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### **The Galaxy**

Torrent of light and river of the air,  
Along whose bed the glimmering stars are seen  
Like gold and silver sands in some ravine  
Where mountain streams have left their channels bare!

The Spaniard sees in thee the pathway, where  
His patron saint descended in the sheen  
Of his celestial armor, on serene  
And quiet nights, when all the heavens were fair.  
Not this I see, nor yet the ancient fable  
Of Phaeton's wild course, that scorched the skies  
Where'er the hoofs of his hot coursers trod;  
But the white drift of worlds o'er chasms of sable,  
The star-dust that is whirled aloft and flies  
From the invisible chariot-wheels of God.

**A Longfellow poem about our own galaxy, over a picture of galaxy Messier 51.**  
Image courtesy Arp's 1966 *Atlas of Peculiar Galaxies*.