering but forswearing eyes;
Doubtless some other heart
Will get the start
Meanwhile, and stepping in before
Will take possession of the sacred store
Of hidden sweets and holy joys;
Words which are not heard with ears
(Those tumultuous shops of noise),
Effectual whispers, whose still voice
The soul itself more feels than hears;
Amorous languishments, luminous trances;
Sights which are not seen with eyes;
Spiritual and soul-piercing glances,
Whose pure and subtle lightning flies
Home to the heart, and sets the house on fire
And melts it down in sweet desire:
Yet does not stay
To ask the windows' leave to pass that way;
Delicious deaths, soft exhalations
Of soul; dear and divine annihilations;
A thousand unknown rites
Of joys and rarefied delights;
An hundred thousand goods, glories and graces;
And many a mystic thing,
Which the divine embraces
Of the dear Spouse of spirits with them will bring;
For which it is no shame
That dull mortality must not know a share.
Of all this store
Of blessings, and ten thousand more
(If when He came
He find the heart from homo)
Doubtless he will unload
Himself some otherwhere,
And pour abroad
His precious sweets
On the fair soul whom first He meets,
O fair! O fortunate! O rich! O dear!
O happy and thrice-happy she,
Dear selected dove
Whoe'er she be,
Whose early love
With winged vows
Makes haste to meet her morning Spouse,
And close with his immortal kisses;
Happy indeed who never misses
To improve that precious hour,
And every day
Seize her sweet prey,
All fresh and fragrant as He rises,
Dropping with a balmy shower
A delicious dew of spices;
O let the blissful heart hold fast
Her heavenly armful; she shall taste
At once ten thousand paradises;
She shall have power
To rifle and deflower
The rich and roseal spring of those rare sweets,
Which with a swelling bosom there she meets:
Boundless and infinite, bottomless treasures
Of pure inebriating pleasures.
Happy proof! she shall discover
What joy, what bliss,
How many heavens at once it is
To have her God become her lover.

Richard Crashaw.
4. (From Visions of the Daughters of Albion)

The moment of desire! the moment of desire!

the virgin

That pines for man shall awaken her womb to

enormous joys

In the secret shadows of her chamber: the youth

shut up from

The lustful joy shall forget to generate and

create an amorous image

In the shadows of his curtains and in the folds

of his silent pillow.

Are not these the places of religion, the rewards

of continence,

The self-enjoyings of self-denial? Why dost

thou seek religion?

Is it because acts are not lovely that thou

seekest solitude

Where the horrible darkness is impressed with

reflections of desire?

William Blake.

5. O lull me, lull me, charming air!

My senses rock with wonder sweet;

Like snow on wool thy fallings are;
Soft like a spirit's are thy feet.
Grief who needs fear
That hath an ear?
Down let him lie
And slumbering die,
And change his soul for harmony.

William Strode.

6. So smooth, so sweet, so silvery is thy voice,
As, could they hear, the damned would make no noise,
But listen to thee (walking in thy chamber)
Meltling melodious words, to lutes of amber.

Robert Herrick.

7. (From Comus)
Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard
My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Gulling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.

John Milton.

8. The Woodman and the Nightingale

A woodman, whose rough heart was out of tune,
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood
Satiate the hungry dark with melody;
And as a vale is watered by a flood,

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness — as a tuberose
Peoples some Indian dell with scenes which lie,
Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close
Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness.

Perey Bysshe Shelley

9. **Inscription on the Tomb of Lady Mary Wentworth**

And here the precious dust is laid,
Whose purely tempered clay was made
So fine, that it the guest betrayed.

Else, the soul grew so fast within,
It broke the outward shell of sin,
And so was hatched a Cherubin.

In height it soared to God above,
In depth it did to knowledge move,
And spread in breadth to general love.

Good to the poor, to kindred dear,
To servants kind, to friendship clear,
To nothing but herself severe.

So, though a virgin, yet a bride
To every grace, she justified
A chaste polygamy, and died.

Learn from hence, reader, what small trust
We owe the world, where virtue must,
Frail as our flesh, crumble to dust.

Thomas Carew.

10. Two Sisters

I
Alice is tall and upright as a pine,
White as blanched almonds or the falling snow,
Sweet as are damask roses when they blow,
And doubtless fruitful as the swelling vine.
Ripe to be cut and ready to be pressed,
Her full-cheeked beauties very well appear,
And a year's fruit she loses very year,
Wanting a man to improve her to the best.
Full fain she would be husbanded, and yet,
Alas, she cannot a fit labourer get
To cultivate her to his own content:
Fain would she be, God wot, about her task,
And yet, forsooth, she is too proud to ask,
And (which is worse) too modest to consent.
II
Margaret of humbler stature by the head
Is (as it oft falls out with yellow hair)
Than her fair sister, yet so much more fair
As her pure white is better mixt with red.
This, hotter than the other ten to one,
Longs to be put unto her mother's trade,
And loud proclaims she lives too long a maid,
Wishing for one to untie her virgin zone.
She finds virginity a kind of ware
That's very, very troublesome to bear,
And being gone she thinks will never be missed;
And yet withal the girl has so much grace,
To call for help I know she wants the face,
Though, asked, I know not how she would resist.

Charles Cotton.

II.
Why should, of all things, man unrul'd
Such unproportioned dwellings build?
The beasts are by their dens express'd
And birds contrive an equal nest;
The low-roofed tortoises do dwell
In cases fit of tortoise-shell:
No creature loves an empty space;
Their bodies measure out their place.
But he, superfluously spread,
Demands more room alive than dead,
And in his hollow palace goes
Where winds, as he, themselves may lose.
What need of all this marble crust
T'impark the wanton mote of dust?

Andrew Marvell.