

The Legacy of the Motes

Gail Godwin

Pour new seas in mine eyes,
that so I might
Drown my world with my
weeping earnestly . . .
Donne, Holy Sonnet 5

London, 1961.

"Look up at the dome," Van Buren instructed the young scholar. "And roll your eyeball round to the left."

"I was going across to that pub for lunch," Elliott told the helpful attendant, "When I saw this thing like a bird flying sideways through the sky. At least I thought it was the sky. But then at lunch it kept wafting back and forth across my page and I realized it was inside my eye."

"One really shouldn't read in pubs," cautioned Van Buren, "The light is so poor." He gingerly pried back Elliott's eyelid with dry fingers and peered deep into the left eye. Good old Van Buren, he'd been able to flush the rarest of seventeenth-century obscurities out of forgotten stacks and was going to be remembered specifically in Elliott's acknowledgements. "Does it hurt?" he asked.

"Not a bit. That's the odd thing. Do you see a hair in there or anything? Though I'm sure I'd feel a hair."

"Hmm. Roll it up and around. Now over that way. Not a thing. Do you think perhaps you've been overtaxing your eyes? It's quite possible, you know. You've been going at those books rather devilishly these past three months. Why not give things a rest? Go to a park, enjoy our English spring. If your eye is still troubling you tomorrow, you might pop over to Moorfield's Eye Hospital."

Tomorrow. Wasn't that just like them. They took a week to launder a shirt. They were always going to parks. Van Buren spent half his lunch hour trudging

back and forth to Lincoln's Inn Fields just so he could eat his sandwich in one. All the time in the world they had. That's what happened to their pound.

"Well, I've only got my index to go and I hate to stop so near the end," he told the older man who stood balanced lightly on his crepe soles, frowning earnestly and ready to be of service. "I want to finish it up, I want to be back in the States by the end of May so I can defend it, you see. I want to have it over and done with." He gave a queer, fractured little laugh. "After all," he said, because Van Buren still looked dubious. "It's not as though the eye were hurting. Whatever it is will probably work itself out of there."

"Very well," said Van Buren. "Let me know if you need anything." He pronounced it 'anna-thing.' Elliott watched him retreat to his own raised desk, a wisp of a man, of indeterminate middle age: the only friend he'd made in England.

Elliott returned to space F.5 beneath the circular blue dome of the British Museum Reading Room. He still could not get over being impressed that he was really here, where generations of the best scholars had polished these desktops to a fine sheen with the rub of their elbows. Over the weeks, this round room had become the center of his universe. It drew him irresistibly into its vortex of Scholarship until the world outside became a faded adjunct, a kind of anteroom where he must retreat at grudging intervals to eat and sleep.

Now, before beginning his afternoon's work, he leafed sensually through the heavyweight bond pages of his *Catalogue of Metaphysical Conceits*. He'd captured them once and for all, those canny little bastards. All day, every weekday since coming here, he'd sat oblivious to the slow unfolding of the English spring outside and culled them first from major writers (Crashaw, Donne, Vaughan) and then from increasingly minor ones (Benlowes, Godolphin, Habington, Sherburne) rooted out for him by the fortuitous Van Buren who had early confided to Elliott his own less scholarly but abiding fascination for the Metaphysical Poets. By day, Elliott had explicated the complex, startling, ingenious analogies, scribbling furiously over hundreds of 4x6 cards, his pencil breaking, running out of lead, as it raced along, trying to keep pace with its owner's ambitious inspirations. By night and on weekends, he sat at the typewriter in his Bloomsbury bedsitter and typed, ignorant of the deepening blue of the late northern twilight. He had pinned them down, one by one, the audacious hyperboles, the paradoxes, until all that remained was to lead each of these broken images into the alphabetical stalls of his index.

A Catalogue of Metaphysical Conceits: his eye swept gratified from left to right across the title page (home in May, Ph.D. with a job at a prestigious school before the age of twenty-five), but a pair of shadowy wings followed the movement of his eye. He brushed at the paper with his fingers, he brushed at the air. He looked up suddenly. The wings beat away to the left. He re-read *A Catalogue of . . .* and they floated back, filigreed wings crossing and recrossing the purity of his title page. He tried them on the walls, the dome; they blended cleverly in the houndstooth of a neighboring scholar's jacket only to reappear, like a mischievous doodle, on the scholar's fresh foolscap notepad. Elliott sat stiff-shouldered and obsessed, swiveling his eyes up, down, left, right, trying to shake the wings. But

they sailed indomitably across his vision. They were haunting, rather beautiful in themselves, but then, so were cancer cells. If they kept on, he'd see about them, not today, not today. He clamped his hand over his left eye and began writing the notecards for his index: Ague, Alchemie, Apparition, Anatomie . . . no: Anatomie, Apparition . . . but then he had to sneak a look and see if they were still there. They were.

He went up to Van Buren. "Look, how far is this Moorfield's?"

"Walking distance, actually." Van Buren gave directions.

"Okay if I leave my things here? It's two now. I should be back by three at the latest."

"Not to worry. I'll put them away with Reserved Books if you don't get back before closing."

"Closing!"

"There might be a bit of a wait," said Van Buren.

Elliott went out into the afternoon cursing. It was probably nothing, they could wash it out with something. But how perverse for it to happen now! While trying to flag a taxi on Great Russell Street, he tested the wings on the dingy stone of buildings, the patches of green grass, and then upon the glare of mottled spring sky where he'd first picked the damned things up. The wings soared at a 90 degree-angle tilt, like little linked bubbles. Elliott noted with no pleasure that it was the smooth, light surfaces (pages, sky) where they most strongly made their presence felt.

Moorfield's smelled of alcohol. Its waiting room was jammed with people of all ages and occupations suffering from afflictions of the eye. One woman's bandage had a perfect circle of red in the middle, like a Japanese flag. What if he lost an eye, both eyes? A receptionist gave him a ticket stub with number 143 on it. "There are quite a few ahead of you," she said, disappearing through a swinging door, carrying the other half of his stub.

Elliott paced the waiting room. He wished he'd brought along his notecards. No, that might diminish the urgency of his case if others saw him reading his own tiny writing on cards. He sat down at last and began playing the wings on the pale green walls. Agonie, Aire, Angells . . . no, Anagram of the Virgin Mary. Hell, he needed the cards. The receptionist returned and called number 87.

His afternoon slipped away. A whole afternoon wasted! At half past four a Pakistani doctor about his own age came through the swinging door and spoke in meticulous English to an old man dabbing at his eyes and looking bewildered. "Can you tell me, Mr. Fiddler, when exactly did you begin having the blacknesses again?" He arranged for the old man to go to surgery early next morning and assisted him gently to his feet. At a quarter to five, a mother with her hair in rollers rushed in, carrying her little boy who had shot something into his eye, and this took precedence over all ticket stubs. Elliott felt sick. He was not accustomed to the sight of such sad, suffering people. What a dreary place this Moorfield's was!

Finally, around dinner time, the young Pakistani asked tiredly if number 143 would please come to the examining room. Elliott followed him through the swing-

ing doors into a long room where people sat in a row of dentist-type chairs. The doctor motioned Elliott to one.

"What seems to be the trouble?"

"Well, there's something strange in my left eye," Elliott said.

"Strange? How do you mean strange?"

"Well, I mean it's in there, I can see it floating back and forth across everything, but it doesn't hurt. As a matter of fact, there it goes now." Excitedly, Elliott traced something swiftly through the air with his finger. The doctor's butterscotch-smooth countenance ignored the finger. He pondered Elliott's face instead.

"What does it look like?" he asked. "How does it feel?"

"That's the thing. It doesn't feel any way at all. I can't feel a thing. But I can tell you exactly what it looks like. It's made up of these little bubbles, it's about the thickness of a hair, and it looks like a pair of wings flying sideways." Elliott felt pleased with the accuracy of his description. He felt suddenly everything would be all right.

The doctor, seemingly unimpressed, flipped his eyelid onto a square-edged wooden stick and rolled it back like a rug. Elliott's eyeball grew cold. To his right, another doctor said, "Now, Mrs. Murdoch, I am going to anesthetise your right eyeball." Out of the corner of his own right eye, Elliott spied the silver flash of a needle. His nerves spun him into an uneasy contemplation of his vile jellies: their vulnerability, their defenselessness . . .

"I think I am going to pass out," he told the Pakistani doctor, who looked interested and unrolled his eyelid at once. He led Elliott into a private room and helped him to lie back on the examining table. A colored nurse appeared and wafted smelling salts gravely beneath his nostrils, as though trying to hypnotize him. Elliott had the sensation of being demonically overcome by these two brown, unsmiling faces floating over him. He fainted.

When they brought him round, he shouted at them, "What time is it? I've got to finish my index. Are you people going to be able to flush this eye out or not?"

"There is nothing in the eye," said the doctor. "I looked carefully while you were out." He spoke slowly as to a foreigner or a small child. Elliott could not help but feel they had stolen something from him, he could not say what. Peering into the mirrors of his soul when he was out cold . . .

"You are a student?" the doctor inquired politely. He looked at his wristwatch.

"No. Yes," Elliott said, sitting up. His present position, in a limbo between student and professor, struck him as a precarious one which he must change as quickly as possible. "There they went, they just floated through your white uniform," he announced to the nurse, who remained standing by with the salts.

"Perhaps you have been working too hard," said the doctor, helping Elliott to stand. "At times people see," he waved his slim brown fingers negligibly about, "things, small impurities, rather like dust in the air. Maybe you should take a little rest. Enjoy the nice weather—"

"Go to a park," supplied Elliott savagely. A whole afternoon wasted. "How much do I owe you?"

"We are under National Health." The doctor clapped a palm to Elliott's

shoulder and steered him towards an exit. "A very good park I can suggest is the Regent's Park. They have an excellent zoo . . ."

Elliott found himself wandering the adjacent streets, displaced in a strange interstice of early evening sunlight. It was too late to get back in the Museum, too early to go to bed. He felt very lonely and did not know which way to go. Perhaps he should have a beer, some supper. He walked on, the wings accompanying him languidly in the slow yellow light. A quaint-looking pub under the sign of a rose tree materialized on his side of the street. He went in and sat down at a table in the corner. He was the only customer. A publican in a clean white apron came over and took his order. Elliott sat in the soft timeless gloom, munching delicious sausages, coating his frayed nerve-ends with a pint of soothing bitter. The publican brought him a second when he was ready for it, though he could not remember asking. He tried his eyes on the brown paneling of the walls, but the wings seemed to have retired for the night. Well, he would follow their example. Tomorrow he would begin fresh and early on the index.

Going out into the blue twilight, he noticed a little mews beside the pub. Its cobbled walk was lined with pots of bright red geraniums that glowed in the dusk. He had never seen such a quality of light as this dusk. Feeling mellow, he decided to explore. Van Buren had told him that London was a secret city that opened itself up to you slowly from within, revealing itself discreetly to those who had found their way inside.

At the end of this mews was a vast green park that seemed to stretch to the frontiers of the evening. He walked soundlessly over its sward. The air hummed around him. He suddenly wanted more than anything else to lie down, and did. Stretching luxuriously upon its cool turf, he suddenly remembered the two halves of his ticket #143 at Moorfield's. What did they do with those stubs at the end of the day? Where was his now? He tried to imagine, but a lassitude was stealing over him, the likes of which he'd never known. Everything seemed to be melting away, his overcrowded brain opened all its doors and windows and the contents spilled like books all over the grass. Canonizations, Compasses, Dirges, Epitaphs, Fevers, Fleas and Fools, Lectures and Legacies, Meditations, Nocturnals, Quid-dities and Quips, all tumbled out and dissolved like tears into the thirsty green. Only his eyes remained. Elliott woke the wings and sent their soft spectres up, over the ground, the trees, to see what they would find. They hovered above a pale spot burgeoning out of the dusk. It came closer, sprouting legs, an undulating tower of a neck, lollopping soundlessly toward him. It was an elegant white giraffe. It passed within a foot of him, never making a sound.

He woke next morning feeling something awful had happened. Why was this bright light pouring into his room so early in the morning? What was wrong? It was afternoon, that's what was wrong! He was in bed and not in the Reading Room. He remembered the preposterous events of yesterday and slammed his eyes shut. Dear God, he prayed for the first time in years, let those things not be there today and I'll finish my index in a week, hiding all night in the Museum if necessary, and get the hell out of this slow-motion country. He tried to visualize

his index in its finished form, but his mind felt soft and doughy, as though all the muscles had been removed. He tried to stick one then another conceit on its surface, but they would not hold, they flaked away. For one mad moment, lying there with his eyes squeezed shut, it occurred to him that he had already finished the index, had pushed himself to the point of exhaustion, and was now back in the States suffering a breakdown in which his mind returned over and over again to England, to do it all again in a compulsive dream.

The eyes, the eyes would be his test. God, I'm going to open them now. Please let yesterday have been a dream.

He opened his eyes. Refreshed, triumphant, they wheeled back into his life, trailing several small progeny born during the night. He cried out in despair. The new ones were less winglike. They were ungainly and squatty, resembling jumbled commas. Oh it was all true then, even the giraffe? He put his hand over the left eye and blotted out the wings. But the squiggles wafted on across the right. Both eyes! Possibly he was going mad as well, but one thing was sure: something terrible was happening to his vision. Not that he was losing it violently, with blood, nor intermittently, in a series of recurring 'blacknesses' like the old man at Moorfield's, nor under the slowly thickening mauve of cataracts. No, by some freak of fate, the prolific wings and squiggles were destined to block up his vision gradually, footnoting his eyes like ivy covering windows until there was no clean space left. He was to be relegated to darkness, untrained for anything, his brilliant future snuffed out at twenty-five.

He indulged in a brief orgy of self-pity, then rallied via his years of drive and dialed directory inquiries and asked for the number of the BMA. The four alphabetical phone books were stacked beside his phone, but he felt he no longer had the right to small print.

"I want the name of your top eye doctor," he told the secretary. "Money is of no concern. I have this friend who thinks he may be going blind." She explained that there were MANY excellent physicians and the BMA really could not . . . He lectured her on the British nation's lack of drive, his voice rising to a shriek. "No spirit of competition! That's why your goddamned pound has shrunk to nothing." She hung up on him.

He closed his eyes and practiced touch-dialing GRO-9000, the number for any American in trouble. He asked the switchboard operator for a consul. A nervy east coast voice snapped onto the wire. Elliott told him that he was an American professor doing important research in the British Museum and his eyes had begun to go bad on him. Who was the best eye-man here? The consul without taking a breath named Derek Hunter-Hyde, the famous ophthalmologist. He was booked for months of course, but the consul had reason to believe he could get the professor in.

Late that afternoon, Derek Hunter-Hyde, R.C.B.-Everything, quietly drew the heavy blue curtains, darkening his consulting room on the third floor of a Regency town house which overlooked a sweep of park. He murmured reassuringly in public school English as he squeezed a clear and cooling drop of anodyne into each of Elliott's troubled eyes. He had him sit forward in a comfortable chair and

look into a little black machine which rested on a highly polished Chippendale table. Hunter-Hyde looked into it from the opposite side and conducted a responsible and leisured search of Elliott's eyes. Then he invited him to sit at his own desk and sketch upon a little pad the things he saw in his eyes. Together they studied the drawings, joking at resemblances to melting airplanes, badly-carpentered crucifixes and a little uroborus who couldn't quite make his tail. Finally, with a charming stutter that was worth every one of the ten guineas, he told Elliott he had something in his eyes called *muscae volitantes*, "Which is Latin, you see, for f-flying flies, or, to put it another way, f-flies in flight." Elliott began laughing and Hunter-Hyde added his own chuckle. Then Elliott inquired amiably if these flies in flight were serious. He was a scholar and depended on his eyes. A few flying flies were one thing, but what if they kept multiplying? *Would* they keep multiplying, did Hunter-Hyde think? Were they dangerous? Ought he . . . ought he to stop reading? He waited for the great man's answer fearfully. Yet what really awful news could anyone receive in this tasteful room?

With equanimity, the famous ophthalmologist replied that he really couldn't say. Nobody knew much about the *muscae*. They came and they went, rather much as they pleased. *Some* of them were dangerous, in that they prefigured retinal detachment; he did not think Elliott's were of that kind. There might be more, Elliott should be prepared for that. Close reading *had* been known to attract them. On the other hand, Elliott might read close-print dictionaries all day every day for the rest of his life and no more would come. Or he might wake one morning to find them gone. Hunter-Hyde's mother had one shaped like the spine of a leaf; she had grown rather fond of it, actually. The vitreous humor was a curious thing. "You know, that jellylike substance that f-fills your eyeball?" Well this vitreous humor sometimes developed, inexplicably, little defects which in turn cast shadows upon the retinal rods. It was impossible to prophesy: Elliott would have to leave it to nature or to God, if he was a believer. The doctor suggested his own favorite park, a small island off Greece. He made Elliott a present of some eye drops in a small shapely green bottle which looked like a faery decanter. "Use them," he advised, "Whenever you feel particularly annoyed by the little fellows. And go and have yourself a walk."

Outside in Regent Square, the world impinged on Elliott. The purplish shadows of afternoon seemed to throb in tune with his eyeballs. The drops Hunter-Hyde had squeezed in seemed to have propitiated the *muscae* for the time being, and a languor similar to the one he had abandoned himself to the evening before now rapidly overtook him once more. What day was it? Wednesday? The Reading Room stayed open til nine p.m. He should go back and start the index. But what he really felt like doing was finding that pub with the sign of the rose tree again, ordering more of those delicious sausages and wandering afterwards into that park, seeing how it looked the second time round. That was the test, wasn't it? He felt certain if he could repeat the evening up to the point where he had lain stretched out on the grass, he would somehow break the spell started by the entrance of the giraffe. Reality would come full circle and then he could go back to his index in peace.

He hailed a taxi. "I want to go to this pub near Moorfield's Eye Hospital," he told the driver. "I don't know its name, but it has this certain sign over the door. If you just drive around, I'm sure to recognize it."

He was rattled around a labyrinth of narrow streets near the hospital. The meter ticked away. They passed several pubs, none beneath the sign of a rose tree. Elliott began to get uneasy. The fare mounted. Finally, he paid the driver and continued the search on foot. He walked miles, doubling back on himself until the afternoon faded into the prolonged blue twilight and still no sign. Had it all been a derangement? If so, when had things last been real, when? He stumbled on, searching for the rose tree sign, the phosphorescent geraniums along a cobbled mews, with no luck. His eyes began to water with self-pity: he must get back to that park and collect his thoughts from the grass, he had to find his giraffe.

A long time after dark, he slumped into a pub with no rose tree, determined to drink himself back into his lost park.

Van Buren found him on the steps next morning. Red-eyed, whiskered, stinking of hops, he clasped the attendant round his neck. "If tha's not solid flesh, I'll be goddamned if I know what is!" he babbled. Taking a small green bottle from his coat pocket, he squeezed two drops from it into each eye. "Keeping the li'l bastards in abeyance," he explained, winking at the perplexed attendant, who asked him didn't he think he could do with a few hours' sleep, come in at noon perhaps?

"Are you kidding? My whole life's in there on little slips of paper. You haven't thrown them away have you? You haven't put anything back on the shelf?"

Van Buren took him by the arm, assuring him he had not. They went inside. Van Buren delivered Elliott his books and notes intact. Elliott settled himself unsteadily into his place at F.5, opened to the title page of his dissertation and began to scream. Van Buren made his way to him calmly, as though he were merely bringing another book. He led him whimpering past the discreetly lowered eyes of other scholars and out of the circular room which had slowly begun to spin. He stood by in the Gents while Elliott vomited for awhile, then carefully washed his face, looked in the mirror to check himself, and passed out cold.

II

May 1, 1971

Dear Mr. Elliott:

What a surprise to hear from you after all this time! Not a day has gone by that I haven't puzzled over that last morning, and I have more than once chided myself with my carelessness in allowing you to go away afterwards without eliciting some forwarding address from you. I am relieved to know that you enjoy good health and that your 'wings' have passed. More on those wings in a moment. I must admit I was extremely frustrated when I received that postal

card from you several years back, the one with the white giraffe and your cryptic greeting and no other address that "A detail from The Garden of Earthly Delights, Prado Museum, Madrid." I then tried reaching you through Cook's and American Express offices in all the major European cities. Did you by any chance receive any of these letters?

You ask about the fate of your dissertation. I am curious to know more about the 'agreement' you say you made about it. With whom, pray tell, did you make such an agreement? I hope you will enlighten me regarding some of these imponderables in a future letter! When several months went by and you did not return to collect it, I sent a letter to your people at the University (I got their names from your acknowledgement page, for which, by the by, I thank you for the inclusion of my own humble one) explaining the situation and asking whether, under the circumstances, they would like me to send it on to them, since the thing was so nearly finished. I am sorry to say they took their own good time in answering, and when they did it was to the effect that they were 'waiting for word from Eliott.' So I had to content myself with that. I took the liberty of removing your ms. to my own flat for safekeeping. As you may remember, I have always been allured by the Metaphysicals, and so it was not very long until I began leafing through your *Catalogue*, savoring each of those delightful, extravagant turns on meanings which you had explicated so thoroughly. I read through the entire ms. and when I had done with it I was impressed but nevertheless vaguely dissatisfied about something. It was as though I had been denied some particular treat of which I had been assured.

I went back and re-read the ms. carefully. And then it came to me. You had overlooked one of the most significant conceits in Metaphysical poetry. The wings, Mr. Eliott! Herbert's "Easter Wings." In light of your final tormented days in the Reading Room, you can imagine how this discovery both excited and exasperated me. I became convinced that your 'visitors' were an exemplary case of psycho-pathological prompting, the sort of thing Jung understood so well. It was your psyche's way of signalling to you that you'd left something out of the book. What exasperated me was the fact that you had vanished for all intents and purposes and I could not communicate to you this urgent piece of news.

I did get the feeling at times that you knew very well I was trying to reach you—especially after that frustrating postal card from Madrid. But now you have communicated and I am able to assure you that your dissertation is safe and sound, although I suppose you have heard by now of that other fellow's book which came out several years ago. Rotten luck, that; his was very disappointing indeed, compared to your compendious, painstaking treatment. We got it here at the BM.

You say that now your 'wings' have departed, you suppose you ought to take up your life seriously again. Permit me to suggest that your ten years can be looked upon as serious. I have been working in a library for forty-two years.

saving my pennies so that when I retire next spring I can at last have the opportunity to do what you say you ought to regret: 'browse the parks of the world.' All this rushing and climbing, is *that* 'serious'? Really, Mr. Elliot, what for? Why *not* do a bit of browsing during your short-term lease among the stars? I am sure that when we meet again, and I do have your promise of that, don't I?, I shall find you are a much more interesting person than that frightfully intense young man who never had time to eat lunch in the park on a spring day.

Yours sincerely,

Phineas Van Buren

P.S. You say that when you sat down to your ms. that final morning that 'the letters all jumbled together, swirling around like snakes on the page, it was the ultimate horror.' Don't you remember that you had put drops of some kind in your eyes? I saw you do it myself. That would explain the swirling letters. I can't read for the remainder of the day when I have my annual eye examination.

During his decade of browsing, Elliott had not been an unhappy man. After he had made his deal with the *muscae*, as a rich man who has lost some of his riches promises God a sizeable tithe if He will not let him lose them all, they became his excuse for the joyous search. He would not enter a library, if they would let him go on seeing. And he saw many things after he had discovered the Library of the World. Chained gently within its environs, he wandered, letting himself marvel, unable to fret, discovering anew each day the paradox that when you had nothing left to lose you began finding any number of things. The *muscae* were his inseparable traveling companions. They went everywhere with him. He played them constantly upon the deepened surface of his life, saw further worlds through them. They became inextricable from his visions. When he suddenly found his white giraffe frozen in the left volet of the Bosch triptych, the winglike *muscae* in his left eye swept conclusively down the flanks of the wondrous creature at the same moment Elliott was comprehending it. *See*, they seemed to say, *we can always find him*.

And then they left him. One morning he woke up, played his eyes drowsily back and forth across the ceiling, summoning them to wake up and help him plan his day, and realized he was alone. Nothing tempered the blankness of those pale walls. He swivelled his eyes back and forth, up and down, rotated them in circles. But the wings had flown away, leaving him alone with their implications. He was like a man who had been dropped from a great height; no, like a man left at the gates of an unknown city by his faithful traveling companions. He lay stunned and sorrowful, unable to begin the day, looking at his blank walls and searching for a link to connect him with the present. He decided to write Van Buren.

After receiving his old friend's reply, Elliott went out into the afternoon. He knocked down two drinks at a bar and walked to the library of that city. He went up the steps and, with some trepidation, entered doors that had been

closed to him for ten years. Inside, he wandered for awhile in the old brownish silence, working his way towards call numbers he had not forgotten. He found the book he wanted, plucked it slowly from the shelf. He sat down at a long polished table beside the window and thumbed with his old expertise to the index of titles and first lines. He made his way to the fateful page.

Easter Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store
 Though foolishly he lost the same
 Decaying more and more
 'Til he became
 Most poor:
 With Thee
 O let me rise
 As larks, harmoniously,
 And sing this day Thy victories:
 Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:
 And still with sicknesses and shame
 Thou didst so punish sin
 That I became
 Most thin.
 With Thee
 Let me combine
 And feel this day Thy victory
 For, if I imp my wing on Thine,
 Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

Bending low over the wings, he wept softly. As his tears fell down on the page, the implications of the *muscae* began opening up to him like flowers, one by one, there seemed to be no end to them, their paradoxes, their analogies, their properties as controlling image. They formed the most elaborate, the most important conceit he would ever come across, the conceit of a lifetime: his.