

# To –

**By Sarah Helen Whitman**

Vainly my heart had with thy sorceries striven:  
It had no refuge from thy love,—no Heaven  
But in thy fatal presence;—from afar  
It owned thy power and trembled like a star  
O'erfraught with light and splendor. Could I deem  
How dark a shadow should obscure its beam?—  
Could I believe that pain could ever dwell  
Where thy bright presence cast its blissful spell?  
Thou wert my proud palladium;—could I fear  
The avenging Destinies when thou wert near?—  
Thou wert my Destiny;—thy song, thy fame,  
The wild enchantments clustering round thy name,  
Were my soul's heritage, its royal dower;  
Its glory and its kingdom and its power!

n/a

Source: American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century (1993)



During her life, Sarah Helen Whitman made a career for herself as both a critic and poet, publishing in top periodicals. Her upbringing featured a typical Quaker education as well as instruction in ladies' etiquette, which exposed her to German, French, and Italian literature. Through her husband, the writer John W. Whitman, she was introduced into elite literary and intellectual society. She wrote articles defending transcendentalists and about spiritualism, a subject that she pursued extensively. She published her poetry mostly in ladies' journals, poems such as "To—," in which she evokes images related to her own spiritual life.