

And they be these: the wood, the weed, the wag.<sup>1</sup>  
 The wood is that which makes the gallow tree;  
 The weed is that which strings the hangman's bag;  
 The wag, my pretty knave, betokeneth thee.  
 Mark well, dear boy, whilst these assemble not,  
 Green springs the tree, hemp grows, the wag is wild,  
 But when they meet, it makes the timber rot,  
 It frets the halter, and it chokes the child.  
 Then bless thee, and beware, and let us pray  
 We part not with thee at this meeting day.  
 —c. 1600

*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd*<sup>2</sup>

If all the world and love were young,  
 And truth in every shepherd's tongue,  
 These pretty pleasures might me move  
 To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold  
 When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,  
 And Philomel<sup>3</sup> becometh dumb;  
 The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton<sup>o</sup> fields *unrestrained, unruly*  
 To wayward winter reckoning yields;  
 A honey tongue, a heart of gall,<sup>o</sup> *bitterness, rancor*  
 Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of roses,  
 Thy cap, thy kirtle,<sup>o</sup> and thy posies *tunic or skirt*  
 Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten—  
 In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,  
 Thy coral clasps and amber studs,  
 All these in me no means can move  
 To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,  
 Had joys no date nor age no need,<sup>4</sup>  
 Then these delights my mind might move  
 To live with thee and be thy love.  
 —1600

*The Lie*

Go, soul, the body's guest,  
 Upon a thankless errand;  
 Fear not to touch the best;  
 The truth shall be thy warrant.  
 5 Go, since I needs must die,  
 And give the world the lie.

Say to the court, it glows  
 And shines like rotten wood;  
 Say to the church, it shows  
 10 What's good, and doth no good.  
 If church and court reply,  
 Then give them both the lie.

Tell potentates<sup>o</sup> they live *powerful rulers*  
 Acting by others' action;  
 15 Not loved unless they give,  
 Not strong but by a faction.  
 If potentates reply,  
 Give potentates the lie.

Tell men of high condition,  
 20 That manage the estate,<sup>o</sup> *the state or body politic*  
 Their purpose is ambition,  
 Their practice only hate.  
 And if they once reply,  
 Then give them all the lie.

25 Tell them that brave it most,<sup>5</sup>  
 They beg for more by spending,  
 Who, in their greatest cost,  
 Seek nothing but commending.  
 And if they make reply,  
 30 Then give them all the lie.

<sup>4</sup> *Had joys ... no need* If joys had no ending, and aging did not bring with it its own needs.

<sup>5</sup> *brave it most* Dress extravagantly.

<sup>1</sup> *wag* Joker, mischievous boy.

<sup>2</sup> *The Nymph's ... Shepherd* Response to Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to His Love."

<sup>3</sup> *Philomel* I.e., the nightingale doesn't sing. In classical mythology, Philomela, the daughter of the King of Athens, was transformed into a nightingale after being pursued and raped by her brother-in-law, Tereus, King of Thrace.