

# To a New-born Child

By Michael Fairfax

ON that intolerable planet  
Whose nature and whose name is Hell,  
There slants a path of polished granite  
Straight to a scaffold from a cell.

With lids cut off and fettered hands  
Each shoots the inexorable slope  
To where the hooded hangman stands  
His fingers ready on the rope.

Didst thou not know by what black art  
Malice fees Love for his attorney,  
Whose sly words wheedle souls to start  
That unintelligible journey?

Whence wast thou? Was that place unknown  
Airless and abject, an abyss  
Of agony, as this our own  
Perdition of paralysis?

No more! Truth's withered in her well;  
The dry pump Reason mocks our thirst.  
All that we know is horror of hell,  
And are we sure we know the worst?

With leaping lungs you got your grip  
On air—"I will to live" your cry.  
The white bark of the phrase may strip  
To the black pith "I will to die."

On this intolerable planet,  
Earth's evil that exceedeth hell,  
There slants a path of polished granite  
Straight to a scaffold from a cell.

With eyelids clipt and fettered hands,  
Thou also slidest on the slope  
To where the hooded hangman stands,  
His fingers ready on the rope.