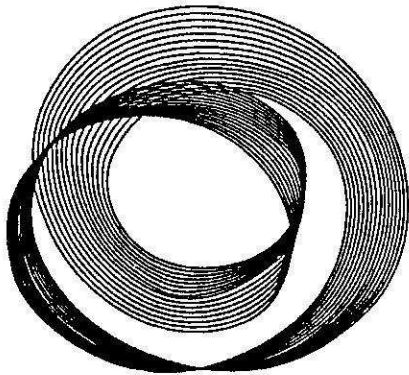


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COMPARISON OF THE
TWO LANGUAGES

ΠΡΑΚΤΙΚΑ 7ου ΔΙΕΘΝΟΥΣ ΣΥΜΠΟΣΙΟΥ
ΑΓΓΛΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΑΣ
ΠΕΡΙΓΡΑΦΗ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΓΚΡΙΣΗ
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FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY
ARISTOTLE UNIVERSITY
OF THESSALONIKI

ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΚΗ ΣΧΟΛΗ
ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
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WHY QUESTIONS?
THE INTERROGATIVE MODE IN ANNE BRADSTREET'S
"THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT"

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Why Questions?
The Interrogative Mode in Anne Bradstreet's
"The Flesh and the Spirit"

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Our starting point in an earlier paper (forthcoming in *Language and Style*) on the same poem, Ann Bradstreet's "The Flesh and the Spirit" (see appendix), was a well identified and documented tension in Bradstreet's poetry. "Several critics have called attention to the 'clash of feeling and dogma' in her poetry, to the struggle between 'how she really feels instead of how she *should* feel,'" writes Rosenfeld (1983: 128). "This struggle adds character and strength to her poetry," he goes on "and one should not attempt to dismiss it, as is sometimes done, by seeing it as merely an incidental flaw in an otherwise clearly defined position of either staunch Puritanism or rebellious Romanticism. The poetry itself does not fully resolve these tensions in either direction, after all, but instead gains much of its vitality and interest from the existence of what Blake called the warring contraries" (128). It was these warring contraries, therefore, that were explored in the previous paper with a view to determining whether the literary critic's claim had any linguistic grounds.

However, "The Flesh and the Spirit," like most puritan discourse, is cast in the question-answer structure of the catechism that Puritans adopted and it is this structure that informs this poem. "'The Flesh and the Spirit' ...cast in the traditional debate form," writes Richardson Jr. (1983: 104), "is more than a routine exercise. Flesh, who speaks first, is not gross, detestable, sensual or mindless. Flesh begins with a series of carefully phrased questions which strikes at the heart of the matter."

It is this statement that constitutes our point of departure this time. In what follows we will try to explore why, indeed, despite the aggressive character of her questions, Flesh manages to maintain a balance so that she—and consequently the advocated *modus vivendi* symbolized by her—is neither gross or detestable, nor sensual or mindless. We also wish to explore why it is that the Puritan catechism is to a very great extent reversed in the poem, since Flesh's speech is felt to be strongly catechistic. Once more I want to repeat (Carol is a literary scholar) that we, linguists, do not want to encroach upon the literary critic's territory, and this is obvious, since in this analysis, too, we depart from the literary critic's premises.

In the previous paper we already said that rhetorical questions—rhetorical, not so much in the sense of not needing an answer, as in the sense of knowing the answers—fail on more than one of Searle's conditions for performing speech acts of questioning. We would now also claim that rhetorical questions do not observe the Cooperative Principle (CP) on the surface level. One of the maxims of the CP, Quality, enjoins sincerity: Do not say that for which you lack evidence, and, following from it, one can presume that one is not to ask for information which one already possesses.

Therefore, as Brown and Levinson (1987) rightly note, rhetorical questions may be implicated in doing Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Face threatening acts implicate both positive and negative face. Brown and Levinson (1987), deriving their notion of 'face' from Goffman (1967), define it as "something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (61). Interactants in a conversational enterprise pay tribute to face, in that it is a significant determinant of how they construct their speech acts. Brown and Levinson also identify 'negative face' as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his[sic] actions be unimpeded by others" and 'positive face' as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" (62).

Flesh is that part of the self that conducts the questioning. The very fact that Flesh conducts the questioning process testifies to the humanness of its existence. Because posing questions is a human characteristic, for animals and Gods do not have questions. (Ricoeur, 1974, Struyker-Boudier, 1988).

"Questions are speech acts which place two people in direct,

immediate interaction," Goody (1978: 39) states; and "in so doing, they carry messages about relationships," in particular, "about relative status, assertions of status and challenges to status". It may seem that a dialogue between two parts of self would take place on such an equal plane that assertions or challenges to status would not be involved. However, the talk exchange in Anne Bradstreet's poem between an allegorical Flesh and her twin sister, Spirit, shows the divided self struggling to be free from lower desires in order to reach higher ideals; and, therefore, is very much about "relative status": each sister striving to achieve ascendancy results in a continual conflict. When Spirit takes her turn, she recalls to Flesh "How oft thy slave, hast thou me made, / When I believed what thou has said," (52-53) so that we can assume prior discussions and debates. Spirit, however, more often thinks in future terms, as when she vows to "combat with thee will and must, / Until I see thee laid in th' dust," (42-43) and asserts in the future tense, "My greatest honour it shall be / When I am victor over thee" (62-63). So while the eavesdropping persona introduces the discourse as "two sisters reason[ing] on / Things that are past and things to come," (4-5) Flesh's first turn uses present tense verbs. She is not concerned with the past, nor does she want Spirit to be concerned about a shadowy future, but rather challenges her to examine the elevated position she takes, see its insubstantial base, and come down to earth and its pleasures.

When Spirit recounts past temptations and vows to resist until victory is achieved, it is obvious that Flesh's intention to seduce is recognized by her sister, of key importance in a communicative act. Temptation represents Flesh's primary goal, and it would seem that the speaker would naturally use the more direct forms of asserting declarative sentences or commanding imperative ones. Toward the conclusion of her speech act, Flesh does employ imperatives to phrase responses to her own questions. However, the secondary illocutionary act, in Searle's (1975) terms, is to request or to verify information, and it is the interrogative form that dominates her discourse. "Questions are not assertions," Hiz (1978) states, and also adds that a question "cannot describe a state of affairs. Neither does it express thought, because it is an expression of suspended thought, or lack of judgment" (ix). Since even Spirit has no doubt as to what Flesh's thoughts and judgments are, the question then becomes: Are Flesh's interrogatives questions?

Lang (1978) briefly addressed the questionable use of interrogatives

by a speaker who asks for information she may already know. If the intention behind the interrogative is, for instance, to embarrass or tease, Lang points out that "syntactically it may appear to be a question, semantically it certainly is not." He also says that while we may question why someone is asking something, if she does not want to know, the real question is: "Why don't you say what you want to say in the right mode, why employ the interrogative mode when you should be employing something else?" (315). It must be assumed that the form Flesh uses functions most efficiently to reach her goal of temptation. Flesh poses ten "questions" to Spirit, some of which ask more than one thing at a time. Her first eleven lines of utterances are composed of a breathless run of six questions, simply reduced to: Do you live on only meditation? Or contemplation? Or mere speculation? Is dreaming and hoping enough? Are possible future treasures better than what the world has now? And a final question, "Art fancy sick, or turned a sot / To catch at shadows which are not?" (19-20), which is basically a summary, although syntactically an interrogative, reflecting on the five previous questions.

Flesh's first question, "what liv'st thou on, / Nothing but meditation?" (10-11), is really two questions. "What liv'st thou on" is in the interrogative form, and according to Searle's (1975) preparatory rules for a "real" question, the speaker should not know the answer. Moving the question mark to the position following "on," and putting a full stop after "meditation," would make a question/answer pairing. However, in its stated form the second line is elliptical: Is it "nothing but meditation?". Flesh, then, is supplying an answer, but in the form of another interrogative which asks for confirmation. In either case, the "question" would be considered "defective" by Searle. This same propositional content could be stated in a declarative sentence: "You are trying to live on nothing but meditation"; or as an imperative with the addition of a negative: "Don't try to live on nothing but meditation." Flesh, however, neither overtly asserts nor commands.

In couching her proposition in the interrogative, Flesh shows preference for a more indirect form which leaves the challenging proposition in suspension. In general, politeness is one of the main motivations for using an indirect illocution; so Flesh seems to wish to follow principles of politeness in her speech act. Also, Flesh's first word, "Sister," sets a polite, personal tone to her discourse, anointing Spirit's

face. With the familiar form of address, the literal content of this first question could even be interpreted as expressing concern for Spirit's physical, as well as emotional state.

On the other hand, among Bolinger's (1978) twelve varieties of yes/no questions (88-90) are some examples which raise less than polite possibilities for the intention behind Flesh's questions. One example is a type of question "that quer[ies] inferences that the speaker draws from something he has heard or observed. . . . [and] wants his supposition either confirmed or replaced." The yes/no choices preclude the politeness principle maxim of providing for options. Then, too, requests of this nature for very personal information threaten both negative and positive face. The first turn utterance of Spirit commands Flesh, "Be still thou unregenerate part," and continues with obvious reference to maintaining negative face, "Disturb no more my settled heart" (38-39). Spirit is highly aware of the threat that Flesh's probing questions represent to her desire to live unstained, without the corrupting influence of her twin. Embodied in the first question is also a threat to Spirit's positive face, especially when viewed against the pattern of another of Bolinger's varieties.

"Questions that embody surprise at a self-evident fact. . . . often involv[ing] the pronoun 'you': [e.g.] 'Are you still around?' is another variety (Bolinger, 1978) having analogous elements to Flesh's first question, which seems to involve confirmation of Spirit's obvious state of existence. While expressing concern toward Spirit is possible, elements of criticism and of challenge to Spirit's faith are also implicated, which would threaten Spirit's good image and positive face. However, the threat is somewhat softened by what Leech (1983) refers to as the "irony principle,"

If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't overtly conflict with the PP [Principle of Politeness], but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature" (82).

Here semantic possibilities of showing concern mitigate the more probable sarcastic intention. And although the yes/no question reduces options that politeness should offer, especially if the proposition is self-evident, still the interrogative form does leave the subtlety that Hiz

described as "suspended thought" and "lack of judgment." More to the point in this discourse, the use of the interrogative mode could be said to exhibit suspended judgment on the part of Flesh. Asserting the propositional content would certainly be more judgmental, accusatory, and more face threatening.

By casting a judgement, such as "You live on Nothing but Meditation" into the interrogative mode, "What livst thou on/ Nothing but Meditation?", Flesh avoids performing a direct Face Threatening Act. What is significant to notice in this utterance is the use of the personal pronoun 'thou' which personalizes the Spirit in Flesh's utterance, thus impinging it (Spirit) on her (Flesh) (in this connection see Kitis, forthcoming). This type of speech act would be directly face threatening and would also seriously damage Spirit's negative face. To minimize these consequences, since her utterance includes referential pronouns, Flesh has to couch it in the interrogative mode if she does not wish to sound abnoxious.

Flesh's third question, "Can speculation satisfy / Notion without reality?" (14-15) again has face threatening elements, as well as reference to what seems to be self-evident fact. However, ellipsis has minimized the threat to Spirit. "Thou" is absent, so that, as phrased, the question is not a personal, but rather an abstract query. This feature impersonalizes the spirit, dissociates Flesh's act from impinging the infringement on Spirit, and thus Flesh respects Spirit's negative face. Flesh seems to want Spirit to ponder her questions on alternating planes of the general and the particular, keeping her somewhat off-balance.

The two-part fourth question balances the elliptical with the explicitly personal: "Dost dream of things beyond the moon, / And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?" (16-17). Here, however, the additive conjunction provides a cohesive link which allows the ellipsis to be more obviously filled in so that both questions within the interrogative are more personal, and hence face threatening, than the previous isolated elliptical question.

Another two-part question on a similar pattern follows: "Hast treasures there laid up in store / That all in th' world thou count'st but poor?" (18-19). As the questions pile up without intervening affirmation by Spirit, it is obvious that Flesh does know that the answers from the first question on would be in the affirmative, or there would be no logic to continue probing in this vein. Searle's preparatory rule of not knowing

the answer to "real" questions is obviously not being met. His remaining category of "exam" questions does allow for Flesh to know the answers, if Spirit's knowledge is being tested. There are obvious restrictions in using only two categories. However, forced from the "real" to consider the "exam" area can suggest intention from a metaphoric angle: Flesh "examining" Spirit about her own self-knowledge. Facing, examining, and then questioning her values are the stages through which Flesh seems to want to lead Spirit. Hudson's (1975) three reasons for phrasing a proposition in the interrogative form include this final stage.

First, Hudson suggests that the interrogative may be employed "because [s]he doesn't know whether the proposition is true and it is important for [her] to know." This, of course, is similar to Searle's "real" questions. Another category is similar to Bolinger's self-evident fact: "[s]he knows that the proposition is true, and knows that the hearer knows it too, but wants to show the hearer that [s]he knows." Flesh does know that the proposition contained in the question about Spirit's faith is true; and, of course, Flesh is not really questioning whether Spirit does have faith, but rather if such a faith is a practical thing to have. Hudson's third type reaches the ultimate force of Flesh's intention: the speaker "thinks the hearer hasn't considered the possibility of the proposition being false and it is important for the hearer to do so" (16-17). The initial questions all assume a positive response from Spirit, yet it is also obvious that the preferred response, which Flesh is challenging Spirit to reach, is a negative one. And, indeed, Flesh's final question in this sequence turns away from a precluded affirmation to a type of question that resists a simple yes/no answer.

Flesh asks: "Art fancy sick, or tuned a sot / To catch at shadows which are not?" (20-21). While the inclination is to give a negative response and thus break the expected pattern of affirmatives, Spirit cannot simply answer that it is not because she is a fool that she can believe in the insubstantial. She needs, more urgently, to deny the very critical proposition involved in the second clause: that what she believes in is as lacking in substance as a shadow. While this question, too, lacks a direct attack on Spirit by not using "thou," it is the most threatening act towards Spirit's positive face.

Another example from Bolinger relates particularly to this question from Flesh. Asking, for instance, "Are you crazy?" he says, embodies "an assumption of the absurd" (89-90). Criticism of Spirit has been

inherent in the earlier questions, but now it takes the form of insult and ridicule, which is the antithesis of appreciation and approval that positive face desires. Yet Spirit is not directly called a "sot," and, in any event, the interrogative form suspends any final judgment of Spirit because the charge is not made in a declarative form.

It is quite significant to notice that all of Flesh's propositional questions are answered in the affirmative, supporting Spirit's position. However, this affirmed declaration is completely reversed and subverted, propagating Flesh's position, not only in the last of her series of questions, "Art fancy sick, or turned a sot/ to catch at shadows which are not?", which characterizes Spirit's ideals as shadowy or a sot, but primarily by collocating terms from the abstract sphere with terms from the concrete one which signify the humanness of our everyday, down-to-earth life. More specifically, concrete terms are predicated of abstract ones as in:

Doth Contemplation feed thee so...? 11
 Can speculation satisfy
 Notion without Reality?

or as in expressions such as "dream of things beyond the moon" "dwell there [beyond the moon]", "treasures beyond the moon", or "catch at shadows". This technique manages to reverse the positively answered propositional questions of Flesh in her favour.

Threats to both positive and negative face follow the question at line 19 when Flesh leaves the interrogative form for the more confrontational imperative: "Come, come, I'll show unto thy sense, / Industry hath its recompense" (22-23). Easily fitting into a class of expressions which Edmondson (1981) calls "the cajoler," (155) Flesh's "come, come" can also be seen near the "modest" end of Searle's grouping of directives, which range from "modest to fierce attempts to get h[earer] to do something" (13). Nevertheless, using both "I" and "thy," Flesh threatens Spirit's negative face directly with the imperative order which infringes on her right to be left alone, while Flesh also expresses her intention to show Spirit that she is misguided, threatening positive face. This direct attack on Spirit in the imperative mode shows by contrast the less threatening mode the indirect interrogative presents. However, the force of the direct illocutionary act of commanding is mitigated, as Leech

(1983) would say, by the very fact that the act Spirit is commanded to perform is judged by Flesh to be beneficial to Spirit.

After the imperative, Flesh changes the direction of her speech act with a final set of four questions. While the previous set dealt with the manifestation of Spirit's present faith, now Flesh proposes a new direction for Spirit to seek satisfaction--in the things of this world. Although marked by interrogative punctuation, "What canst desire, but thou may'st see / True substance in variety?" is more declarative in nature: "What[ever]" she desires Flesh will show her in the more tangible things of the earth. Of course, this intention to have Spirit "see" the world the way Flesh is advising her to see it threatens Spirit's negative face. However, such aggressiveness is balanced by simultaneously anointing Spirit's face, i.e. by the simultaneous adherence to the Tact Maxim of the Politeness Principle: minimizing cost, while maximizing benefits (Leech, 132). Flesh proceeds to address particular benefits to Spirit that she may have in this world, with no hint of cost. It is important to note the contrast with the prototype temptation of Christ by Satan, who, in showing Him the things of the world, said, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matthew 4:9). Not only is there a dramatic difference in the application of the Tact Maxim in the two temptations, but Satan challenges and orders, while now Spirit more subtly sets up hypothetical situations, using the interrogative mode.

The first tempting hypothesis, "Dost honour like?" (26), is somewhat distanced by the omission of a personal pronoun. However, in Bolinger's taxonomy, this question and the two that follow could be categorized as "embody[ing] an invitation" (88). Like Bolinger's example of offering fruit to a friend, Flesh offers worldly honour to Spirit. The cajoling tone of a question is more tempting than a direct assertion of Flesh's ability to give this desirable attribute to Spirit. The following imperative, "Acquire the same," can be considered to be face threatening because of the mode. Yet, as mentioned, the intention in the pairings of the question/response is to show Spirit the benefits she may easily acquire.

"For riches doth thou long full sore?" (30) adds a second offering available in this world, now explicitly directed to Spirit. In this question, particularly, are reminders of the first set of questions. Initially, Flesh questioned Spirit about her present actions, and repeating the pattern by using the same mode of interrogatives links form and function. Flesh

seeks to replace Spirit's behavior with a new model and cleverly and smoothly works toward that end by retaining the less assertive questions. Then, too, there are semantic connections. In the first set of questions Flesh asked Spirit whether she did "dream of things beyond the moon" and did "hope to dwell there soon." Now "dream" and "hope" for heavenly things is replaced in this question by wondering if Spirit may "long" for sublunar riches. The imperative that completes the pair lists the particulars--silver, pearls, and gold--which can more substantially replace the shadowy, speculated "treasures."

"Affect's thou pleasure?" (35) is the last invitational interrogative, effectively covering all worldly offerings. Here the subsequent imperative, "Take thy fill, / Earth hath enough of what you will," (34-35) not only maximizes the benefit to Spirit, but even succeeds in minimizing the cost to Earth, a psychologically wise move toward a sensitive hearer. In this last set of questions, which seductively dangles temptations before Spirit, there are more pronounced elements of the rhetorical question because the situation is now more hypothetical. Flesh, then, uses the questions to point to affirmation and to provide a platform for her subsequent imperatives, which enticingly describe worldly "things." The inherent declarative framework is "if you want . . . then take . . ." but the interrogative form is more engaging, as it invites interaction and an explicit response from Spirit.

Flesh wants not only to engage, but to entangle Spirit through a hypnotically repeated mode. Flesh's questions seem initially only to ask for information or confirmation, or even show concern. Spirit, in fact, is aware of face anointing acts when she says to Flesh, "Thou speak'st me fair" (50). Yet questions also imply ridicule for present behavior, causing Spirit to counter that Flesh "need'st not scoff" (66). Spirit knows that face is threatened, but also anointed, making the force of Flesh's speech act slippery. Finally, questions provide a platform for Flesh to show advantages for a change in Spirit, which she acknowledges as tempting "charms" that she knows would lead to "deadly harms" (56-7). Shifts in force and focus make Flesh's speech act far from a direct confrontation, and the softened edges to every face-threatening act show that it is not Spirit's "face" that is so much in danger. And her attempts to get Spirit to do something only appear to be "modest."

Flesh attacks more successfully from within, and the attempt here is "fierce." Probing interrogatives unite form and function. They function to question Spirit about her beliefs through an iterated form of

inverting propositional content. Continually hearing such a pattern, the ultimate effect can move Spirit to invert normally declarative propositions. Then, "I do believe in God" becomes "Do I believe in God?"

Appendix

The Flesh and the Spirit

In secret place where once I stood	
Close by the Banks of <i>Lacrim</i> flood	
I heard two sisters reason on	
Things that are past, and things to come;	
One flesh was call'd, who had her eye	5
On worldly wealth and vanity;	
The other spirit, who did rear	
Her thoughts unto a higher sphere:	
Sister, quoth Flesh, what liv'st thou on	
Nothing but Meditation?	10
Doth Contemplation feed thee so	
Regardlessly to let earth goe?	
Can speculation satisfy	
Notion without Reality?	
Dost dream of things beyond the Moon	15
And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?	
Hast treasures there laid up in store	
That all in th' world thou count'st but poor?	
Art fancy sick, or turn'd a Sot	
To catch at shadowes which are not?	20
Come, come, Ile shew unto thy sence,	
Industry hath its recompence,	
What canst desire, but thou maist see	
True substance in variety?	
Dost honour like? acquire the same,	25
As some to their immortal fame:	

And trophies to thy name erect
 Which wearing time shall ne're deject.
 For riches dost thou long full sore?
 Behold enough of precious store. 30
 Earth hath more silver, pearls and gold,
 Than eyes can see, or hands can hold.
 Affect's thou pleasure? take thy fill,
 Earth hath enough of what you will.
 Then let not goe, what thou maist find, 35
 For things unknown, only in mind.
Spir. Be still thou unregenerate part,
 Disturb no more my settled heart,
 For I have vow'd, (and so will doe)
 Thee as a foe, still to pursue. 40
 And combate with thee will and must,
 Untill I see thee laid in th' dust.
 Sisters we are, ye twins we be,
 Yet deadly feud 'twixt thee and me;
 For from one father are we not, 45
 Thou by old Adam wast begot.
 But my arise is from aabove,
 Whence my dear father I do love.
 Thou speak'st me fair, but hat'st me sore,
 Thy flatt'ring shews Ile trust no more. 50
 How oft thy slave, hast thou me made,
 when I believ'd, what thou hast said,
 And never had more cause of woe
 Than when I did what thou bad'st doe. 55
 Ile stop mine ears at these thy charms,
 And count them for my deadly harms.
 Thy sinfull pleasures I doe hate,
 Thy riches are to me no bait,
 Thine honours doe, nor will I love;
 For my ambition lyes above. 60
 My greatest honour it shall be
 When I am victor over thee,
 And triumph shall, with laurel head,
 When thou my Captive shalt be led,

How I do live, thou need'st not scoff,
 For I have meat thou know'st not off; 65
 The hidden Manna I doe eat,
 The word of life it is my meat.
 My thoughts do yield me more content
 Than can thy hours in pleasure spent. 70
 Nor are they shadows which I catch,
 Nor fancies vain at which I snatch,
 But reach at things that are so high,
 Beyond thy dull capacity;
 Eternal substance I do see, 75
 With which inriched I would be:
 Mine Eye doth pierce the heavens, and see
 What is Invisible to thee.
 My garments are not silk nor gold,
 Nor such like trash which Earth doth hold, 80
 But Royal Robes I shall have on,
 More glorious than the glistring Sun;
 My Crown not Diamonds, Pearls, and gold,
 But such as Angels heads infold.
 The City where I hope to dwell, 85
 There's none on Earth can paralel;
 The stately Walls both high and strong,
 are made of pretious *Jasper* stone;
 The Gates of Pearl, both rich and clear,
 And Angels are for Porters there; 90
 The Streets thereof transparent gold,
 Such as no Eye did e're behold,
 A Chrystal River there doth run,
 Which shall remain for ever pure,
 Nor Sun, nor Moon, they have no need, 95
 For glory doth from God proceed:
 No Candle there, nor yet Torch light,
 For there shall be no darksome night. 100
 From sickness and infirmity,
 For evermore they shall be free,
 For withering age shall e're come there,
 But beauty shall be bright and clear;

This City pure is not for thee,
For things unclean there shall not be:
If I of Heaven may have my fill,
Take thou the world, and all that will.
(from Hutchinson, 1969)

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