2ed Stage

Sixth Lecture

**Easter Wings**

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,

      Though foolishly he lost the same,

            Decaying more and more,

                  Till he became

                        Most poore:

                        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 beginne

      And still with sicknesses and shame.

            Thou didst so punish sinne,

                  That I became

                        Most thinne.

                        With thee

                  Let me combine,

            And feel thy victorie:

         For, if I imp my wing on thine,

Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

**Summary Of The Poem**

1. This poem is a **back and forth between despair and hope.**

2. In the first half of each stanzas, Herbert describes the despairs and in the second

half of each he finds the hope.

3. **The first two lines of the poem are referring to Adam**, as the first man and the

first loser, because of Adam Herbert also has it bad. as you can see in the second

stanza he uses words like sad, shame, sickness and sin to show that they wore him

down into nothing.

4. When you think there is no way out of this endless darkness, Herbert asks to rise

up with the Easter and resurrected Christ.

**Line 1**

***Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,***

• Addressing God directly, Herbert begins at, well, the beginning. See, way back in Garden of

Eden times, God created humans and gave them a pretty sweet life. Since God probably didn't

forget this, the speaker isn't so much reminding him of the good ole days as just thinking aloud.

• "Wealth" here doesn't literally mean dollars in the bank. Along with "store," it refers more generally

to abundance. Adam had all he needed: food, wildlife, a wife.

**Lines 2-5**

***Though foolishly he lost the same,***

***Decaying more and more,***

***Till he became***

***Most poor***

• "Foolishly" Adam lost all his good stuff.

• This is Bad News for the first man. In lines 3-5 Herbert paints a grim picture of how everything went

bad.

"Decaying" means to be slowly destroyed.

as Adam gets poorer and poorer, the lines get smaller and smaller until "most poor" (5)

**Lines 6-8**

***With thee***

***O let me rise***

***As larks, harmoniously,***

• The speaker's still having the heart-to-heart with God at line 6, but now the speaker himself enters

the poem and we start getting me's instead of he's.

• We also get a new tense. Adam and his long-ago problems were narrated in past tense, but now

we get a present-tense speaker speaking passionately and hopefully about the future. Adam may

have ended up in a rough place, but our speaker, for one, is determined to ask for something better.

This is also where Easter enters the poem for the first time. Notice that the speaker wants to rise "with

thee," the "thee" here being "God."

**Lines 9-10**

***And sing this day thy victories:***

***Then shall the fall further the flight in me.***

• The speaker has just asked God to let him rise harmoniously like a lark and now he formalizes his

request for a bit of music.

• He wants to be allowed to sing his worship, in particular, the "victories" of God

**Line 11**

***My tender age in sorrow did begin:***

• And we're back to Adam. The speaker was born into "sorrow" because he and all other humans inherit Adam's

sin, according to the teachings of Christianity that Herbert adhered to. "Tender age" here just means "youth."

• Sounds like a pretty raw deal, right? You've done nothing, but as soon as you're born you're slapped with some

ancient dead guy's mistakes. No wonder the speaker wants to rise out of the sadness and pain and sin that

Adam left us.

**Lines 12-15**

***And still with sicknesses and shame***

***Thou didst so punish sin,***

***That I became***

***Most thin.***

• Just like in the first stanza, Herbert follows the downward spiral of human life—only this time, he's describing his

own life, not Adam's.

• Bad to begin with, life keeps getting worse as God punishes both the speaker's own sins and the sin he

inherited from Adam.

• As he describes in the poem, accumulated sickness and shame eventually whittle away at the speaker

physically and spiritually until at line 15 he becomes "most thin."

• Once again the poem's form reflects the content: the lines get littler as Herbert becomes thinner, with lines 15

and 16 petering out into 2 syllables each.

• Check out the sibilant bonanza of S's in lines 12-13: "still," "sicknesses" (that's 4 S's in one word), "shame,"

"didst," "so," "punish," "sin."

• Tricky Herbert's at it again. Just like its line 5 twin, line 15 smacks us upside the head with some poetic irony.

We've got "most" but then we get "thin," underlining the all-round bummer nature of the situation.

**Lines 16-18**

***With thee***

***Let me combine,***

***And feel this day thy victory:***

• Line 16, an exact repeat of line 6, again marks the turn around the happy corner. The speaker may be sinful, ashamed,

and thin, but now things are looking up. The fact that these cheery words are "with thee" emphasizes how central God is

to these improvements.

• The switch from past tense to the hypothetical future in line 17 ("let me") marks the speaker's transformation from

passive victim of the past to awesome flying bird-man of the future.

**Lines 19-20**

***For, if I imp my wing on thine,***

***Affliction shall advance the flight in me.***

• The speaker explains his meaning more clearly in line 19, turning again to his feathered friends. This time, however, he

uses hawks instead of larks and, instead of just rising with God, he asks for an extra boost: he wants to "imp" his wing to

God's.

• What the heck is "to imp"? If you keep pet hawks (we don't either, since it's no longer the 17th century), you might know

that it's a technical term meaning to repair a damaged feather by attaching part of a new feather. This implies (eh? eh?)

that the speaker is too damaged by sin, too thin and sick, to fly properly on his own. He needs some of God's feathers to

strengthen him.

• In line 20 he reaches a similar conclusion to line 10. Just as Adam's fall increased the distance of his flight in stanza 1,

now his own affliction (his sin and God's punishment) lengthens his flight. "Advance" here means "increase."