

Candlemas 2018

An Evening of Light, Music, Poetry, and Art

POETRY NOT IN THE PRINTED PROGRAM

Out, brief candle!

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

—William Shakespeare (1564-1616) from *Macbeth*, v:ii

Death, be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou are not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou'art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

—John Donne (1572-1631) "Holy Sonnet 10"

Sonnet: Candlemas, 2018

O Angelus of Light, O candles blest
this night, require of us your care and trust
as from the blare and dark, worn time we rest,
hushed, wary, weary; treasures turned to dust.

O flame, present us, make us fresh with hope
as to the Temple Jesus once was brought;
so make our little flames grow greater scope,
a sign for Simeon, as he once sought.

Become in us a burning, ardent fire,
the promised joy, ambassador of bliss,
a flame made pure by holiest desire,
the heart's salvation from night's bleak abyss.

The light of love is in the hand and heart
as from this sacred hour we depart.

—Vern Barnet (1942-)

with debt to Thomas Traherne (1637?-1674); Luke 2:22-35

O Light Invisible

O Light Invisible, we praise Thee!
Too bright for mortal vision.

O Greater Light, we praise Thee for the less;
The eastern light our spires touch at morning,
The light that slants upon our western doors at evening,
The twilight over stagnant pools at batflight,
The moon light and star light, owl and moth light,
Glow-worm glowlight on a grassblade.
O Light Invisible, we worship Thee!

[We thank Thee for the light that we have kindled,
The light of altar and of sanctuary;
Small lights of those who meditate at midnight
And lights directed through the coloured panes of windows
And light reflected from the polished stone,
The gilded carven wood, the coloured fresco.
Our gaze is submarine, our eyes look upward
And see the light that fractures through unquiet water.
We see the light but see not whence it comes.
O Light Invisible, we glorify Thee!]

In our rhythm of earthly life we tire of light. We are glad
when the day ends, when the play ends; and ecstasy is
too much pain.

We are children quickly tired: [children who are up in the
night and fall asleep as the rocket is fired; and the day
is long for work or play.]

We tire of distraction or concentration, we sleep and are
glad to sleep,

Controlled by the rhythm of blood and the day and the
night and the seasons.

And we must extinguish the candle, put out the light and
relight it;

Forever must quench, forever relight the flame.

Therefore we thank Thee for our little light, that is dappled
with shadow.

We thank Thee who hast moved us to building, to finding,
to forming at the ends of our fingers and beams of our
eyes.

And when we have built an altar to the Invisible Light, we
may set thereon the little lights for which our bodily vi-
sion is made.

And we thank Thee that darkness reminds us of light.

O Light Invisible, we give Thee thanks for Thy great glory!

—T S Eliot (1888-1965)

Arranged from Section X of "Choruses from 'The Rock'"