

# Epitaph

By Katherine Philips

*On her Son H.P. at St. Syth's Church where her body also lies interred*

What on Earth deserves our trust?  
Youth and Beauty both are dust.  
Long we gathering are with pain,  
What one moment calls again.  
Seven years childless marriage past,  
A Son, a son is born at last:  
So exactly lim'd and fair,  
Full of good Spirits, Meen, and Air,  
As a long life promised,  
Yet, in less than six weeks dead.  
Too promising, too great a mind  
In so small room to be confined:  
Therefore, as fit in Heaven to dwell,  
He quickly broke the Prison shell.  
So the subtle Alchemist,  
Can't with Hermes Seal resist  
The powerful spirit's subtler flight,  
But t'will bid him long good night.  
And so the Sun if it arise  
Half so glorious as his Eyes,  
Like this Infant, takes a shroud,  
Buried in a morning Cloud.

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.



One of the first women to acquire fame as a writer in England, Katherine Philips addressed poems of love and companionship to the women in her circle, called "Society of Friendship." She was known as "The Matchless Orinda" for the pseudonym she adopted within the group and as "the English Sappho" for her similarities to the ancient Greek poetess of Lesbos.

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