

*A. E. Housman (1859–1936)*

**On the Idle Hill of Summer**

On the idle hill of summer,  
Sleepy with the flow of streams,  
Far I hear the steady drummer  
Drumming like a noise in dreams.

Far and near and low and louder  
On the roads of earth go by,  
Dear to friends and food for powder,  
Soldiers marching, all to die.

East and west on fields forgotten  
Bleach the bones of comrades slain,  
Lovely lads and dead and rotten;  
None that go return again.

Far the calling bugles hollo,  
High the screaming fife replies,  
Gay the files of scarlet follow:  
Woman bore me, I will rise.

*Alexander Pope (1688–1744)*

**from The Rape of the Lock, from Canto 1**

What dire offense from amorous causes springs,  
What mighty contests rise from trivial things,  
I sing—This verse to Caryll, Muse! is due:  
This, even Belinda may vouchsafe to view:  
Slight is the subject, but not so the praise,  
If she inspire, and he approve my lays.

Say what strange motive, Goddess! could compel  
A well-bred lord to assault a gentle belle?  
Oh, say what stranger cause, yet unexplored,  
Could make a gentle belle reject a lord?  
In tasks so bold can little men engage,  
And in soft bosoms dwells such mighty rage?

Sol through white curtains shot a timorous ray,  
And oped those eyes that must eclipse the day.  
Now lapdogs give themselves the rousing shake,  
And sleepless lovers just at twelve awake:  
Thrice rung the bell, the slipper knocked the ground,  
And the pressed watch returned a silver sound.  
Belinda still her downy pillow pressed,  
Her guardian Sylph prolonged the balmy rest:  
'Twas he had summoned to her silent bed  
The morning dream that hovered o'er her head.  
A youth more glittering than a birthnight beau  
(That even in slumber caused her cheek to glow)  
Seemed to her ear his winning lips to lay,  
And thus in whispers said, or seemed to say:

"Fairest of mortals, thou distinguished care  
Of thousand bright inhabitants of air!  
If e'er one vision touched thy infant thought,  
Of all the nurse and all the priest have taught,  
Of airy elves by moonlight shadows seen,  
The silver token, and the circled green,  
Or virgins visited by angel powers,  
With golden crowns and wreaths of heavenly flowers,  
Hear and believe! thy own importance know  
Nor bound thy narrow views to things below.  
Some secret truths, from learned pride concealed,  
To maids alone and children are revealed:  
What though no credit doubting wits may give?  
The fair and innocent shall still believe.  
Know, then, unnumbered spirits round thee fly,  
The light militia of the lower sky:  
These, though unseen, are ever on the wing,  
Hang o'er the box, and hover round the Ring.

Think what an equipage thou hast in air,  
And view with scorn two pages and a chair.  
As now your own, our beings were of old,  
And once enclosed in woman's beauteous mold;  
Thence, by a soft transition, we repair  
From earthly vehicles to these of air.  
Think not, when woman's transient breath is fled,  
That all her vanities at once are dead:  
Succeeding vanities she still regards,  
And though she plays no more, o'erlooks the cards.  
Her joy in gilded chariots, when alive,  
And love of ombre, after death survive.  
For when the Fair in all her pride expire,  
To their first elements their souls retire:  
The sprites of fiery termagants in flame  
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.  
Soft yielding minds to water glide away,  
And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental tea.  
The graver prude sinks downward to a Gnome,  
In search of mischief still on earth to roam.  
The light coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,  
And sport and flutter in the fields of air.

"Know further yet; whoever fair and chaste  
Rejects mankind, is by some Sylph embraced:  
For spirits, freed from mortal laws, with ease  
Assume what sexes and what shapes they please.  
What guards the purity of melting maids,  
In courtly balls, and midnight masquerades,  
Safe from the treacherous friend, the daring spark,  
The glance by day, the whisper in the dark,  
When kind occasion prompts their warm desires,  
When music softens, and when dancing fires?  
'Tis but their Sylph, the wise Celestials know,  
Though Honor is the word with men below.

"Some nymphs there are, too conscious of their face,  
For life predestined to the Gnomes' embrace.  
These swell their prospects and exalt their pride,  
When offers are disdained, and love denied:  
Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,  
While peers, and dukes, and all their sweeping train,  
And garters, stars, and coronets appear,  
And in soft sounds, 'your Grace' salutes their ear.  
'Tis these that early taint the female soul,  
Instruct the eyes of young coquettes to roll,  
Teach infant cheeks a bidden blush to know,  
And little hearts to flutter at a beau.

"Oft, when the world imagine women stray,  
The Sylphs through mystic mazes guide their way,  
Through all the giddy circle they pursue,

And old impertinence expel by new.  
What tender maid but must a victim fall  
To one man's treat, but for another's ball?  
When Florio speaks what virgin could withstand,  
If gentle Damon did not squeeze her hand?  
With varying vanities, from every part,  
They shift the moving toyshop of their heart;  
Where wigs with wigs, with sword-knots sword-knots strive,  
Beaux banish beaux, and coaches coaches drive.  
This erring mortals levity may call;  
Oh, blind to truth! the Sylphs contrive it all.  
"Of these am I, who thy protection claim,  
A watchful sprite, and Ariel is my name.  
Late, as I ranged the crystal wilds of air,  
In the clear mirror of thy ruling star  
I saw, alas! some dread event impend,  
Ere to the main this morning sun descend,  
But Heaven reveals not what, or how, or where:  
Warned by the Sylph, O pious maid, beware!  
This to disclose is all thy guardian can:  
Beware of all, but most beware of Man!"

*Alexander Pope (1688–1744)*

**Ode on Solitude**

I.

How happy he, who free from care  
The rage of courts, and noise of towns;  
Contented breathes his native air,  
In his own grounds.

II.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,  
Whose flocks supply him with attire,  
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,  
In winter fire.

III.

Blest! who can unconcern'dly find  
Hours, days, and years slide swift away,  
In health of body, peace of mind,  
Quiet by day,

IV.

Sound sleep by night; study and ease  
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,  
And innocence, which most does please,  
With meditation.

V.

Thus let me live, unheard, unknown;  
Thus unlamented let me die;  
Steal from the world, and not a stone  
Tell where I lie.

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)*

**from The Lotos-Eaters**

"Courage!" he said, and pointed toward the land,  
"This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon."  
In the afternoon they came unto a land  
In which it seemèd always afternoon.  
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,  
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.  
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon;  
And, like a downward smoke, the slender stream  
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! some, like a downward smoke,  
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go;  
And some through wavering lights and shadows broke,  
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.  
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow  
From the inner land; far off, three mountaintops,  
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,  
Stood sunset-flush'd; and, dew'd with showery drops,  
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmèd sunset linger'd low adown  
In the red West: through mountain clefts the dale  
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down  
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale  
And meadow, set with slender galingale;  
A land where all things always seem'd the same!  
And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,  
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave  
To each, but whoso did receive of them  
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave  
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave  
On alien shores; and if his fellow spake,  
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave;  
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,  
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,  
Between the sun and moon upon the shore;  
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,  
Of child, and wife, and slave; but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam,  
Then some one said, "We will return no more";  
And all at once they sang, "Our island home  
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam."

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)*

**Tears, Idle Tears**

Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,  
Tears from the depth of some divine despair  
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,  
In looking on the happy Autumn-fields,  
And thinking of the days that are no more.

Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,  
That brings our friends up from the underworld,  
Sad as the last which reddens over one  
That sinks with all we love below the verge;  
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

Ah, sad and strange as in dark summer dawns  
The earliest pipe of half-awakened birds  
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes  
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square;  
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

Dear as remembered kisses after death,  
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feigned  
On lips that are for others; deep as love,  
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret;  
O Death in Life, the days that are no more!



## *Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)*

### **The Gallery**

Clora, come view my soul, and tell  
Whether I have contrived it well.  
Now all its several lodgings lie  
Composed into one gallery;  
And the great arras-hangings, made  
Of various faces, by are laid;  
That, for all furniture, you'll find  
Only your picture in my mind.

Here thou art painted in the dress  
Of an inhuman murderess;  
Examining upon our hearts  
Thy fertile shop of cruel arts:  
Engines more keen than ever yet  
Adornèd tyrant's cabinet;  
Of which the most tormenting are  
Black eyes, red lips, and curlèd hair.

But, on the other side, thou'rt drawn  
Like to Aurora in the dawn;  
When in the east she slumb'ring lies,  
And stretches out her milky thighs;  
While all the morning choir does sing,  
And manna falls, and roses spring;  
And, at thy feet, the wooing doves  
Sit perfecting their harmless loves.

Like an enchantress here thou show'st,  
Vexing thy restless lover's ghost;  
And, by a light obscure, dost rave  
Over his entrails, in the cave;  
Divining thence, with horrid care,  
How long thou shalt continue fair;  
And (when informed) them throw'st away,  
To be the greedy vulture's prey.

But, against that, thou sit'st afloat  
Like Venus in her pearly boat.  
The halcyons, calming all that's nigh,  
Betwixt the air and water fly:  
Or, if some rolling wave appears,  
A mass of ambergris it bears:  
Nor blows more wind than what may well  
Convoy the perfume to the smell.

These pictures and a thousand more,  
Of thee, my gallery do store;  
In all the forms thou canst invent  
Either to please me, or torment:  
For thou alone to people me,  
Art grown a num'rous colony;  
And a collection choicer far  
Than or Whitehall's, or Mantua's were.

But, of these pictures and the rest,  
That at the entrance likes me best;  
Where the same posture, and the look  
Remains, with which I first was took:  
A tender shepherdess, whose hair  
Hangs loosely playing in the air,  
Transplanting flowers from the green hill,  
To crown her head, and bosom fill.

*Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)*

**To His Coy Mistress**

Had we but world enough, and time,  
This coyness, lady, were no crime.  
We would sit down, and think which way  
To walk, and pass our long love's day.  
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side  
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide  
Of Humber would complain. I would  
Love you ten years before the Flood,  
And you should, if you please, refuse  
Till the conversion of the Jews.  
My vegetable love should grow  
Vaster than empires and more slow;  
An hundred years should go to praise  
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;  
Two hundred to adore each breast,  
But thirty thousand to the rest;  
An age at least to every part,  
And the last age should show your heart.  
For, lady, you deserve this state,  
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear  
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;  
And yonder all before us lie  
Deserts of vast eternity.  
Thy beauty shall no more be found;  
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound  
My echoing song; then worms shall try  
That long-preserved virginity,  
And your quaint honor turn to dust,  
And into ashes all my lust:  
The grave's a fine and private place,  
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue  
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,  
And while thy willing soul transpires  
At every pore with instant fires,  
Now let us sport us while we may,  
And now, like amorous birds of prey,  
Rather at once our time devour  
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.  
Let us roll all our strength and all  
Our sweetness up into one ball,  
And tear our pleasures with rough strife  
Thorough the iron gates of life:

Thus, though we cannot make our sun  
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

*Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743–1825)*

**The Rights of Woman**

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!  
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest;  
O born to rule in partial Law's despite,  
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!

Go forth arrayed in panoply divine;  
That angel pureness which admits no stain;  
Go, bid proud Man his boasted rule resign,  
And kiss the golden scepter of thy reign.

Go, gird thyself with grace; collect thy store  
Of bright artillery glancing from afar;  
Soft melting tones thy thundering cannon's roar,  
Blushes and fears thy magazine of war.

Thy rights are empire: urge no meaner claim,—  
Felt, not defined, and if debated, lost;  
Like sacred mysteries, which withheld from fame,  
Shunning discussion, are revered the most.

Try all that wit and art suggest to bend  
Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee;  
Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;  
Thou mayst command, but never canst be free.

Awe the licentious, and restrain the rude;  
Soften the sullen, clear the cloudy brow:  
Be, more than princes' gifts, thy favors sued;—  
She hazards all, who will the least allow.

But hope not, courted idol of mankind,  
On this proud eminence secure to stay;  
Subduing and subdued, thou soon shalt find  
Thy coldness soften, and thy pride give way.

Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,  
Conquest or rule thy heart shall feebly move,  
In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,  
That separate rights are lost in mutual love.

*Anne Bradstreet (ca. 1612–1672)*

**The Author to Her Book**

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,  
Who after birth didst by my side remain,  
Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,  
Who thee abroad, exposed to public view,  
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,  
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).  
At thy return my blushing was not small,  
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,  
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,  
Thy visage was so irksome in my sight;  
Yet being mine own, at length affection would  
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could:  
I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,  
And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw.  
I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet,  
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet;  
In better dress to trim thee was my mind,  
But nought save homespun cloth i' th' house I find.  
In this array 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam.  
In critic's hands beware thou dost not come,  
And take thy way where yet thou art not known;  
If for thy father asked, say thou hadst none;  
And for thy mother, she alas is poor,  
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

*Anne Bradstreet (ca. 1612–1672)*

**The Prologue**

1

To sing of wars, of captains, and of kings,  
Of cities founded, commonwealths begun,  
For my mean pen, are too superior things,  
And how they all, or each, their dates have run  
Let poets, and historians set these forth,  
My obscure verse shall not so dim their worth.

2

But when my wond'ring eyes, and envious heart,  
Great Bartas' sugared lines do but read o'er,  
Fool, I do grudge the Muses did not part  
'Twixt him and me that overfluent store;  
A Bartas can do what a Bartas will,  
But simple I, according to my skill.

3

From schoolboy's tongue, no rhetoric we expect,  
Nor yet a sweet consort, from broken strings,  
Nor perfect beauty, where's a main defect;  
My foolish, broken, blemished Muse so sings;  
And this to mend, alas, no art is able,  
'Cause nature made it so irreparable.

4

Nor can I, like that fluent sweet-tongued Greek  
Who lisped at first, speak afterwards more plain.  
By art, he gladly found what he did seek,  
A full requital of his striving pain:  
Art can do much, but this maxim's most sure.  
A weak or wounded brain admits no cure.

5

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,  
Who says my hand a needle better fits;  
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong;  
For such despite they cast on female wits:  
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,  
They'll say it's stolen, or else it was by chance.

6

But sure the antique Greeks were far more mild,  
Else of our sex, why feigned they those nine,  
And poesy made Calliope's own child?  
So 'mongst the rest they placed the arts divine:  
But this weak knot they will full soon untie,  
The Greeks did nought, but play the fool and lie.

7

Let Greeks be Greeks, and women what they are,  
Men have precedency, and still excel;  
It is but vain, unjustly to wage war;  
Men can do best, and women know it well;  
Preeminence in each and all is yours,  
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.

8

And oh, ye high flown quills that soar the skies,  
And ever with your prey, still catch your praise,  
If e'er you deign these lowly lines your eyes,  
Give wholesome parsley wreath, I ask no bays:  
This mean and unrefinèd stuff of mine,  
Will make your glistering gold but more to shine.



*Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661–1720)*

**Adam Posed**

Could our first father, at his toilsome plow,  
Thorns in his path, and labor on his brow,  
Clothed only in a rude, unpolished skin,  
Could he a vain fantastic nymph have seen,  
In all her airs, in all her antic graces,  
Her various fashions, and more various faces;  
How had it posed that skill, which late assigned  
Just appellations to each several kind!  
A right idea of the sight to frame;  
T'have guessed from what new element she came;  
T'have hit the wav'ring form, or giv'n this thing a name.

*Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661–1720)*

**A Nocturnal Reverie**

In such a night, when every louder wind  
Is to its distant cavern safe confined;  
And only gentle Zephyr fans his wings,  
And lonely Philomel, still waking, sings;  
Or from some tree, famed for the owl's delight,  
She, hollowing clear, directs the wand'rer right:  
In such a night, when passing clouds give place,  
Or thinly veil the heav'ns' mysterious face;  
When in some river, overhung with green,  
The waving moon and trembling leaves are seen;  
When freshened grass now bears itself upright,  
And makes cool banks to pleasing rest invite,  
Whence springs the woodbind, and the bramble-rose,  
And where the sleepy cowslip sheltered grows;  
Whilst now a paler hue the foxglove takes,  
Yet checkers still with red the dusky brakes  
When scattered glow-worms, but in twilight fine,  
Shew trivial beauties watch their hour to shine;  
Whilst Salisb'ry stands the test of every light,  
In perfect charms, and perfect virtue bright:  
When odors, which declined repelling day,  
Through temp'rate air uninterrupted stray;  
When darkened groves their softest shadows wear,  
And falling waters we distinctly hear;  
When through the gloom more venerable shows  
Some ancient fabric, awful in repose,  
While sunburnt hills their swarthy looks conceal,  
And swelling haycocks thicken up the vale:  
When the loosed horse now, as his pasture leads,  
Comes slowly grazing through th' adjoining meads,  
Whose stealing pace, and lengthened shade we fear,  
Till torn-up forage in his teeth we hear:  
When nibbling sheep at large pursue their food,  
And unmolested kine rechew the cud;  
When curlews cry beneath the village walls,  
And to her straggling brood the partridge calls;  
Their shortlived jubilee the creatures keep,  
Which but endures, whilst tyrant man does sleep;  
When a sedate content the spirit feels,  
And no fierce light disturbs, whilst it reveals;  
But silent musings urge the mind to seek  
Something, too high for syllables to speak;  
Till the free soul to a composedness charmed,  
Finding the elements of rage disarmed,

O'er all below a solemn quiet grown,  
Joys in th' inferior world, and thinks it like her own:  
In such a night let me abroad remain,  
Till morning breaks, and all's confused again;  
Our cares, our toils, our clamors are renewed,  
Or pleasures, seldom reached, again pursued.

*Ben Jonson (1572–1637)*

**The Hourglass**

Consider this small dust here running in the glass,  
By atoms moved;  
Could you believe that this the body was  
Of one that loved?  
And in his mistress' flame, playing like a fly,  
Turned to cinders by her eye:  
Yes; and in death, as life, unblessed,  
To have it expressed,  
Even ashes of lovers find no rest.

*Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)*

**A Daughter of Eve**

A fool I was to sleep at noon,  
And wake when night is chilly  
Beneath the comfortless cold moon;  
A fool to pluck my rose too soon,  
A fool to snap my lily.

My garden-plot I have not kept;  
Faded and all-forsaken,  
I weep as I have never wept:  
Oh it was summer when I slept,  
It's winter now I waken.

Talk what you please of future spring  
And sun-warm'd sweet to-morrow:—  
Stripp'd bare of hope and everything,  
No more to laugh, no more to sing,  
I sit alone with sorrow.

*Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)*

**In an Artist's Studio**

One face looks out from all his canvases,  
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:  
We found her hidden just behind those screens,  
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.  
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,  
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,  
A saint, an angel—every canvas means  
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.  
He feeds upon her face by day and night,  
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,  
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:  
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;  
No as she is, but was when hope shone bright;  
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

*Dante Alighieri (1265–1321)*

**from The Divine Comedy, from The Inferno**

Canto III

Through me the way is to the city dolent;  
Through me the way is to eternal dole;  
Through me the way among the people lost.

Justice incited my sublime Creator;  
Created me divine Omnipotence,  
The highest Wisdom and the primal Love.

Before me there were no created things,  
Only eterne, and I eternal last.  
All hope abandon, ye who enter in!

These words in somber color I beheld  
Written upon the summit of a gate;  
Whence I: Their sense is, Master, hard to me!

And he to me, as one experienced:  
Here all suspicion needs must be abandoned,  
All cowardice must needs be here extinct.

We to the place have come, where I have told thee  
Thou shalt behold the people dolorous  
Who have foregone the good of intellect.

And after he had laid his hand on mine  
With joyful mien, whence I was comforted,  
He led me in among the secret things.

There sighs, complaints, and ululations loud  
Resounded through the air without a star,  
Whence I, at the beginning, wept thereat.

Languages diverse, horrible dialects,  
Accents of anger, words of agony,  
And voices high and hoarse, with sound of hands,

Made up a tumult that goes whirling on  
Forever in that air forever black,  
Even as the sand doth, when the whirlwind breathes.

And I, who had my head with horror bound,  
Said: Master, what is this which now I hear?

What folk is this, which seems by pain so vanquished?

And he to me: This miserable mode  
Maintain the melancholy souls of those  
Who lived withouten infamy or praise.

Commingled are they with that caitiff choir  
Of Angels, who have not rebellious been,  
Nor faithful were to God, but were for self.

The heavens expelled them, not to be less fair;  
Nor them the nethermore abyss receives,  
For glory none the damned would have from them.

And I: O Master, what so grievous is  
To these, that maketh them lament so sore?  
He answered: I will tell thee very briefly.

These have no longer any hope of death;  
And this blind life of theirs is so debased,  
They envious are of every other fate.

No fame of them the world permits to be;  
Misericord and Justice both disdain them.  
Let us not speak of them, but look, and pass.

And I, who looked again, beheld a banner,  
Which, whirling round, ran on so rapidly,  
That of all pause it seemed to me indignant;

And after it there came so long a train  
Of people, that I ne'er would have believed  
That ever Death so many had undone.

When some among them I had recognized.  
I looked, and I beheld the shade of him  
Who made through cowardice the great refusal.

Forthwith I comprehended, and was certain,  
That this the sect was of the caitiff wretches  
Hateful to God and to his enemies.

These miscreants, who never were alive,  
Were naked, and were stung exceedingly  
By gadflies and by hornets that were there.

These did their faces irrigate with blood,  
Which, with their tears commingled, at their feet  
By the disgusting worms was gathered up.



And when to gazing farther I betook me.  
People I saw on a great river's bank;  
Whence said I: Master, now vouchsafe to me,

That I may know who these are, and what law  
Makes them appear so ready to pass over,  
As I discern athwart the dusky light.

And he to me: These things shall all be known  
To thee, as soon as we our footsteps stay  
Upon the dismal shore of Acheron.

Then with mine eyes ashamed and downward cast,  
Fearing my words might irksome be to him,  
From speech refrained I till we reached the river.

And lo! towards us coming in a boat  
An old man, hoary with the hair of eld,  
Crying: Woe unto you, ye souls depraved

Hope nevermore to look upon the heavens;  
I come to lead you to the other shore,  
To the eternal shades in heat and frost.

And thou, that yonder standest, living soul,  
Withdraw thee from these people, who are dead—  
But when he saw that I did not withdraw,

He said: By other ways, by other ports  
Thou to the shore shalt come, not here, for, passage;  
A lighter vessel needs must carry thee.

And unto him the Guide: Vex thee not, Charon;  
It is so willed there where is power to do  
That which is willed; and farther question not.

Thereat were quieted the fleecy cheeks  
Of him the ferryman of the livid fen,  
Who round about his eyes had wheels of flame.

But all those souls who weary were and naked  
Their color changed and gnashed their teeth together,  
As soon as they had heard those cruel words.

God they blasphemed and their progenitors,  
The human race, the place, the time, the seed  
Of their engendering and of their birth!

Thereafter all together they drew back,  
Bitterly weeping, to the accursed shore,  
Which waiteth every man who fears not God.

Charon the demon, with the eyes of glede,  
Beckoning to them, collects them all together,  
Beats with his oar whoever lags behind.

As in the autumn-time the leaves fall off,  
First one and then another, till the branch  
Unto the earth surrenders all its spoils;

In similar wise the evil seed of Adam  
Throw themselves from that margin one by one,  
At signals, as a bird unto its lure.

So they depart across the dusky wave,  
And ere upon the other side they land,  
Again on this side a new troop assembles.

My son, the courteous Master said to me,  
All those who perish in the wrath of God  
Here meet together out of every land;

And ready are they to pass o'er the river,  
Because celestial Justice spurs them on,  
So that their fear is turned into desire.

This way there never passes a good soul;  
And hence if Charon doth complain of thee  
Well mayst thou know now what his speech imports.

This being finished, all the dusk champaign  
Trembled so violently, that of that terror  
The recollection bathes me still with sweat.

The land of tears gave forth a blast of wind,  
And fulminated a vermilion light,  
Which overmastered in me every sense,

And as a man whom sleep hath seized I fell.

(tr. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

*Deena Linett*

**Jury Duty**

i.

Your number's up. Cliff edge  
is a window-ledge, twelfth floor

New Courts Building, Essex  
County. Below, the snow's

been four feet deep for weeks.  
Cops patrol and we're locked in

as if by serving time  
we would develop empathy.

Clouds sweet as cream drift  
across the skies where they are free.

Twelve-eighteen's my new I.D.,  
hotel room, flight number, war lottery.

ii.

After the change of government  
begin with the maps, newly revised.

Ignore the stars. They will not  
be there when you need them.

You're in altered relation  
to the spray of light on dark. Now

you see the galaxy edge-on, spinning  
all the way toward the beginning.

Your compass says south is a range  
of mountains with a glacier whose flow's

shape is music you know  
but can't sing; you are west

of fields of purple flowers and east  
of a salt sea. Where are you? Why

have they left you here? What is your task?  
What will you devote yourself to?

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*Deena Linett*

**The Tiger in the Driveway**

has escaped the carousel and stands chained  
to the trunk of a dogwood in the suburbs

fourteen miles from New York. Bright  
in his new coat of paint, his stripes

blend with the mix of light and shade,  
his likeness, and only slightly less dangerous.

Across the street, nearly hidden  
in dense brushy rhododendron, a bronze swan

glimmers in dots of light like rain or little mirrors,  
like medallions. When the light's right they reflect

the tiger, broken into pieces, flattened, tamed.  
She doesn't like to hear his panting on hot days

but senses how the chain beneath his chin  
chafes skin. Sympathy like light wind

cannot stir her feathers, weighted with metal.  
Nights she imagines his slide silent as shadow

to the beds upstairs. Driven out (he is always  
driven out), he dreams it's possible to slip

behind the stove or fridge; he spits  
like a house-cat when the woman sprinkles water

on the grass and wets his clothes. He misses  
his little blue jacket but not the saddle's

golden tassels and gilt trim, and he longs for music,  
but not the children climbing and patting.

On long summer afternoons he might doze  
in the shade of the garage where blades and spokes,

old bikes and broken mowers, gleam beneath coats  
of grime and dust, brown furry frosting. He is manifest

desire and drips like bitten peaches, plums; tigers.  
His fine eyes shine with bleak intelligence and blink

in all that dark, and then he stretches, pink  
tongue curling. His breast heaves. Bars bow:

he is potential mouth and froth and leap,  
brings smells like meat, the scent of mud from rivers

with him, bruises, streaks of old abrasions, chunks  
of carrion and traces of wild grasses,

memories of fatty thighs of swans,  
their gorgeous splayed black paddlefeet.

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## *Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)*

### **The City in the Sea**

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne  
In a strange city lying alone  
Far down within the dim West,  
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best  
Have gone to their eternal rest.  
There shrines and palaces and towers  
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)  
Resemble nothing that is ours.  
Around, by lifting winds forgot,  
Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down  
On the long night-time of that town;  
But light from out the lurid sea  
Streams up the turrets silently—  
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—  
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—  
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—  
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers  
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—  
Up many and many a marvelous shrine  
Whose wreathèd friezes interwine  
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky  
The melancholy waters lie.  
So blend the turrets and shadows there  
That all seem pendulous in air,  
While from a proud tower in the town  
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves  
Yawn level with the luminous waves;  
But not the riches there that lie  
In each idol's diamond eye—  
Not the gaily-jeweled dead  
Tempt the waters from their bed;  
For no ripples curl, alas!  
Among that wilderness of glass—  
No swellings tell that winds may be  
Upon some far-off happier sea—  
No heavings hint that winds have been  
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air!  
The wave—there is a movement there!  
As if the towers had thrust aside,  
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—  
As if their tops had feebly given  
A void within the filmy Heaven.  
The waves have now a redder glow—  
The hours are breathing faint and low—  
And when, amid no earthly moans,  
Down, down that town shall settle hence,  
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,  
Shall do it reverence.



## *Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)*

### **The Raven**

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—  
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,  
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.  
"Tis some visiter," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—  
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;  
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.  
Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow  
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain  
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;  
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating  
"Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door—  
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;—  
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;  
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,  
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,  
That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;—  
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,  
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;  
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,  
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"  
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"  
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.  
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;  
Let me see, then, what theroat is, and this mystery explore—  
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—  
"Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,  
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;

Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;  
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—  
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,  
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only  
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.  
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—  
Till I scarcely more than muttered "Other friends have flown before—  
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before."  
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,  
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store  
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster  
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—  
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore  
Of 'Never—nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,  
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;  
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking  
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing  
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;  
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,  
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer  
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.

"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee  
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;  
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,  
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—  
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—  
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!  
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—  
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—  
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!  
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"  
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

*Edgar Lee Masters (1868–1950)*

**Doc Hill**

I went up and down the streets  
Here and there by day and night,  
Through all hours of the night caring for the poor who were sick.  
Do you know why?  
My wife hated me, my son went to the dogs.  
And I turned to the people and poured out my love to them.  
Sweet it was to see the crowds about the lawns on the day of my funeral,  
And hear them murmur their love and sorrow.  
But oh, dear God, my soul trembled, scarcely able  
To hold to the railing of the new life  
When I saw Em Stanton behind the oak tree  
At the grave,  
Hiding herself, and her grief!

*Edgar Lee Masters (1868–1950)*

**Seth Compton**

When I died, the circulating library  
Which I built up for Spoon River,  
And managed for the good of inquiring minds,  
Was sold at auction on the public square,  
As if to destroy the last vestige  
Of my memory and influence.  
For those of you who could not see the virtue  
Of knowing Volney's "Ruins" as well as Butler's "Analogy"  
And "Faust" as well as "Evangeline,"  
Were really the power in the village,  
And often you asked me,  
"What is the use of knowing the evil in the world?"  
I am out of your way now, Spoon River,  
Choose your own good and call it good.  
For I could never make you see  
That no one knows what is good  
Who knows not what is evil;  
And no one knows what is true  
Who knows not what is false.

*Edmund Spenser (ca. 1552–1599)*

**from Amoretti: Sonnet 67**

Like as a huntsman after weary chase,  
Seeing the game from him escap'd away,  
Sits down to rest him in some shady place,  
With panting hounds beguiled of their prey:  
So after long pursuit and vain assay,  
When I all weary had the chase forsook,  
The gentle deer return'd the self-same way,  
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook.  
There she beholding me with milder look,  
Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide:  
Till I in hand her yet half trembling took,  
And with her own goodwill her firmly tied.  
Strange thing, me seem'd, to see a beast so wild,  
So goodly won, with her own will beguil'd.

*Edmund Spenser (ca. 1552–1599)*

**from The Faerie Queene, from The First Booke**

Contayning  
The Legende of the  
Knight of the Red Crosse,  
or  
Of Holinesse

1

Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,  
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds,  
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,  
For trumpets sterne to chaunge mine Oaten reeds,  
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds;  
Whose prayes having slept in silence long,  
Me, all too meane, the sacred Muse areeds  
To blazon broad emongst her learned throng:  
Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song.

2

Helpe then, O holy Virgin chiefe of nine,  
Thy weaker Novice to performe thy will,  
Lay forth out of thine everlasting scryne  
The antique rolles, which there lye hidden still,  
Of Faerie knights and fairest Tanaquill,  
Whom that most noble Briton Prince so long  
Sought through the world, and suffered so much ill,  
That I must rue his undeservèd wrong:  
O helpe thou my weake wit, and sharpen my dull tong.

3

And thou most dreaded impe of hightest Jove,  
Faire Venus sonne, that with thy cruell dart  
At that good knight so cunningly didst rove,  
That glorious fire it kindled in his hart,  
Lay now thy deadly Heben bow apart,  
And with thy mother milde come to mine ayde:  
Come both, and with you bring triumphant Mart,  
In loves and gentle jollities arrayd,  
After his murdrous spoiles and bloody rage allayd.

4

And with them eke, O Goddess heavenly bright,  
Mirrour of grace and Majestie divine,  
Great Lady of the greatest Isle, whose light  
Like Phoebus lampe throughout the world doth shine,  
Shed thy faire beames into my feeble eyne,  
And raise my thoughts too humble and too vile,  
To thinke of that true glorious type of thine,  
The argument of mine afflicted stile:  
The which to heare, vouchsafe, O dearest dred a-while.



*Edward Lear (1812–1888)*

**The Owl and the Pussy-Cat**

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat,  
They took some honey, and plenty of money  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:  
But what shall we do for a ring?"  
They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
To the land where the Bong-tree grows  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon,  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

*Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935)*

**Miniver Cheevy**

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,  
Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;  
He wept that he was ever born,  
And he had reasons.

Miniver loved the days of old  
When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;  
The vision of a warrior bold  
Would set him dancing.

Miniver sighed for what was not,  
And dreamed, and rested from his labors;  
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,  
And Priam's neighbors.

Miniver mourned the ripe renown  
That made so many a name so fragrant;  
He mourned Romance, now on the town,  
And Art, a vagrant.

Miniver loved the Medici,  
Albeit he had never seen one;  
He would have sinned incessantly  
Could he have been one.

Miniver cursed the commonplace  
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;  
Hi missed the medieval grace  
Of iron clothing.

Miniver scorned the gold he sought,  
But sore annoyed was he without it;  
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,  
And thought about it.

Miniver Cheevy, born too late,  
Scratched his head and kept on thinking;  
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,  
And kept on drinking.

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)*

**from Sonnets from the Portuguese**

VI

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand  
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore  
Alone upon the threshold of my door  
Of individual life, I shall command  
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
Without the sense of that which I forbore—  
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land  
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine  
With pulses that beat double. What I do  
And what I dream include thee, as the wine  
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue  
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,  
And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

## *Emily Brontë (1818–1848)*

### Stars

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun  
Restored our earth to joy  
Have you departed, every one,  
And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes  
Were gazing down in mine,  
And with a full heart's thankful sighs  
I blessed that watch divine!

I was at peace, and drank your beams  
As they were life to me  
And revelled in my changeful dreams  
Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought—star followed star  
Through boundless regions on,  
While one sweet influence, near and far,  
Thrilled through and proved us one.

Why did the morning dawn to break  
So great, so pure a spell,  
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek  
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and arrow-straight  
His fierce beams struck my brow:  
The soul of Nature sprang elate,  
But mine sank sad and low!

My lids closed down—yet through their veil  
I saw him blazing still;  
And steep in gold the misty dale  
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then  
To call back Night, and see  
Your worlds of solemn light, again  
Throb with my heart and me!

It would not do—the pillow glowed  
And glowed both roof and floor,  
And birds sang loudly in the wood,  
And fresh winds shook the door.

The curtains waved, the wakened flies  
Were murmuring round my room,  
Imprisoned there, till I should rise  
And give them leave to roam.

O Stars and Dreams and Gentle Night;  
O Night and Stars return!  
And hide me from the hostile light  
That does not warm, but burn—

That drains the blood of suffering men;  
Drinks tears, instead of dew:  
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,  
And only wake with you!

*Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)*

**348**

I dreaded that first Robin, so,  
But He is mastered, now,  
I'm some accustomed to Him grown,  
He hurts a little, though—

I thought if I could only live  
Till that first Shout got by—  
Not all Pianos in the Woods  
Had power to mangle me—

I dared not meet the Daffodils—  
For fear their Yellow Gown  
Would pierce me with a fashion  
So foreign to my own—

I wished the Grass would hurry—  
So—when 'twas time to see—  
He'd be too tall, the tallest one  
Could stretch—to look at me—

I could not bear the Bees should come,  
I wished they'd stay away  
In those dim countries where they go,  
What word had they, for me?

They're here, though; not a creature failed—  
No Blossom stayed away  
In gentle deference to me—  
The Queen of Calvary—

Each one salutes me, as he goes,  
And I, my childish Plumes,  
Lift, in bereaved acknowledgement  
Of their unthinking Drums—

*Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)*

**712**

Because I could not stop for Death—  
He kindly stopped for me—  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove—He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility—

We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess—in the Ring—  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—  
We passed the Setting Sun—

Or rather—he passed us—  
The Dews drew quivering & chill—  
For only Gossamer, my Gown—  
My Tippet—only Tulle—

We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground—  
The Roof was scarcely visible—  
The Cornice—in the Ground—

Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity—

*Emma Lazarus (1849–1887)*

**The New Colossus**

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"



*Fleda Brown (1944–)*

### **I Write My Mother a Poem**

Sometimes I feel her easing further into her grave,  
resigned, as always, and I have to come to her rescue.  
Like now, when I have so much else to do. Not that

she'd want a poem. She would have been proud, of course,  
of all its mystery, involving her, but scared a little.  
Her eyes would have filled with tears. It always comes

to that, I don't know why I bother. One gesture  
and she's gone down a well of raw feeling, and I'm left  
alone again. I avert my eyes, to keep from scaring her.

On her dresser is one of those old glass bottles  
of Jergen's Lotion with the black label, a little round  
bottle of Mum deodorant, a white plastic tray

with Avon necklaces and earrings, pennies, paper clips,  
and a large black coat button. I appear to be very  
interested in these objects, even interested in the sun

through the blinds. It falls across her face, and not,  
as she changes the bed. She would rather have clean sheets  
than my poem, but as long as I don't bother her, she's glad

to know I care. She's talked my father into taking  
a drive later, stopping for an A & W root beer.  
She is dreaming of foam on the glass, the tray propped

on the car window. And trees, farmhouses, the expanse  
of the world as seen from inside the car. It is no  
use to try to get her out to watch airplanes

take off, or walk a trail, or hear this poem  
and offer anything more than "Isn't that sweet!"  
Right now bombs are exploding in Kosovo, students

shot in Colorado, and my mother is wearing a root beer  
mustache. Her eyes are unfocused, everything's root beer.  
I write root beer, root beer, to make her happy.

*Fleda Brown (1944–)*

**The Women Who Loved Elvis All Their Lives**

She reads, of course, what he's doing, shaking Nixon's hand,  
dating this starlet or that, while he is faithful to her  
like a stone in her belly, like the actual love child,  
its bills and diapers. Once he had kissed her  
and time had stood still, at least some point seems to  
remain back there as a place to return to, to wait for.  
What is she waiting for? He will not marry her, nor will he  
stop very often. Desireé will grow up to say her father is dead.  
Desireé will imagine him standing on a timeless street,  
hungry for his child. She will wait for him, not in the original,  
but in a gesture copied to whatever lover she takes.  
He will fracture and change to landscape, to the Pope, maybe,  
or President Kennedy, or to a pain that darkens her eyes.

"Once," she will say, as if she remembers,  
and the memory will stick like a fishbone. She knows  
how easily she will comply when a man puts his hand  
on the back of her neck and gently steers her.  
She knows how long she will wait for rescue, how the world  
will go on expanding outside. She will see her mother's photo  
of Elvis shaking hands with Nixon, the terrifying conjunction.  
A whole war with Asia will begin slowly,  
in her lifetime, out of such irreconcilable urges.  
The Pill will become available to the general public,  
starting up a new waiting in that other depth.  
The egg will have to keep believing in its timeless moment  
of completion without any proof except in the longing  
of its own body. Maris will break Babe Ruth's record  
while Orbison will have his first major hit with  
"Only the Lonely," trying his best to sound like Elvis.

*Gary Fincke (1945– )*

**The Billion Heartbeats of the Mammal**

“Feel this,” my father says, guiding my hand  
To the simple Braille of his pacemaker.  
“Sixty,” he tells me, “over and over  
Like a clock,” and I mention the billion  
Heartbeats of the mammal, how the life span  
Can be rough-guessed by the 800 beats  
Per minute of the shrew, the 200  
Of the house cat, speeding through their billion  
In three years, in twelve. How slowly we act,  
According to our pets. How we are stone  
To the frantic insects. “Not slow enough,”  
He answers, summing up the math, citing  
His two billion heartbeats of punched-in work,  
The one billion my mother beat to do  
The daily double-shift of housekeeper  
And clerk until her heart softened to mush.  
He’s busy, now, with wiping down his floors  
The way he swirled a mop through locker rooms  
Before striding the push broom up and down  
The grain of gym sweep, repeating the moves  
Of twenty kinds of cleaning between ten  
And six-thirty in the high school I used  
Between eight and three-fifteen. He might have  
Been following the Peterson Method  
For care, learning the neat lines and ovals  
Of my mother, who wrote to me, the day  
She died, a perfectly scripted letter,  
Pages of open vowels so nothing  
She said could be misread. And even now,  
In the attic, inside her black notebooks  
Stacked and banded, her carefully copied  
Familiar quotes, the good advice  
Of the writing exercise dating back  
To a hundred lines of ovals, fifty  
Of the properly slanted line. Penciled  
Pages of strict, block printing, the two-space  
Capitals, the touch of tall letters to  
The roof of lines, my father repeating  
The multiplication and division  
To the thirty years of humans, how he is  
Closing in on three billion while I am  
Nearing two. How we are the exception  
To the heartbeat system, taking so long  
To come of age we have time to practice

The Peterson Method for memory,  
Preserve these things to open up and read.

*Gary Fincke (1945–)*

**The Magpie Evening: A Prayer**

When magpies die, each of the living swoops down  
and pecks, one by one, in an accepted order.

He coaxed my car to start, the boy who's killed himself.  
He twisted a cable, performed CPR on  
The carburetor while my three children shivered  
Through the unanswerable questions about stalled.  
He chose shotgun, full in the face, so no one stepped  
Into the cold, blowing on his hands, to fix him.  
Let him rest now, the minister says. Let this be,  
Repeating himself to four brothers, five sisters,  
All of them my neighbors until they grew and left.  
Let us pray. Let us manage what we need to say.  
Let this house with its three hand-made additions be  
Large enough for the one day of necessity.  
Let evening empty each room to ceremony  
Chosen by the remaining nine. Let the awful,  
Forecasted weather hold off in east Ohio  
Until each of them, oldest to youngest, has passed.  
Let their thirty-seven children scatter into  
The squabbling of the everyday, and let them break  
This creeping chain of cars into the fanning out  
Toward anger and selfishness and the need to eat  
At any of the thousand tables they will pass.  
Let them wait. Let them correctly choose the right turn  
Or the left, this entrance ramp, that exit, the last  
Confusing fork before the familiar driveway  
Three hundred miles and more from these bleak thunderheads.  
Let them regather into the chairs exactly  
Matched to their numbers, blessing the bountiful or  
The meager with voices that soar toward renewal.  
Let them have mercy on themselves. Let my children,  
Grown now, be repairing my faults with forgiveness.

*Geoffrey Chaucer (ca. 1343–1400)*

**from The Canterbury Tales, from The Wife of Bath's Prologue**

Experience, though noon auctoritee  
Were in this world, is right ynough for me  
To speke of wo that is in mariage:  
For lordinges, sith I twelf yeer was of age—  
Thanked be God that is eterne on live—  
Housbondes at chirche dore I have had five  
(If I so ofte mighte han wedded be),  
And alle were worthy men in hir degree.  
But me was told, certain, nat longe agoon is,  
That sith that Crist ne wente nevere but ones  
To wedding in the Cane of Galilee,  
That by the same ensample taughte he me  
That I ne sholde wedded be but ones.  
Herke eek, lo, which a sharp word for the nones,  
Biside a well, Jesus, God and man,  
Spak in repreve of the Samaritan:  
"Thou hast yhad five housbondes," quod he,  
"And that ilke man that now hath thee  
Is nat thyn housbonde." Thus saide he certain.  
What that he mente therby I can nat sayn,  
But that I axe why the fifthe man  
Was noon housbonde to the Samaritan?  
How manye mighte she han in mariage?  
Yit herde I nevere tellen in myn age  
Upon this nombre diffinicioun.  
Men may divine and glosen up and down,  
But wel I woot, expres, withouten lie,  
God bad us for to wexe and multiplye:  
That gentil text can I wel understonde.

*George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788–1824)*

**When We Two Parted**

When we two parted  
In silence and tears,  
Half broken-hearted  
To sever for years,  
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,  
Colder thy kiss;  
Truly that hour foretold  
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning  
Sunk chill on my brow—  
It felt like the warning  
Of what I feel now.  
Thy vows are all broken,  
And light is thy fame;  
I hear thy name spoken,  
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,  
A knell to mine ear;  
A shudder comes o'er me—  
Why wert thou so dear?  
They know not I knew thee,  
Who knew thee too well—  
Long, long shall I rue thee,  
To deeply to tell.

In secret we met—  
In silence I grieve,  
That thy heart could forget,  
Thy spirit deceive.  
If I should meet thee  
After long years,  
How should I greet thee?—  
With silence and tears.

## *George Herbert (1593–1633)*

### **Man**

My God, I heard this day  
That none doth build a stately habitation,  
But he that means to dwell therein.  
What house more stately hath there been,  
Or can be, than is Man? to whose creation  
All things are in decay.

For Man is every thing,  
And more: he is a tree, yet bears more fruit;  
A beast, yet is or should be more:  
Reason and speech we only bring.  
Parrots may thank us, if they are not mute,  
They go upon the score.

Man is all symmetry,  
Full of proportions, one limb to another,  
And all to all the world besides:  
Each part may call the furthest, brother;  
For head with foot hath private amity,  
And both with moons and tides.

Nothing hath got so far,  
But man hath caught and kept it, as his prey.  
His eyes dismount the highest star:  
He is in little all the sphere.  
Herbs gladly cure our flesh, because that they  
Find their acquaintance there.

For us the winds do blow,  
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.  
Nothing we see but means our good,  
As our delight or as our treasure:  
The whole is either our cupboard of food,  
Or cabinet of pleasure.

The stars have us to bed;  
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws;  
Music and light attend our head.  
All things unto our flesh are kind  
In their descent and being; to our mind  
In their ascent and cause.

Each thing is full of duty:  
Waters united are our navigation;



Distinguishèd, our habitation;  
Below, our drink; above, our meat;  
Both are our cleanliness. Hath one such beauty?  
Then how are all things neat?

More servants wait on Man  
Than he'll take notice of: in every path  
He treads down that which doth befriend him  
When sickness makes him pale and wan.  
O mighty love! Man is one world, and hath  
Another to attend him.

Since then, my God, thou hast  
So brave a palace built, O dwell in it  
That it may dwell with thee at last!  
Till then, afford us so much wit,  
That, as the world serves us, we may serve thee,  
And both thy servants be.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)*

**God's Grandeur**

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs—

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

*Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)*

**Pied Beauty**

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-color as a brinded cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.  
All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

## *Grace Cavalieri (1937–)*

### **Athletes**

The first time I saw my American poems translated  
I just stopped and studied  
the hieroglyphics on the page,  
tiny scribbles of black ink  
saying twice  
what was said before.  
Then I knew  
I would not leave this world  
without loving some of it . . .  
nothing reduced to a single truth . . .  
all of one blood,  
our words, music and lives coming together.  
It was not that the stars had fallen down—  
It was more that we didn't need  
the lamp which had gone out.  
How separate we are in the dark  
after the poem is gone.

## *Grace Cavalieri (1937–)*

### **Dates**

The silver from my mother's mirror  
gleams its stories  
toward a light which drops and never breaks.  
It says to tell the truth and

permanently shining, brings forth  
an original day bright as this one  
where children and other small creatures  
played without threat

but the child's story is never without fear—is it—  
and seems to be made of remainders which either  
want for love or some relief from it.

In the third grade the pyramids were presented to us  
by Miss O'Malley  
so kind that she would—  
in honor of learning—  
give us the key to Egypt  
if she could.

Who would like to bring dates for all to taste?  
Who can do this on the lunch hour? she asked.  
Naturally I  
—who could not imagine how—  
said I would—  
and, like a child with enough money to spend, ran  
home with only one hour, one hour to ease  
my dear mother who probably had  
little money in the house, yet who bravely asked  
“Shouldn't you buy two packages for the class”  
I said No.

Love and fear divided in my mind between  
an ocean of children  
and my mother's troubled face,  
“One package is all I need” I lied,  
“Someone else will bring the rest”  
(Children spend so much time persuading—  
no wonder no one believes them).  
Eight dates for twenty children  
which would taste so sweet—  
Miss O'Malley, always kind, cut the tiny squares  
and I kept interrupting, hoping they  
wouldn't notice. After all  
there wasn't water in the land of pyramids . . . was

there . . . and  
not too many trees,  
probably hungry people and small rations there as well.

That day every one of us was a reflection of the other—  
the children who ate their portions,  
the mother at home worrying about her daughter's gift,  
the child thinking about her mother's face,  
and Miss O'Malley who, kind and earnest,  
taught us all about a hardy people in an arid land  
who gave what they had and could give nothing more.

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)*

**The Fire of Drift-Wood**

We sat within the farm-house old,  
Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,  
Gave to the sea-breeze damp and cold,  
An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port,  
The strange, old-fashioned, silent town,  
The lighthouse, the dismantled fort,  
The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,  
Descending, filled the little room;  
Our faces faded from the sight,  
Our voices only broke the gloom.

We spake of many a vanished scene,  
Of what we once had thought and said,  
Of what had been, and might have been,  
And who was changed, and who was dead;

And all that fills the hearts of friends,  
When first they feel, with secret pain,  
Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,  
And never can be one again;

The first slight swerving of the heart,  
That words are powerless to express,  
And leave it still unsaid in part,  
Or say it in too great excess.

The very tones in which we spake  
Had something strange, I could but mark;  
The leaves of memory seemed to make  
A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,  
As suddenly, from out the fire  
Built of the wreck of stranded ships,  
The flames would leap and then expire.

And, as their splendor flashed and failed,  
We thought of wrecks upon the main,  
Of ships dismasted, that were hailed  
And sent no answer back again.

The windows, rattling in their frames,  
The ocean, roaring up the beach,  
The gusty blast, the bickering flames,  
All mingled vaguely in our speech;

Until they made themselves a part  
Of fancies floating through the brain,  
The long-lost ventures of the heart,  
That send no answers back again.

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!  
They were indeed too much akin,  
The drift-wood fire without that burned,  
The thoughts that burned and glowed within.



*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807–1882)*

**The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls**

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;  
Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
Efface the footprints in the sands,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveller to the shore,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

*John Donne (1572–1631)*

**The Flea**

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,  
How little that which thou deniest me is;  
Me it sucked first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;  
Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame nor loss of maidenhead,  
Yet this enjoys before it woo,  
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where we almost, yea more than married are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our marriage bed and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, we are met,  
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.  
Though use make you apt to kill me,  
Let not to that, self-murder added be,  
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Curel and sudden, hast thou since  
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?  
Wherein could this flea guilty be,  
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?  
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou  
Find'st not thy self nor me the weaker now;  
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be;  
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,  
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

*John Dryden (1631–1700)*

**To the Memory of Mr. Oldham**

Farewell, too little, and too lately known,  
Whom I began to think and call my own:  
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine  
Cast in the same poetic mold with mine.  
One common note on either lyre did strike,  
And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.  
To the same goal did both our studies drive;  
The last set out the soonest did arrive.  
Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,  
While his young friend performed and won the race.  
O early ripe! to thy abundant store  
What could advancing age have added more?  
It might (what nature never gives the young)  
Have taught the numbers of thy native tongue.  
But satire needs not those, and wit will shine  
Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line:  
A noble error, and but seldom made,  
When poets are by too much force betrayed.  
Thy generous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,  
Still showed a quickness, and maturing time  
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.  
Once more, hail and farewell; farewell, thou young,  
But ah too short, Marcellus of our tongue;  
Thy brows with ivy, and with laurels bound;  
But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

*John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)*

**Burning Drift-Wood**

Before my drift-wood fire I sit,  
And see, with every waif I burn,  
Old dreams and fancies coloring it,  
And folly's unlaid ghosts return.

O ships of mine, whose swift keels cleft  
The enchanted sea on which they sailed,  
Are these poor fragments only left  
Of vain desires and hopes that failed?

Did I not watch from them the light  
Of sunset on my towers in Spain,  
And see, far off, uploom in sight  
The Fortunate Isles I might not gain?

Did sudden lift of fog reveal  
Arcadia's vales of song and spring,  
And did I pass, with grazing keel,  
The rocks whereon the sirens sing?

Have I not drifted hard upon  
The unmapped regions lost to man,  
The cloud-pitched tents of Prester John,  
The palace domes of Kubla Khan?

Did land winds blow from jasmine flowers,  
Where Youth the ageless Fountain fills?  
Did Love make sign from rose blown bowers,  
And gold from Eldorado's hills?

Alas! the gallant ships, that sailed  
On blind Adventure's errand sent,  
Howe'er they laid their courses, failed  
To reach the haven of Content.

And of my ventures, those alone  
Which Love had freighted, safely sped,  
Seeking a good beyond my own,  
By clear-eyed Duty piloted.

O mariners, hoping still to meet  
The luck Arabian voyagers met,  
And find in Bagdad's moonlit street,  
Haroun al Raschid walking yet,

Take with you, on your Sea of Dreams,  
The fair, fond fancies dear to youth.  
I turn from all that only seems,  
And seek the sober grounds of truth.

What matter that it is not May,  
That birds have flown, and trees are bare,  
That darker grows the shortening day,  
And colder blows the wintry air!

The wrecks of passion and desire,  
The castles I no more rebuild,  
May fitly feed my drift-wood fire,  
And warm the hands that age has chilled.

Whatever perished with my ships,  
I only know the best remains;  
A song of praise is on my lips  
For losses which are now my gains.

Heap high my hearth! No worth is lost;  
No wisdom with the folly dies.  
Burn on, poor shreds, your holocaust  
Shall be my evening sacrifice!

Far more than all I dared to dream,  
Unsought before my door I see;  
On wings of fire and steeds of steam  
The world's great wonders come to me,

And holier signs, unmarked before,  
Of Love to seek and Power to save,—  
The righting of the wronged and poor,  
The man evolving from the slave;

And life, no longer chance or fate,  
Safe in the gracious Fatherhood.  
I fold o'er-wearied hands and wait,  
In full assurance of the good.

And well the waiting time must be,  
Though brief or long its granted days,  
If Faith and Hope and Charity  
Sit by my evening hearth-fire's blaze.

And with them, friends whom Heaven has spared,  
Whose love my heart has comforted,  
And, sharing all my joys, has shared

My tender memories of the dead,—

Dear souls who left us lonely here,  
Bound on their last, long voyage, to whom  
We, day by day, are drawing near,  
Where every bark has sailing room.

I know the solemn monotone  
Of waters calling unto me;  
I know from whence the airs have blown  
That whisper of the Eternal Sea.

As low my fires of drift-wood burn,  
I hear that sea's deep sounds increase,  
And, fair in sunset light, discern  
Its mirage-lifted Isles of Peace.

*John Greenleaf Whittier (1807–1892)*

**Ichabod!**

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn  
Which once he wore!  
The glory from his gray hairs gone  
Forevermore!

Revile him not—the Tempter hath  
A snare for all;  
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,  
Befit his fall!

Oh! dumb be passion's stormy rage,  
When he who might  
Have lighted up and led his age,  
Falls back in night.

Scorn! would the angels laugh, to mark  
A bright soul driven,  
Fiend-goaded, down the endless dark,  
From hope and heaven!

Let not the land, once proud of him,  
Insult him now,  
Nor brand with deeper shame his dim,  
Dishonored brow.

But let its humbled sons, instead,  
From sea to lake,  
A long lament, as for the dead,  
In sadness make.

Of all we loved and honored, nought  
Save power remains—  
A fallen angel's pride of thought,  
Still strong in chains.

All else is gone; from those great eyes  
The soul has fled:  
When faith is lost, when honor dies,  
The man is dead!

Then, pay the reverence of old days  
To his dead fame;  
Walk backward, with averted gaze,  
And hide the shame!

## *John Keats (1795–1821)*

### **Ode on a Grecian Urn**

1

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,  
Thou foster child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

2

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

3

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
Forever piping songs forever new;  
More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
Forever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
Forever panting, and forever young;  
All breathing human passion far above,  
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

4

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,



And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?  
What little town by river or sea shore,  
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
And, little town, thy streets forevermore  
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

5

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
When old age shall this generation waste,  
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

*John Milton (1608–1674)*

**from Paradise Lost, Book I**

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that, on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire  
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed  
In the beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth  
Rose out of Chaos; or, if Sion hill  
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence  
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,  
That with no middle flight intends to soar  
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues  
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.  
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,  
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first  
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,  
Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;  
That, to the height of this great argument,  
I may assert Eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.

*Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)*

**A Satirical Elegy on the Death of a Late Famous General**

His Grace! impossible! what dead!  
Of old age too, and in his bed!  
And could that mighty warrior fall?  
And so inglorious, after all!  
Well, since he's gone, no matter how,  
The last loud trump must wake him now:  
And, trust me, as the noise grows stronger,  
He'd wish to sleep a little longer.  
And could he be indeed so old  
As by the newspapers we're told?  
Threescore, I think, is pretty high;  
'Twas time in conscience he should die.  
This world he cumbered long enough;  
He burnt his candle to the snuff;  
And that's the reason, some folks think,  
He left behind so great a s---k.  
Behold his funeral appears,  
Nor widow's sighs, nor orphan's tears,  
Wont at such times each heart to pierce,  
Attend the progress of his hearse.  
But what of that, his friends may say,  
He had those honors in his day.  
True to his profit and his pride,  
He made them weep before he died.  
Come hither, all ye empty things,  
Ye bubbles raised by breath of kings;  
Who float upon the tide of state,  
Come hither, and behold your fate.  
Let pride be taught by this rebuke,  
How very mean a thing's a Duke;  
From all his ill-got honors flung,  
Turned to that dirt from whence he sprung.

*Judith Sargent Murray (1751–1820)*

**from On the Equality of the Sexes, Part I**

That minds are not alike, full well I know,  
This truth each day's experience will show.  
To heights surprising some great spirits soar,  
With inborn strength mysterious depths explore;  
Their eager gaze surveys the path of light,  
Confessed it stood to Newton's piercing sight,

    Deep science, like a bashful maid retires,  
And but the ardent breast her worth inspires;  
By perseverance the coy fair is won,  
And Genius, led by Study, wears the crown.

    But some there are who wish not to improve,  
Who never can the path of knowledge love,  
Whose souls almost with the dull body one,  
With anxious care each mental pleasure shun.  
Weak is the leveled, enervated mind,  
And but while here to vegetate designed.  
The torpid spirit mingling with its clod  
Can scarcely boast its origin from God.  
Stupidly dull—they move progressing on—  
They eat, and drink, and all their work is done,  
While others, emulous of sweet applause,  
Industrious seek for each event a cause,  
Tracing the hidden springs whence knowledge flows,  
Which nature all in beauteous order shows.

    Yet cannot I their sentiments imbibe  
Who this distinction to the sex ascribe,  
As if a woman's form must needs enroll  
A weak, a servile, an inferior soul;  
And that the guise of man must still proclaim  
Greatness of mind, and him, to be the same.  
Yet as the hours revolve fair proofs arise  
Which the bright wreath of growing fame supplies,  
And in past times some men have sunk so low,  
That female records nothing less can show.  
But imbecility is still confined,  
And by the lordly sex to us consigned.  
They rob us of the power t'improve,  
And then declare we only trifles love.  
Yet haste the era when the world shall know  
That such distinctions only dwell below.  
The soul unfettered to no sex confined,  
Was for the abodes of cloudless day designed.

    Meantime we emulate their manly fires,  
Though erudition all their thoughts inspires,

Yet nature with equality imparts,  
And noble passions, swell e'en female hearts.

## *Katherine Philips (1632–1664)*

### **On the Welch Language**

If honor to an ancient name be due,  
Or riches challenge it for one that's new,  
The British language claims in either sense  
Both for its age, and for its opulence.  
But all great things must be from us removed,  
To be with higher reverence beloved.  
So landships which in prospects distant lie,  
With greater wonder draw the pleasèd eye.  
Is not great Troy to one dark ruin hurled?  
Once the fam'd scene of all the fighting world.  
Where's Athens now, to whom Rome learning owes,  
And the safe laurels that adorned her brows?  
A strange reverse of fate she did endure,  
Never once greater, than she's now obscure.  
Even Rome her self can but some footsteps show  
Of Scipio's times, or those of Cicero.  
And as the Roman and the Grecian state,  
The British fell, the spoil of time and fate.  
But though the language hath the beauty lost,  
Yet she has still some great remains to boast,  
For 'twas in that, the sacred bards of old,  
In deathless numbers did their thoughts unfold.  
In groves, by rivers, and on fertile plains,  
They civilized and taught the listening swains;  
Whilst with high raptures, and as great success,  
Virtue they clothed in music's charming dress.  
This Merlin spoke, who in his gloomy cave,  
Even Destiny her self seemed to enslave.  
For to his sight the future time was known,  
Much better than to others is their own;  
And with such state, predictions from him fell,  
As if he did decree, and not foretell.  
This spoke King Arthur, who, if fame be true,  
Could have compelled mankind to speak it too.  
In this one Boadicca valor taught,  
And spoke more nobly than her soldiers fought:  
Tell me what hero could be more than she,  
Who fell at once for fame and liberty?  
Nor could a greater sacrifice belong,  
Or to her children's, or her country's wrong.  
This spoke Caractacus, who was so brave,  
That to the Roman fortune check he gave:  
And when their yoke he could decline no more,  
He it so decently and nobly wore,

That Rome her self with blushes did believe,  
A Britain would the law of honor give;  
And hastily his chains away she threw,  
Lest her own captive else should her subdue.

## *Kenneth Carroll (1959–)*

### **in the morning**

*for mary*

it was my first poetry reading  
i, a reluctant 7 year old attendee  
standing in my jockeys as my sister,  
her mouth twisting violently  
around Dunbar's dialectic verse,  
screached "lias, lias, bless de lawd"

at eight, my sister lacked subtlety  
screaming lines without attention to timbre or tone,  
commas & hyphens caused her no pause  
she was, as instructed, projecting,  
loud enough for her voice to bounce  
off the rear of draper elementary's auditorium  
& to wake the deceased & resting Dunbar  
a shrill fisherwoman's delivery for a future audience

shut up, I muttered, through sleepy eyes  
as my sister switched to Langston's poem,  
"life for me ain't been no crystal stair"  
her head rocking with emphasis & joy at my annoyance  
i heard these two poems ricochet off the walls of our home  
no less than five thousand times in a truncated february

my friends came to my home often,  
looking for this kid named lias, who caused my sister  
to scream with madness every waking hour  
& searching in vain for the crystals in our stairs  
by the time my sister had her official reading  
our entire family was reciting both poems  
like brainwashed idiots

thirty years later, it is me  
annoying my family with verse and stanza  
casting my life by the poems coursing my veins  
while my sister's life has become the jagged minstrel  
that identify Dunbar's lyrics  
her song marked by the erratic meter  
of an addict's rhyme as she fills her lungs  
with the shattered remains of a descending crystal stair

now i recite poems that beg her to live,  
that implore her to be as tenacious in her search



for rhythm & meaning as the little girl  
who lit up our home with sweet black words  
who Langston warned and Dunbar amused

in the morning,  
i pray for the blessing of any lord  
for some lyrical benediction  
to heal her cacophonous wounds  
& make whole again the little girl,  
who clings to sonnets & sobriety.

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*Kenneth Carroll (1959–)*

**Riding Shotgun**

*For Morris & Mary Carroll, my grandparents*

You riding shotgun, grandma said  
my face glazed over with ignorance  
in all my 12 years I had never heard such a thing  
riding shotgun? I repeated seeking an explanation  
all I knew was that I was sitting next to grandpa in the front seat  
close enough to smell his hi-karate after-shave &  
trace the veins in his hands as they knitted like winding creeks  
around his slender fists & unfurled as long rivers up his arms  
the front seat with grandpa, a rare allowance for a child born  
in a time when a lack of reverence for any adult  
could find your behind burning from an adroit switching

in the backseat my jealous brothers & sisters rolled their eyes  
snaking their tongues furiously out of their mouths to mock me

grandma broke the term down—riding shotgun  
there was something john wayne-ish about it  
something my cowboy-&-indian-playing ass could dig  
the image was phat,  
I imagined myself, Nat Love of the projects  
afro peeking out from the brim of my Stetson  
steel-faced, eagle-eyed brother, winchester  
between my legs, scouring the horizon for  
bandits & navajo

I wish I could have seen the cancer coming that took grandma  
or the alcoholism that would steal my father's eyes from me  
but my job was simple, to make sure the coast was free  
of obstruction for grandpa's bifocal maneuverings as  
we headed to our ancestral grounds in upper marlboro

what ya see boy, asked grandpa intermittently  
even when it was obvious he needed no help  
my eyes spinning like the pontiac's hubcaps, never leaving  
the road

I answered simply  
its all clear over here grandpa  
& it was as far as I could see.

*Len Roberts (1947–)*

**Climbing the Three Hills in Search of the Best Christmas Tree**

Just seven nights from the  
darkest  
night of the year, my son  
and I climb  
the three hills behind  
the white  
house, his flashlight  
leaping  
from hemlock to fir,  
to white  
pine and blue spruce  
and back  
again. Up, up higher  
he runs,  
shadow among larger  
shadows  
in the below-zero,  
constellated  
half-mooned sky, his  
voice  
so distant at times  
I think  
it is the wind, a rustle  
of tall  
grass, the squeak of my  
boots  
on new snow, his silence  
making  
me shout, Where are you?,  
his floating  
back, Why are you so slow?,  
a good  
question I ask myself to  
the beat  
of my forty-eight-year-old  
heart,  
so many answers rushing up  
that  
I have to stop and command  
them back,  
snow devils whirling  
before  
me, behind me, on all  
sides,

names that gleam and  
black  
out like ancient specks  
of moon-  
light, that old track  
I step  
onto like an escalator  
rising  
to the ridge where the  
best  
trees grow and I know  
I will find my son.

© Len Roberts

*Len Roberts (1947–)*

## **The List of Most Difficult Words**

I was still standing although  
Gabriella Wells and Barbara Ryan were too,  
their bodies dark against the wall of light  
that dull-pewter December afternoon,  
shadows with words that flowed  
so easily from their mouths,  
fluorescent and grievous,  
pied and effervescent,  
words I'd spelled out to the rhythm  
of my father's hoarse whispers  
during our nightly practice sessions  
beneath the dim bulb,  
superfluous, excelsior,  
desultory and exaggeration  
mixed with his Schaefer breath  
and Lucky Strike smoke

as I went down  
The List of Most Difficult Words  
with a man whose wife had left,  
one son grown into madness,  
the other into death,  
my father's hundred-and-five-pound skeleton  
of skin glowing in that beer-flooded kitchen  
when he'd lift the harmonica

to blow a few long, sad riffs  
of country into a song  
while he waited for me to hit  
the single l of spiraling,  
the silent i of receipt,  
the two of us working words hard  
those nights on Olmstead Street,  
sure they would someday save me.

© Len Roberts

*Leon Markowicz (1940–)*

**Birthday Song**

The canary yellow envelope at mail call  
aroused the other seminarians,  
“What’s the occasion?”  
“Ya got me,” I lied and peeked in at  
two Mallards landing  
on a Blessed Virgin blue  
pond with a largemouth bass  
leaping to greet them  
under the swirling script  
in the sky—  
Happy Birthday  
To A Wonderful Son—  
the only reminder that  
tomorrow, just another  
day in the sem,  
was my birthday,  
the seventh since any celebration  
with Mom and Sarah, my sister,  
the seventh away from Winthrop Street  
in Detroit, half a continent west,  
my third birthday  
with my new family  
the Congregation of the Holy Ghost  
whom I adopted with vows of  
poverty, chastity, obedience  
a family but  
no gifts, not even a handkerchief,  
no three-layer cake  
lathered with angel-white icing,  
lipstick-red roses,  
first slice for the birthday boy,  
no candles, family, friends to sing  
Happy Birthday to You

© Leon Markowicz

## *Leon Markowicz (1940–)*

### **Call Out**

three quick rings  
in Detroit  
Hi Ma it's your son

What's the matter?  
Are you OK? only  
my fifth call home  
in eleven years

I'm leaving the seminary,  
said out loud for the first  
time impossible to breathe  
back in those fatal words  
rehearsed for three weeks  
afraid to break her heart  
six months  
from the altar of God  
her only son offering Mass  
just for her to pass through  
the gates of heaven repay her  
for all those years  
she lugged bushel upon  
bushel of other people's wash  
into her home bought  
a mangle burned her right  
hand ironing faster  
and faster  
to keep me out of Ford's  
River Rouge foundry

Did you lose your vocation?  
Lose? like I lost those wool  
gloves she sent me for Christmas?  
lose as if I actually owned it?  
lose forever never to find again?

I'm just not cut  
out for this life  
ain't that the truth  
nothing but the truth  
certainly not  
the whole truth  
silence about the vote  
cast by all the priests brothers

seminarians  
in perpetual vows  
three spare no's  
lined up behind the first  
black ball

© Leon Markowicz



*Lewis Carroll (1832–1898)*

**Jabberwocky**

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought—  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"  
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.

*Lewis Carroll (1832–1898)*

**The Walrus and the Carpenter**

The sun was shining on the sea,  
Shining with all his might;  
He did his very best to make  
The billows smooth and bright—  
And this was odd, because it was  
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,  
Because she thought the sun  
Had got no business to be there  
After the day was done—  
"It's very rude of him," she said,  
"To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,  
The sands were dry as dry.  
You could not see a cloud, because  
No cloud was in the sky;  
No birds were flying overhead—  
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Were walking close at hand;  
They wept like anything to see  
Such quantities of sand.  
"If this were only cleared away,"  
They said, "it would be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops  
Swept it for half a year,  
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,  
"That they could get it clear?"  
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,  
And shed a bitter tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"  
The Walrus did beseech.  
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny beach;  
We cannot do with more than four,  
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,  
But never a word he said;

The eldest Oyster winked his eye,  
And shook his heavy head—  
Meaning to say he did not choose  
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,  
All eager for the treat;  
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,  
Their shoes were clean and neat—  
And this was odd, because, you know,  
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,  
And yet another four;  
And thick and fast they came at last,  
And more, and more, and more—  
All hopping through the frothy waves,  
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter  
Walked on a mile or so,  
And then they rested on a rock  
Conveniently low;  
And all the little Oysters stood  
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,  
"To talk of many things:  
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax—  
And cabbages—and kings—  
And why the sea is boiling hot—  
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,  
"Before we have our chat;  
For some of us are out of breath,  
And all of us are fat!"  
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.  
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,  
"Is what we chiefly need;  
Pepper and vinegar besides  
Are very good indeed—  
Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,  
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,  
Turning a little blue.

"After such kindness, that would be  
A dismal thing to do!"  
"The night is fine," the Walrus said,  
"Do you admire the view?"

"It was so kind of you to come!  
And you are very nice!"  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
"Cut us another slice."  
I wish you were not quite so deaf—  
I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,  
"To play them such a trick,  
After we've brought them out so far,  
And made them trot so quick!"  
The Carpenter said nothing but  
"The butter's spread too thick!"

"I weep for you," the Walrus said;  
"I deeply sympathize."  
With sobs and tears he sorted out  
Those of the largest size,  
Holding his pocket-handkerchief  
Before his streaming eyes.

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,  
"You've had a pleasant run!  
Shall we be trotting home again?"  
But answer came there none—  
And this was scarcely odd, because  
They'd eaten every one.

## *Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)*

### **Dover Beach**

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

*Oliver Wendell Holmes (1809–1894)*

**The Last Leaf**

I saw him once before,  
As he passed by the door,  
And again  
The pavement stones resound,  
As he totters o'er the ground  
With his cane.

They say that in his prime,  
Ere the pruning-knife of Time  
Cut him down,  
Not a better man was found  
By the Crier on his round  
Through the town.

But now he walks the streets,  
And looks at all he meets  
Sad and wan,  
And he shakes his feeble head,  
That it seems as if he said,  
"They are gone."

The mossy marbles rest  
On the lips that he has prest  
In their bloom,  
And the names he loved to hear  
Have been carved for many a year  
On the tomb.

My grandmamma has said—  
Poor old lady, she is dead  
Long ago—  
That he had a Roman nose,  
And his cheek was like a rose  
In the snow;

But now his nose is thin,  
And it rests upon his chin  
Like a staff,  
And a crook is in his back,  
And a melancholy crack  
In his laugh.

I know it is a sin  
For me to sit and grin

At him here;  
But the old three-cornered hat,  
And the breeches, and all that,  
Are so queer!

And if I should live to be  
The last leaf upon the tree  
In the spring,  
Let them smile, as I do now,  
At the old forsaken bough  
Where I cling.

*Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)*

**Hélas**

To drift with every passion till my soul  
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,  
Is it for this that I have given away  
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?  
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll  
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday  
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,  
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.  
Surely there was a time I might have trod  
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance  
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God.  
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod  
I did but touch the honey of romance—  
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?



*Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)*

**Sympathy**

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,  
And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting—  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—  
When he beats his bars and he would be free;  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—  
I know why the caged bird sings!

*Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872–1906)*

**We Wear the Mask**

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
    We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
    We wear the mask!

*Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792–1822)*

**Ozymandias**

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,  
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!'  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

*Philip Freneau (1752–1832)*

**from The House of Night**

1

Trembling I write my dream, and recollect  
A fearful vision at the midnight hour;  
So late, Death o'er me spread his sable wings,  
Painted with fancies of malignant power!

...

3

Let others draw from smiling skies their theme,  
And tell of climes that boast unfading light,  
I draw a darker scene, replete with gloom,  
I sing the horrors of the House of Night.

4

Stranger, believe the truth experience tells,  
Poetic dreams are of a finer cast  
Than those which o'er the sober brain diffused,  
Are but a repetition of some action past.

5

Fancy, I own thy power—when sunk in sleep  
Thou play'st thy wild delusive part so well  
You lift me into immortality,  
Depict new heavens, or draw the scenes of hell.

6

By some sad means, when Reason holds no sway,  
Lonely I roved at midnight o'er a plain  
Where murmuring streams and mingling rivers flow,  
Far to their springs, or seek the sea again.

7

Sweet vernal May! though then thy woods in bloom  
Flourished, yet nought of this could Fancy see,  
No wild pinks blessed the meads, no green the fields,  
And naked seemed to stand each lifeless tree. . . .

*Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784)*

**To a Lady on the Death of Her Husband**

Grim monarch! see, depriv'd of vital breath,  
A young physician in the dust of death:  
Dost thou go on incessant to destroy,  
Our griefs to double, and lay waste our joy?  
"Enough" thou never yet wast known to say,  
Though millions die, the vassals of thy sway:  
Nor youth, nor science, nor the ties of love,  
Nor aught on earth thy flinty heart can move.  
The friend, the spouse from his dire dart to save,  
In vain we ask the sovereign of the grave.  
Fair mourner, there see thy lov'd Leonard laid,  
And o'er him spread the deep impervious shade;  
Clos'd are his eyes, and heavy fetters keep  
His senses bound in never-waking sleep,  
Till time shall cease, till many a starry world  
Shall fall from heav'n, in dire confusion hurl'd,  
Till nature in her final wreck shall lie,  
And her last groan shall rend the azure sky:  
Not, not till then his active soul shall claim  
His body, a divine immortal frame.

But see the softly-stealing tears apace  
Pursue each other down the mourner's face;  
But cease thy tears, bid ev'ry sigh depart,  
And cast the load of anguish from thine heart:  
From the cold shell of his great soul arise,  
And look beyond, thou native of the skies;  
There fix thy view, where fleeter than the wind  
Thy Leonard mounts, and leaves the earth behind.  
Thyself prepare to pass the vale of night  
To join for ever on the hills of light:  
To thine embrace his joyful sprit moves  
To thee, the partner of his earthly loves;  
He welcomes thee to pleasures more refin'd,  
And better suited to th' immortal mind.

*Phillis Wheatley (1753–1784)*

**To S. M., a Young African Painter, on Seeing His Works**

To show the lab'ring bosom's deep intent,  
And thought in living characters to paint,  
When first thy pencil did those beauties give,  
And breathing figures learnt from thee to live,  
How did those prospects give my soul delight,  
A new creation rushing on my sight?  
Still, wond'rous youth! each noble path pursue,  
On deathless glories fix thine ardent view:  
Still may the painter's and the poet's fire  
To aid thy pencil, and thy verse conspire!  
And may the charms of each seraphic theme  
Conduct thy footsteps to immortal fame!  
High to the blissful wonders of the skies  
Elate thy soul, and raise thy wishful eyes.  
Thrice happy, when exalted to survey  
That splendid city, crowned with endless day,  
Whose twice six gates on radiant hinges ring:  
Celestial Salem blooms in endless spring.  
Calm and serene thy moments glide along,  
And may the muse inspire each future song!  
Still, with the sweets of contemplation blessed,  
May peace with balmy wings your soul invest!  
But when these shades of time are chased away,  
And darkness ends in everlasting day,  
On what seraphic pinions shall we move,  
And view the landscapes in the realms above?  
There shall thy tongue in heav'nly murmurs flow,  
And there my muse with heav'nly transport glow:  
No more to tell of Damon's tender sighs,  
Or rising radiance of Aurora's eyes,  
For nobler themes demand a nobler strain,  
And purer language on th' ethereal plain.  
Cease, gentle muse! the solemn gloom of night  
Now seals the fair creation from my sight.

*Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603)*

**[The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy]**

The doubt of future foes exiles my present joy,  
And wit me warns to shun such snares as threaten mine annoy;  
For falsehood now doth flow, and subjects' faith doth ebb,  
Which should not be if reason ruled or wisdom weaved the web.  
But clouds of joys untried do cloak aspiring minds,  
Which turn to rain of late repent by changed course of winds.  
The top of hope supposed the root upreared shall be,  
And fruitless all their grafted guile, as shortly ye shall see.  
The dazzled eyes with pride, which great ambition blinds,  
Shall be unsealed by worthy wights whose foresight falsehood finds.  
The daughter of debate that discord aye doth sow  
Shall reap no gain where former rule still peace hath taught to know.  
No foreign banished wight shall anchor in this port;  
Our realm brooks not seditious sects, let them elsewhere resort.  
My rusty sword through rest shall first his edge employ  
To poll their tops that seek such change or gape for future joy.

## *Robert Browning (1812–1889)*

### **My Last Duchess**

That's my last duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without



Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

## *Robert Burns (1759–1796)*

### **To a Mouse**

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
    Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
    Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion  
    Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
    An' fellow mortal!

I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen icker in a thrave  
    'S a sma' request;  
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,  
    An' never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!  
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
    O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's win's ensuin,  
    Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an waste,  
An' weary winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
    Thou thought to dwell,  
Till crash! the cruel coulter past  
    Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble  
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,  
    But house or hald,  
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,  
    An' cranreuch cauld!

But Mousie, thou art no thy lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain:

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain  
For promised joy!

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But och! I backward cast my e'e  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho I canna see,  
I guess an' fear!

## *Robert Frost (1874–1963)*

### **Mending Wall**

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
"Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offense.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well

He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

*Robert Frost (1874–1963)*

**The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that, the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

*Robert Herrick (1591–1674)*

**To Find God**

Weigh me the fire; or canst thou find  
A way to measure out the wind?  
Distinguish all those floods that are  
Mixed in that wat'ry theater,  
And taste thou them as saltless there,  
As in their channel first they were.  
Tell me the people that do keep  
Within the kingdoms of the deep;  
Or fetch me back that cloud again,  
Beshivered into seeds of rain.  
Tell me the motes, dust, sands, and spears  
Of corn, when summer shakes his ears;  
Show me that world of stars, and whence  
They noiseless spill their influence.  
This if thou canst; then show me Him  
That rides the glorious cherubim.

*Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936)*

**Recessional**

1897

God of our fathers, known of old,  
Lord of our far-flung battle-line,  
Beneath whose awful Hand we hold  
Dominion over palm and pine—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies;  
The Captains and the Kings depart:  
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,  
An humble and a contrite heart.  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away;  
On dune and headland sinks the fire:  
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday  
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!  
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose  
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe,  
Such boastings as the Gentiles use,  
Or lesser breeds without the Law—  
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,  
Lest we forget—lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust  
In reeking tube and iron shard,  
All valiant dust that builds on dust,  
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard,  
For frantic boast and foolish word—  
Thy mercy on Thy People, Lord!



*Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)*

**from The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**

*Argument*

How a Ship having passed the Line was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; and how from thence she made her course to the tropical Latitude of the Great Pacific Ocean; and of the strange things that befell; and in what manner the Ancyent Marinere came back to his own Country.

PART I

[An ancient Mariner meeteth three Gallants bidden to a wedding-feast and detaineth one.]

It is an ancient Mariner,  
And he stoppeth one of three.  
—"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,  
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

The Bridegroom's doors are opened wide,  
And I am next of kin;  
The guests are met, the feast is set:  
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,  
"There was a ship," quoth he.  
"Hold off! unhand me, graybeard loon!"  
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

[The Wedding-Guest is spellbound by the eye of the old seafaring man, and constrained to hear his tale.]

He holds him with his glittering eye—  
The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years' child:  
The Mariner hath his will.

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:  
He cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,  
Merrily did we drop

[The Mariner tells how the ship sailed southward with a good wind and fair weather, till it reached the Line.]

Below the kirk, below the hill,  
Below the lighthouse top.

The Sun came up upon the left,  
Out of the sea came he!  
And he shone bright, and on the right  
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,  
Till over the mast at noon—" "  
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.

[The Wedding-Guest heareth the bridal music; but the Mariner continueth his tale.]

The bride hath paced into the hall,  
Red as a rose is she;  
Nodding their heads before her goes  
The merry minstrelsy.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;  
And thus spake on that ancient man,  
The bright-eyed Mariner.

[The ship driven by a storm toward the South Pole.]

"And now the storm-blast came, and he  
Was tyrannous and strong;  
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe,  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.

[The land of ice, and of fearful sounds where no living thing was to be seen.]

And through the drifts the snowy clifts  
Did send a dismal sheen:

Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—  
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a swound!

[Till a great sea-bird, called the Albatross, came through the snow-fog,  
and was received with great joy and hospitality.]

At length did cross an Albatross,  
Thorough the fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,  
And round and round it flew.  
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;  
The helmsman steered us through!

[And lo! the Albatross proveth a bird of good omen, and followeth the ship  
as it returned northward through fog and floating ice.]

And a good south wind sprung up behind;  
The Albatross did follow,  
And every day, for food or play,  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,  
It perched for vespers nine;  
Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke white,  
Glimmered the white Moon-shine."

[The ancient Mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen.]

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!  
From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—  
Why look'st thou so?"—With my crossbow  
I shot the Albatross.

## PART II

The Sun now rose upon the right:  
Out of the sea came he,  
Still hid in mist, and on the left  
Went down into the sea.

And the good south wind still blew behind,  
But no sweet bird did follow,  
Nor any day for food or play  
Came to the mariners' hollo!

[His shipmates cry out against the ancient Mariner, for killing the bird of good luck.]

And I had done a hellish thing,  
And it would work 'em woe:  
For all averred, I had killed the bird  
That made the breeze to blow.  
Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,  
That made the breeze to blow!

[But when the fog cleared off, they justify the same, and thus make themselves accomplices in the crime. ]

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
The glorious Sun uprist:  
Then all averred, I had killed the bird  
That brought the fog and mist.  
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
That bring the fog and mist.

[The fair breeze continues; the ship enters the Pacific Ocean, and sails northward,  
even till it reaches the Line.]

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,  
The furrow followed free;  
We were the first that ever burst  
Into that silent sea.

[The ship hath been suddenly becalmed.]

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be;  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.

Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.

[And the Albatross begins to be avenged.]

Water, water, everywhere,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, everywhere,  
Nor any drop to drink.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.

About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue and white.

[A Spirit had followed them; one of the invisible inhabitants of this planet, neither departed souls nor angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.]

And some in dreams assurèd were  
Of the Spirit that plagued us so;  
Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
From the land of mist and snow.

And every tongue, through utter drought,  
Was withered at the root;  
We could not speak, no more than if  
We had been choked with soot.

[The shipmates, in their sore distress, would fain throw the whole guilt on the ancient Mariner: in sign whereof they hang the dead sea-bird round his neck.]

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks  
Had I from old and young!  
Instead of the cross, the Albatross  
About my neck was hung.

*Sappho (ca. 7th–6th century B.C.)*

**To Atthis**

My Atthis, although our dear Anaktoria  
lives in distant Sardis,  
she thinks of us constantly, and

of the life we shared in days when for her  
you were a splendid goddess,  
and your singing gave her deep joy.

Now she shines among Lydian women as  
when the red-fingered moon  
rises after sunset, erasing

stars around her, and pouring light equally  
across the salt sea  
and over densely flowered fields;

and lucent dew spreads on the earth to quicken  
roses and fragile thyme  
and the sweet-blooming honey-lotus.

Now while our darling wanders she thinks of  
lovely Atthis's love,  
and longing sinks deep in her breast.

She cries loudly for us to come! We hear,  
for the night's many tongues  
carry her cry across the sea.

(tr. Willis Barnstone)

## *Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)*

### **Kubla Khan**

Or a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.  
So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the sacred river.  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
From the fountain and the caves.  
It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer  
In a vision once I saw:

It was an Abyssinian maid,  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
Singing of Mount Abora.  
Could I revive within me  
Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.



## *Sarah Wentworth Morton (1759–1846)*

### **To Mr. Stuart**

*Upon Seeing Those Portraits Which Were Painted by Him at  
Philadelphia, in the Beginning of the Present Century.*

Stuart, thy Portraits speak!—with skill divine  
Round the light graces flows the waving line;  
Expression in its finest utterance lives,  
And a new language to creation gives.  
Each varying trait the gifted artist shows,  
Wisdom majestic in his bending brows;  
The warrior's open front, his eye of fire—  
As where the charms of bashful youth retire.  
Or patient, plodding, and with wealth content,  
The man of commerce counts his cent per cent.  
'Tis character that breathes, 'tis soul that twines  
Round the rich canvas, traced in living lines.  
Speaks in the face, as in the form display'd,  
Warms in the tint, and mellows in the shade.  
Those touching graces, and that front sublime,  
Thy hand shall rescue from the spoil of time.  
Hence the fair victim scorns the threat'ning rage,  
And stealing step, of slow advancing age.  
Still on her cheek the bright carnation blows,  
Her lip's deep blush its breathing sweetness shows.  
For like the magic wand, thy pencil gives  
Its potent charm, and every feature lives.

Even as the powerful eye's transcendent ray  
Bends its soft glance and bids the heart obey,  
Thy fine perceptions flow, by heaven designed,  
To reach the thought, and pierce the unfolded mind.  
Through its swift course the rapid feeling trace,  
And stamp the sovereign passion on the face.

Even one, by no enlivening grace arrayed,  
One, born to linger in affliction's shade,  
Hast thou, kind artist, with attraction dressed,  
With all that nature in her soul expressed.

Go on, and may reward thy cares attend;  
—The friend of genius must remain thy friend.  
Though sordid minds with impious touch presume  
To blend thy laurel with the cypress gloom,  
With tears of grief its shining leaves to fade,  
Its fair hope withering in the cheerless shade,

The well-earned meed of liberal praise deny,  
And on thy talents gaze with dubious eye.

Genius is sorrow's child—to want allied—  
Consoled by glory, and sustained by pride.  
To souls sublime her richest wreath she owes,  
And loves that fame which kindred worth bestows.

*ir Philip Sidney (1554–1586)*

**from Astrophil and Stella**

1

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,  
That she dear she might take some pleasure of my pain,  
Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,  
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,  
I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:  
Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,  
Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow  
Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.  
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;  
Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows;  
And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.  
Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,  
Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:  
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

*Sir Walter Raleigh (ca. 1552–1618)*

**A Vision upon the Fairy Queen**

Methought I saw the grave where Laura lay,  
    Within that temple where the vestal flame  
    Was wont to burn; and, passing by that way,  
    To see that buried dust of living fame,  
Whose tomb fair Love, and fairer Virtue kept:  
    All suddenly I saw the Fairy Queen;  
    At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept,  
    And, from thenceforth, those Graces were not seen:  
For they this queen attended; in whose stead  
    Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse:  
    Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,  
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce:  
    Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,  
    And cursed the access of that celestial thief!

*Thomas Campion (1567–1620)*

**Now Winter Nights Enlarge**

Now winter nights enlarge  
The number of their hours;  
And clouds their storms discharge  
Upon the airy towers.  
Let now the chimneys blaze  
And cups o'erflow with wine,  
Let well-tuned words amaze  
With harmony divine.  
Now yellow waxen lights  
Shall wait on honey love  
While youthful revels, masques, and courtly sights  
Sleep's leaden spells remove.

This time doth well dispense  
With lovers' long discourse;  
Much speech hath some defense,  
Though beauty no remorse.  
All do not all things well;  
Some measures comely tread,  
Some knotted riddles tell,  
Some poems smoothly read.  
The summer hath his joys,  
And winter his delights;  
Though love and all his pleasures are but toys,  
They shorten tedious nights.

*Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)*

**Hap**

If but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

*Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)*

**The Darkling Thrush**

I leant upon a coppice gate  
    When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
    The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
    Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
    Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
    The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
    The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
    Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
    Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
    The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
    Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
    In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
    Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
    Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
    Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
    His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
    And I was unaware.

*Thomas Moore (1779–1852)*

**Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms**

Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,  
Which I gaze on so fondly today,  
Were to change by tomorrow, and fleet in my arms,  
Like fairy-gifts fading away,  
Thou wouldst still be adored, as this moment thou art,  
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,  
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart  
Would entwine itself verdantly still.

It is not while beauty and youth are thine own,  
And thy cheeks unprofaned by a tear  
That the fervor and faith of a soul can be known,  
To which time will but make thee more dear;  
No, the heart that has truly loved never forgets,  
But as truly loves on to the close,  
As the sunflower turns on her god, when he sets,  
The same look which she turned when he rose.



*Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542)*

**They Flee from Me**

They flee from me that sometime did me seek  
With naked foot stalking in my chamber.  
I have seen them gentle tame and meek  
That now are wild and do not remember  
That sometime they put themselves in danger  
To take bread at my hand; and now they range  
Busily seeking with a continual change.

Thanked be fortune, it hath been otherwise  
Twenty times better; but once in special,  
In thin array after a pleasant guise,  
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,  
And she me caught in her arms long and small;  
And therewithal sweetly did me kiss,  
And softly said, Dear heart, how like you this?

It was no dream, I lay broad waking.  
But all is turned thorough my gentleness  
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;  
And I have leave to go of her goodness  
And she also to use newfangledness.  
But since that I so kindly am served,  
I would fain know what she hath deserved.

*W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911)*

**If You're Anxious for to Shine in the High Aesthetic Line**

Am I alone  
And unobserved? I am!

Then let me own  
I'm an aesthetic sham!

This air severe  
Is but a mere  
Veneer!

This cynic smile  
Is but a wile  
Of guile!

This costume chaste  
Is but good taste  
Misplaced!

Let me confess!  
A languid love for lilies does not blight me!  
Lank limbs and haggard cheeks do not delight me!  
I do not care for dirty greens  
By any means.  
I do not long for all one sees  
That's Japanese.  
I am not fond of uttering platitudes  
In stained-glass attitudes.  
In short, my medievalism's affectation,  
Born of a morbid love of admiration!

If you're anxious for to shine in the high aesthetic line as a man of culture rare,  
You must get up all the germs of the transcendental terms, and plant them  
everywhere.  
You must lie upon the daisies and discourse in novel phrases of your complicated  
state of mind.  
The meaning doesn't matter if it's only idle chatter of a transcendental kind.  
And everyone will say,  
As you walk your mystic way,  
"If this young man expresses himself in terms too deep for me,  
Why, what a very singularly deep young man this deep young man must be!"

Be eloquent in praise of the very dull old days which have long since passed  
away,  
And convince 'em, if you can, that the reign of good Queen Anne was Culture's

palmiest day.

Of course you will pooh-pooh whatever's fresh and new, and declare it's crude  
and mean,

For Art stopped short in the cultivated court of the Empress Josephine.

And everyone will say,

As you walk your mystic way,

"If that's not good enough for him which is good enough for me,

Why, what a very cultivated kind of youth this kind of youth must be!"

Then a sentimental passion of a vegetable fashion must excite your languid  
spleen,

An attachment à la Plato for a bashful young potato, or a not-too-French French  
bean!

Though the Philistines may jostle, you will rank as an apostle in the high  
aesthetic band,

If you walk down Piccadilly with a poppy or a lily in your medieval hand.

And everyone will say,

As you walk your flowery way,

"If he's content with a vegetable love which would certainly not suit me,

Why, what a most particularly pure young man this pure young man must be!"

*Walt Whitman (1819–1892)*

**from Passage to India**

1

Singing my days,  
Singing the great achievements of the present,  
Singing the strong light works of engineers,  
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)  
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,  
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,  
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;  
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O soul,  
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!  
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!  
The past—the infinite greatness of the past!  
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?  
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still keeps on,  
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

2

Passage O soul to India!  
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truths of the world,  
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,  
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,  
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,  
The deep diving bibles and legends,  
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;  
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!  
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the known, mounting  
to heaven!  
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, burnish'd with gold!  
Towers of fabled immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!  
You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!  
You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India!  
Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?  
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,  
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,  
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,  
The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,  
You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,  
Your engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,  
You, not for trade or transportation only,  
But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

*William Blake (1757–1827)*

**The Tyger**

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forest of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies  
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?  
On what wings dare he aspire?  
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,  
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?  
And when thy heart began to beat,  
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?  
In what furnace was thy brain?  
What the anvil? what dread grasp  
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,  
And watered heaven with their tears,  
Did he smile his work to see?  
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright  
In the forests of the night,  
What immortal hand or eye  
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

*William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)*

**The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

*William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)*

**When You Are Old**

When you are old and gray and full of sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.



*William Langland (ca.1330–1387)*

**from Piers Plowman**

In a somer seson, whan softe was the sonne,  
I shoop me into shroudes as I a sheep were,  
In habite as an heremite unholy of werkes,  
Wente wide in this world wondres to here.  
Ac on a May morwenyng on Malverne Hilles  
Me bifel a ferly, of Fairye me thoghte.  
I was wery [of] wandred and wente me to reste  
Under a brood bank by a bournes syde;  
And as I lay and lenede and loked on the watres,  
I slombred into a slepyng, it sweyed so murye.

    Thanne gan [me] to meten a merveillous swevene—  
That I was in a wilderness, wiste I nevere where.  
As I biheeld into the eest an heigh to the sonne,  
I seigh a tour on a toft trieliche ymaked,  
A deep dale bynethe, a dongeon therinne,  
With depe diches and derke and dredfulle of sighte.  
A fair feeld ful of folk fond I ther bitwene—  
Of alle manere of men, the meene and the riche,  
Werchyng and wandryng as the world asketh.

*William Shakespeare (1564–1616)*

**Sonnet 29**

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee—and then my state,  
Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love rememb'ed such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

*William Shakespeare (1564–1616)*

**Sonnet 55**

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments  
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;  
But you shall shine more bright in these contents  
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.  
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,  
And broils root out the work of masonry,  
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn  
The living record of your memory.  
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity  
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room  
Even in the eyes of all posterity  
That wear this world out to the ending doom.  
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,  
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

*William Wordsworth (1770–1850)*

**Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey**

Five years have passed; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur. Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

                                    These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye;  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind  
With tranquil restoration—feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened—that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on—

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul;  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again;  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led—more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colors and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, not any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned

To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear—both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;

And let the misty mountain winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—  
If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service; rather say  
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

## *William Wordsworth (1770–1850)*

### **The Tables Turned**

An Evening Scene on the Same Subject

Up! up! my Friend, and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun, above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your Teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless—  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things:—  
We murder to dissect.

Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.