ANTOLOGIA DELLA POESIA INGLESE
per i corsi di letteratura inglese della laurea triennale

a cura di
CLARA ASSONI e DANIELA PAGANI
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Milano 2007
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http://www.unicatt.it/librario
in copertina: Hammersmith Bridge, Londra

Questo volume è stato stampato nel mese di ottobre 2007
presso la LITOGRAFIA SOLARI, Peschiera Borromeo (Milano)
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THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY
The Longè Love That in My Thought Doth Harbour

The longè¹ love that in my thought doth harbour³
And in mine hert⁴ doth keep his residence,
Into my face presseth with bold pretence
And therein campeth, spreading his banner⁵.

She that me learneth⁶ to love and suffer
And will⁷ that my trust and lustës negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame and reverence,
With his⁸ hardiness⁹ taketh displeasure.

¹ Adapted from Petrarch’s Rime 140:
   Amor, che nel penser mio vive e regna,
   E ’l suo seggio maggior nel mio cor tëne,
   T’alor armato ne la fronte vêne:
   Ivi si loca, et ivi pon sua insegna.
   Quella ch’ amare e sofferr ne ’nsegna,
   E vôl che ’l gran desio, l’accesa spene
   Ragion, vergogna e reverenza affrene,
   Di nostro ardir fra sé stessa si sdegnna.
   Onde Amor pavanoso fugge al core,
   Lasciando ogni sua impresa, e piange e trema;
   Ivi s’asconde, e non appar piú fôre.
   Che posì’ so far, temendo il mio signore,
   Se non star seco infin a l’ ora estrema?
   Ché bel fin fa chi ben amando more.

² lasting.
³ temporarily reside.
⁴ Playing on “hart” (= deer) and “heart”.
⁵ The first four lines of this sonnet introduce the “conceit” (or elaborately, sustained metaphor) of love as a kind of warrior who, “with bold pretense”, flaunts his warlike presence by means of the “banner”. Elaborate metaphors of this kind are found often in Elizabethan love poetry and sometimes, as in this instance, an entire sonnet will turn on a single conceit.
⁶ teaches.
⁷ to will, i.e., to make sure that trust and lustës negligence (public) confidence (in her love) and the neglect (of propriety in showing) sexual desire (for her).
⁸ the God of Love’s.
⁹ boldness.
Wherewithall unto the hert's forest\textsuperscript{10} he fleeth,\nLeaving his enterprise with pain and cry,\nAnd there him hideth and not appeareth.\nWhat may I do when my master feareth\nBut in the field with him\textsuperscript{11} to live and die?\nFor good is the life ending faithfully.

(pub. 1557)

\textsuperscript{10} A phrase not in Petrarch, one that plays on "hart's" = (deer's) and "heart's".
\textsuperscript{11} Inconsistent with line 9 (the lord has fled to the forest).
My Galley, Chargèd with Forgetfulness

My galley, chargèd with forgetfulness,
Thorough2 sharp seas in winter nights doth pass
'Tween rock and rock3; and eke4 my enemy5, alas,
That is my lord, steereth6 with cruelness,
And every oar7 a thought in readiness,
As though that death were light in such a case
An endless wind doth tear the sail apace
Of forced sighs8 and trusty fearfulness9.
A rain of tears, a cloud of dark disdain,
Hath done the wearied cords10 great hinderance;
Wreathèd11 with error and eke with ignorance.
The stars12 be hid that led me to this pain;
Drownèd is Reason that should me consort13,
And I remain despairing of the port.

(pub. 1557)

1 Adapted from Petrarch’s Rime 189:
   Passa la nave mia colma d’oblio
   Per aspro mare, a mezza notte, il verno
   E’ drawers Scilla e Cariddi: ed al governo
   Siede l’ signore, anzi l’ nimico mio
   A ciascun remo un penser pronto e rio,
   Che la tempesta e ’l fin par ch’ abbi a’ scherno:
   La vela rompe un vento, umido, eterno,
   Di sospir, di speranze e di desio
   Pioggia li lagrimar, nebbia di sdegni
   Bagna e rallenta le già stanche sarte,
   Che son d’ error con ignoranzia attorto
   Celansi i duo mei dolci usati segni;
   Morta fra l’ onde è la ragion e l’ arte:
   Tal ch’ i’ incomincio a desesperar del porto.

2 through.

3 Petrarch’s Scylla and Charybdis.

4 also.

5 Cupid.

6 “who” is understood.

7 oar, as in Petrarch, but playing possibly on “hour.”

8 This line modifies “An endless wind” in line 7.

9 fear to trust.

10 tackle, lines holding the sails in place.

11 wretched.

12 Cf. Petrarch, “i duo mei dolci usati segni,” “my two sweet familiar stars.”

13 accompany.
Whoso List to Hunt

Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind;
But as for me, hêlas, I may no more.
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
As well as I may spend his time in vain.

1 Adapted from Petrach's Rime 190:
Una candida cerva sopra l’erba
Verde m’apparve, con duo corna d’oro,
Fra due riviere, a l’ombra d’un alloro,
Levando l’sole, a la stagione acerba.
Era sua vista si dolce superba,
Ch’i lasci, per seguirla, ogni lavoro;
Come l’avaro, che ‘n cercar tesoro
Con diletto l’affanno disacerba.
“Nessun mi tocchi,” al bel collo dintorno
Scritto avea di diamanti e di topazi;
“Libera farmi al mio Cesare parve.”
Ed era l’sol già volto al mezzo giorno,
Gli occhi miei stanchi di mirar, non sazi;
Quand’io cadde ne l’acqua, ed ella sparve.

2 cares, whoever wishes.
3 female deer.
4 alas.
5 futile labour.
6 Playing on the word “dear”.
7 since.
8 ‘in a net I seek to hold the wind’: proverbial.
And graven with diamonds in letters plain
There is written, her fair neck round about:
Noli me tangere⁹, for Caesar’s I am¹⁰,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

(pub. 1815)

⁹ “touch me not”, a phrase from the Vulgate. See Christ’s words to
Mary Magdalene in the garden after his resurrection: ‘Touch me not; for I
am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say’.

¹⁰ Noli me tangere quia Caesaris sum (‘Touch me not, for I am
Caesar’s’) was inscribed on the collars of Caesar’s hinds, which were then
set free and were presumably safe from hunters. Wyatt’s sonnet is usually
supposed to refer to Anne Boleyn, in whom Henry VIII became interested
in 1526.
They Flee from Me

They flee from me that sometime did me seek
With naked foot, stalking1 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 danger2
To take bread at my hand; and now they range,
Busily seeking with a continual change.

Thankèd be fortune it hath been otherwise
Twenty times better3; but once in special4,
In thin array after a pleasant guise5;
When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small6;
Therewithall sweetly did me kiss
And softly said, ‘Dear heart’, how like you this?7

It was no dream: I lay broad waking8.
But all is turned thorough my gentleness
Into a strange fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness9,
And she also, to use newfangleness10.
But since that I so kindely11 am served
I would fain know what she hath deserved.

(pub. 1557)

---

1 Walking carefully in a stealthy way.
2 under obligation to me, in my debt (or possibly even in my power).
3 Better on twenty occasions; or more than twenty times?
4 especially.
5 pleasing style, or possibly behaviour or livery (dress).
6 slender.
7 A play on ‘hart’.
8 wide anuse.
9 Her gracious permission to go (ironically).
10 Literally: fondness for novelty, following the fashion; fickleness.
11 naturally, in a kind way (ironically), and according to nature (as a wild animal would behave).
Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey
(1517-1547)

Love, That Doth Reign and Live Within My Thought

Love that doth reign and live within my thought
And built his seat within my captive breast,
Clad in the arms wherein with me he fought,
Oft in my face he doth his banner rest.
But she that taught me love and suffer pain,
My doubtful hope and eke my hot desire
With shamefast look to shadow and refrain,
Her smiling grace converteth straight to ire.
And coward Love then to the heart apace
Taketh his flight, where he doth lurk and plain
His purpose lost, and dare not show his face.
For my lord's guilt thus faultless bide I pain;
Yet from my lord shall not my foot remove:
Sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

(pub. 1557)

1 Adapted from Petrarch's Rime 140. Cf. Wyatt's "The Lönge Love," a translation of the same sonnet.
2 also.
3 modest.
4 complain.
5 endure.
The Soote Season

The soote\(^1\) season, that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill and eke the vale;
The nightingale with feathers new she sings,
The turtle to her make\(^1\) hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs,
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale,
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings,
The fishes float with new repairèd scale,
The adder all her slough away she slings,
The swift swallow pursueth the flie's small,
The busy bee her honey now she mings\(^4\).
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale\(^5\).
And thus I see, among these pleasant things,
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs\(^6\).

(pub. 1557)

---

\(^1\) In this adaptation from Petrarch’s *Rime* 310, Surrey has changed the details of nature from Italian to English:

Zefiro torna, e il bel tempo rimena,
e i fiori e le erbe, sua dolce famiglia,
e garrir Progne, e pianger Filomena,
e primavera candida e vermiglia.
Ridono i prati, e il ciel si rasseren;
Giove s’allegra di mirar sua figlia;
L’aria, e l’acqua, e la terra è d’amor piena;
ogni animal d’amor si riconsiglia.
Ma per me, lasso!, tornano i più gravi sospiri, che del cor profondo tragge
quella ch’al ciel se ne portò le chiavi;
e cantar augeletti, e fiorir piagg,
e ’n belle donne oneste atti soavi
sono un deserto, e fere aspre e selvagge.

\(^2\) sweet, fragrant.

\(^3\) turtledove to her mate.

\(^4\) mingles.

\(^5\) harm.

\(^6\) to spring / Spring.
Alas! So All Things Now Do Hold Their Pace

Alas! so all things now do hold their pace,
Heaven and earth disturbèd in no thing;
The beasts, the air, the birds their song do cease,
The nightès chare2 the stars about do bring.
Calm is the sea, the weaves work less and less; 5
So am not I, whom love, alas, doth wring,
bringing before my face the great increase
Of my desires, whereat I weep and sing,
In joy and woe, as in a doubtful ease.
For my sweet thoughts sometime do pleasure bring, 10
But by and by the cause of my disease3
Gives me a pang that inwardly doth sting,
When that I think what grief it is again
To live and lack the thing should rid my pain.

(pub. 1557)

---

1 Adapted from Petrarch’s *Rime* 164:
Or che 1 ciel e la terra e l’ vento tace
e le fere e gli augelli il sonno affrena,
Notte il carro stellato in giro mena,
e nel suo letto il mar senza’onda giace,
veggio, penso, ardo, pango; e chi mi sface
sempre m’è inanzi per mia dolce pena:
guerra è l’ mio stato, d’ira e di duol piena;
e sol di lei pensando ho qualche pace,
Così sol d’una chiara fonte viva
move l’ dolce e l’amaro, ond’io mi pasco;
una man sola mi risana e punge.
E perché l mio martir non giunga a riva
mille volte il di moro e mille nasco;
tanto da la salute mia son lunge.

2 Perhaps from *charet*: chariot, car; but derived from Petrarch’s “carro”: the Great Bear.

3 *discomfort.*
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 sunburn'd brain.
But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;
Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows;
And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.
Thus great with child to speak and helpless in my throes,
Biting my trewand pen, beating myself for spite,
"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

(pub. 1591)
From *Astrophil and Stella*

**Sonnet XXXI — With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb’st the skies**

With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb’st the skies!
How silently, and with how wan a face!
What, may it be that even in heav’nly place
That busy archer¹ his sharp arrows tries!
Sure, if that long-with love-acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel’st a lover’s case,
I read it in thy looks; thy languish’d grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state descries.
Then, ev’n of fellowship, O Moon, tell me,
Is constant love deem’d there but want of wit?
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?
Do they above love to be lov’d, and yet
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness? ¹

(pub. 1591)

¹ Cupid.
² Terminal period changed to a question mark.
From *Astrophil and Stella*

**Sonnet LXXI — Who will in fairest book of nature know**

Who will in fairest book of nature know  
How virtue may best lodg'd in beauty be,  
Let him but learn of Love to read in thee,  
Stella, those fair lines which true goodness show.

There shall he find all vices' overthrow,  
Not by rude force, but sweetest sovereignty  
Of reason, from whose light those night-birds' fly;  
That inward sun in thine eyes shineth so.

And, not content to be perfection's heir  
Thyself, dost strive all minds that way to move,  
Who mark in thee what is in thee most fair.  
So while thy beauty draws thy heart to love,  
As fast thy virtue bends that love to good:

But “Ah,” Desire still cries, “Give me some food!”

(pub. 1591)

1 Adapted from Petrarch’s *Rime* 248:

Chi vuol veder quantunque pò Natura  
e 'l Ciel tra noi, venga a mirar coestei,  
ch'è sola un sol, non pur a li occhi mei,  
ma al mondo cieco, che vertù non cura;  
et venga tosto, perché Morte fura  
prima i migliori, et lascia star i rei:  
questa aspettata al regno delli déi  
cosa bella mortal passa, et non dura.  
Vedrà, s'arriva a tempo, ogni vertute,  
ogni bellezza, ogni real costume  
giunti in un corpo con mirabil' tempre:  
allor dirà che mie rime son mute,  
'ingegno offeso dal soverchio lume;  
ma se piú tarda, avrà da pianger sempre.

2 i.e., vices.
Lyke as a ship that through the Ocean wyde,
By conduct of some star doth make her way,
Whenas a storme hath dimd her trusty guyde,
Out of her course doth wander far astray.
So I whose star, that wont with her bright ray, 5
Me to direct, with clouds is ouercast,
Doe wander now in darknesse and dismay,
Through hidden perils round about me plast‘.
Yet hope I well, that when this storme is past
My Helice’ the lodestar of my lyfe 10
Will shine again, and looke on me at last,
With louely light to cleare my cloudy grief.
Till then I wander carefull’ comfortlesse,
In secret sorow and sad pensiuensese.

(1592-1594, pub. 1595)
From Amoretti
LXVII — Like as a huntsman after weary chase

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: 5
So after long pursuit and vain assay,
When I all weary had the chace 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: 10
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.¹

(1592-1594, pub. 1595)

¹ An imitation of Petrarch’s Rime 190, Una candida cerva, but with a different ending.
From *Amoretti*

**LXIV — Comming to kisse her lyps**

(such grace I Found)

Comming to kisse her lyps (such grace I Found)  
Me seemed I smelt a gardin of sweet flowres  
That dainty odours from them threw around  
For damzels fit to decke their lovers bowres.  
Her lips did smell lyke unto gillyflowers,  
Her ruddy cheeks lyke budded bellamoures,  
Her lovely eyes like pincks but newly spred,  
Her goodly bosome lyke a strawberry bed,  
Her neck lyke to a bouche of cullambynnes;  
Her brest lyke lillyes ere theyr leaves be shed,  
Her nipples lyke yong blossomed jessemynes.  
Such fragrant flowres doe give most odorous smell,  
But her sweet odour did them all excell.

(1592-1594, pub. 1595)

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1 Most of the imagery of this sonnet is imitated from the *Song of Solomon* 4:10-16.
2 *carnations*.
3 *bellflowers*.
4 *jasmines*. 
From Amoretti
LXV — One day I wrote her name upon the strand

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washed it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tyde, and made my pains his pray.  
"Vayne man", sayd she, "that doest in vaine assay, 5
A mortall thing so to immortalize;  
For I myself shall lyke to this decay,
And eek my name be wyped out lykewize."
"Not so," (quod I) "let baser things devize, 10
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:"
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name:
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,
Our love shall live, and later life renew."  

(1592-1594, pub. 1595)

\[^1\] beach.
\[^2\] prey.
\[^3\] attempt.
\[^4\] also.
\[^5\] quoth.
\[^6\] contrive.
William Shakespeare
(1564-1616)

Sonnet XVIII — Shall I compare thee to a summer's day

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

(pub. 1609)

1 duration, period.
2 beauty.
3 stripped of gay apparel, stripped of its ornament.
4 ow'est.
5 When in (this) immortal poetry you become even with time.
6 The boast of immortality for one's verse was a Renaissance convention and goes back to the classics. It implies, not egotism on the part of the poet, but faith in the permanence of poetry.
Sonnet LV — Not marble, nor the gilded monuments

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, 5
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 10
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.

(pub. 1609)

1 Than in a tomb or effigy that time wears away and covers with dust.
2 Mars’.
3 the enmity of oblivion, of being forgotten.
Sonnet LXXIII — That time of year thou mayst in me behold

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin’d choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see’st the twilight of such day 5
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, 10
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consum’d with that which it was nourish’d by.
    This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,
    To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

(pub. 1609)

1 The ashes of what was formerly the fuel.
Sonnet XCIV — They that have power to hurt and will do none

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show;
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow:
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet
Though to itself it only live and die,
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds;
Lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

(pub. 1609)

1 seem to do.
2 They do not squander nature’s gifts.
3 surpasses.
4 i.e., weeds. This also occurs in the anonymous play (probably by Shakespeare), Edward III, II, i, 451.
Sonnet CXVI — Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no, it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his hight be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

(pub. 1609)

6 From the marriage service: "If any of you know cause or just impediment why these persons should not be joined together…"
7 The one who departs from love.
3 Seamark (cf. landmark).
4 Man cannot grasp the star's heavenly worth and astrological influence.
5 The star's value is incalculable, although the star's “hight” (altitude) may be known and used for practical purposes.
6 Slave or victim.
7 Time's (as also in line 11).
8 The brink of Doomsday.
Sonnet CXXIX — Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action; and till action, lust
Is perjur'd, murd'rous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust;
Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight;
Past reason hunted; and, no sooner had,
Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad:
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;

1 The meaning will appear clearly if lust in action is regarded as the subject. Expense: (1) spending, expenditure; (2) by implication, "ejaculation." Spirit: Thomas Thomas (1587) translates Latin "spiritus" as "Spirite, breath, winde, sauour, the soule, life, smell, aire, noise, fiercenes, heart, stomack, hawtinesse of courage." Shakespeare's sense here may be "the spirit of life [that] doeth walke mixed with bloode," that is, the "pulse" (Thomas Thomas, "arteria"). Waste: (1) squandering, useless consumption; and (2) by implication and punning, waist (a woman's middle), conventionally spelled "waste" in the period. The word order here is inverted and slightly obscures the meaning. Lust, when put into action, expends "spirit" (life, vitality) in a "waste" (desert, with a possible pun on "waist") of shame.

2 excessive.
3 brutal.
4 Used sexually for pleasure.
5 immediately.
6 This line and the next exemplify rhetorical anaphora, the repetition of the same phrase ("Past reason") in successive clauses.
7 A simile. The bait here ("lust in action" or copulation) is set out by the hunter to catch the animal but turns out to catch the hunter.
8 (1) set in place; (2) by implication, bedded. An example of rhetorical anadiplosis, the repetition of the last word of one clause ("mad") at the beginning of the next clause.
9 made in.
10 (1) experienced; and (2) by implication, taken sexually. An example of rhetorical polyptoton, the repetition of a word with altered inflections ("Had, having... to have").
A bliss in proof\textsuperscript{11}, and prov\textsuperscript{d}\textsuperscript{12}, a very\textsuperscript{13} woe;
Before, a joy propos\textsuperscript{d}; behind, a dream\textsuperscript{14}.

All this the world well knows; yet none knows well\textsuperscript{15}
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell\textsuperscript{16}.

(pub. 1609)

\textsuperscript{11} A bliss during the experience.
\textsuperscript{12} \textit{proof and}.
\textsuperscript{13} true.
\textsuperscript{14} A metaphor. Shakespeare may have in mind dreams of sexual conquest, intensely imagined while they are going on but afterwards ill-remembered and of no consequence in the awake world because it is ‘despised’.
\textsuperscript{15} An example of rhetorical antithesis (contrasted ideas in like grammatical structures).
\textsuperscript{16} An example of rhetorical paradox. \textit{heaven}: evidently elided as a single syllable, ‘heav’n.’ \textit{hell}: ‘putting the devil into hell,’ an euphemism for thrusting the penis into the vagina.
Sonnet CXXX — *My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun*

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips’ red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damask’d, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.  
I grant I never saw a goddess go:  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

(pub. 1609)

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1 An anti-Petrarchan sonnet. All of the details commonly attributed by other Elizabethean sonneteers to their ladies are here denied to the poet’s mistress.

2 Ladies’ hair was often compared to golden wire in Elizabethan poetry.

3 variegated. The damask rose (supposedly from Damascus, originally) is pink.

4 walk.

5 admirable, extraordinary.
THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY
John Donne
(1572-1631)

From Holy Sonnets
VII — At the round earth’s imagin’d corners, blow

At the round earth’s imagin’d corners, blow
Your trumpets, angels; and arise, arise
From death, you numberless infinities
Of souls, and to your scatter’d bodies go;
All whom the flood did, and fire shall o’erthrow,
All whom war, death, age, agues, tyrannies,
Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes
Shall behold God and never taste death’s woe1.
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
For, if above all these, my sins abound,
’Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace
When we are there; Here on this lowly ground
Teach me how to repent; for that’s as good
As if thou’hadst seal’d my pardon with thy blood.

(1609, pub. 1633)

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1 The problem of the order and date of the nineteen poems called the ‘Holy Sonnets’ is very complicated. Most of the sonnets were probably written about 1609, but ‘Since she whom I lov’d’ was written after the death of Donne’s wife in 1617, and “Show me dear Christ” perhaps even later.

2 Cf. Revelation 7.1: ‘I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth’.

3 Those who will be alive at the Second Coming.
From *Holy Sonnets*

X — *Death, be not proud, though some have callèd thee*

Death, be not proud, though some have callèd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul’s delivery.5
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy2 or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell’st thou then?10
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

(1609, pub. 1633)

1 To find rest for their bones and freedom (“delivery”) for their souls.
2 opium.
3 why do you puff with pride?
From *Holy Sonnets*

*XIV — Batter my heart, three-person’d God, for you*

Batter my heart, three-person’d God; for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o’erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp’d town to’another due,
Labor to’admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv’d, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov’d fain,
But am betroth’d unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

(1609, pub. 1633)
The Good-Morrow

I wonder by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we lov’d? Were we not wean’d till then,
But suck’d on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seven sleepers’ den?¹
’Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desir’d, and got, ’twas but a dream of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other’s sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown²,
Let us possess one world³, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mix’d equally⁴;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

(pub. 1633)

¹ According to a popular legend, seven young Christians of Ephesus, in the second century, took refuge from Roman persecution in a cave, and miraculously slept for some two hundred years when the entrance of their cave was walled up by their pursuers.
² except for.
³ Some read “others”, but “other” is an old plural form.
⁴ let us concede that maps (or charts of the heavens) have shown to other investigators, etc.
⁵ An alternative reading is “Let us possess our world”.
⁶ The scholastic doctrine is that what is simple (that is, one, or though two, always alike, not a compound) cannot be dissolved or die; “equally” means qualitatively the same.
The Sun Rising

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers’ seasons run?

    Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride, 5
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long:

    If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me
Whether both the ‘Indias of spice and mine’
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw’st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear: “All here in one bed lay.”

She’s all states, and all princes I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compar’d to this,
All honour’s mimic, all wealth alchemy.

    Thou, sun, art half as happy’as we,
In that the world’s contracted thus;
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be

1 King James was addicted to hunting.
2 Autumn chores. The ‘country ants’ may imply an allusion to the old fable of the ant and the grasshopper.
3 unchanging.
4 The India of ‘spice’ is East India, that of ‘mine’ (gold) the West Indies.
5 All the nations of the world.
6 fraudulent, there means counterfeit gold.
To warm the world, that's done in warming us. 
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere; 
This bed thy centre is; these walls, thy sphere. 30

(pub. 1633)

? As the earth was the center of the sun's orbit (according to Ptolemaic astronomy), so the bed will be the new center of the sun's activities and the walls of the bedroom will outline its motion.
A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
    And whisper to their souls, to go,
Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
        “The breath goes now;” and some say, “No:”

So let us melt, and make no noise,
    No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;
’Twere profanation of our joys
    To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th’ earth brings harms and fears;
    Men reckon what it did, and meant;
But trepidation of the spheres,
    Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers’ love
    (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
Absence, because it doth remove
    Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refin’d,
    That ourselves know not what it is,
Inter-assured of the mind,
    Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

1 According to Izaak Walton, addressed by Donne to his wife when he was about to set out for France in 1612.
2 earthquake.
3 The precession of the equinoxes under the Ptolemaic system was explained as caused by the shaking or trepidation of the outermost, crystalline sphere of the universe.
4 harmless.
5 earthly; everything below the moon was thought subject to change; above it was "unchangeable firmament", as Donne says in "The Fever", playing with the same metaphor.
6 were the elements of, composed.
7 “For we consist of three parts, a Soul and Body, and Mind: which [mind] I call those affections and thoughts and passions which neither soul nor body hath alone but have been begotten by their communication, as Musique results out of our breath and a cornet” (Donne).
Our two souls therefore, which are one, 
Though I must go, endure not yet 
A breach, but an expansion, 
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so 
As stiff twin compasses8 are two; 
Thy soul, the fix’d foot, makes no show 
To move, but doth, if the’ other do.

And though it in the centre sit, 
Yet when the other far doth roam, 
It leans, and hearkens after it, 
And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must 
Like th’ other foot, obliquely run; 
Thy firmness makes my circle just, 
And makes me end, where I begun.

(pub. 1633)

8 An emblem of constancy in change, as the circle they produce signifies perfection. The smile is the most famous examples of the ‘metaphysical conceit’.
George Herbert
(1593–1633)

The Altar

A broken ALTAR, Lord, thy servant rears,
Made of a heart, and cemented with tears,
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workman’s tool hath touch’d the same.

A HEART alone
Is such a stone
As nothing but
Thy power doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame,
To praise thy Name.

That, if I chance to hold my peace
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
Oh let thy blessèd SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctify this ALTAR to be thine.

(pub. 1633)

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1 This poem and Easter Wings are "shaped verses", which represent, by the typographical shape of the poem on the page, some part of the subject. Though sometimes condemned as "false wit", this sort of poem has appealed to an occasional author from hellenistic times to the present. Among recent examples are Vision and Prayer by Dylan Thomas and Un Coup de Dés by Stéphane Mallarmé.

2 A reference to Exodus 20.25, in which the Lord enjoins Moses to build an altar without using cut stone or any tools.

3 Herbert wants his poem to praise God whether or not it is being read or spoken. There is also a reference to Luke 19.40: "I tell you that should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out". Herbert’s poetry, like Milton’s, is rich to overflowing in scriptural echoes.
Easter Wings

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,

Though foolishly he lost the same,

Decaying more and more,

Till he became

Most poore:

With thee

O let me rise

As larks, harmoniously,

And sing this day thy victories:

Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did begin:

And still with sicknesses and shame.

Thou didst so punish sin,

That I became

Most thin.

With thee

Let me combine,

And feel thy victorie:

For, if I imp my wing on thine,

Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

(pub. 1633)

1 ample goods, abundance.

2 The length of the lines decreases to reflect their content, diminished man.

3 Herbert alludes to the paradox of the 'fortunate fall' or felix culpa. Only by sinning with Eve, and being cast out of the Garden of Eden into a world of labour, pain, and death, did Adam enable the second Adam, Christ, to redeem man and show a love and forgiveness that otherwise could never have been.

4 "feel this day" in 1633. The two added words disturb the clear metrical scheme (which has six syllables in lines 3, 8, and 13) and are not found in the manuscript of the poem.

5 Herbert suggests that if he adds his feathers to God's wings, he will fly the higher because of God's might. Sometimes feathers were grafted or imped into a falcon's wing to increase the power of its flight. Note that this metaphor suggests that the wing-like stanza on one page represents Herbert's wings, and the wing-stanza on the facing page represents God's.
The Collar

I struck the board, and cried, ‘No more;
I will abroad!
What? shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines and life are free; free as the road,
Loose as the wind, as large as store.
Shall I be still in suit?
Have I no harvest but a thorn
To let me blood, and not restore
What I have lost with cordial fruit?
Sure there was wine
Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn
Before my tears did drown it.
Is the year only lost to me?
Have I no bays to crown it,
No flowers, no garlands gay? all blasted?
All wasted?
Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures; leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit and not. Forsake thy cage,
Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
Good cable, to enforce and draw,
And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
Away! take heed;
I will abroad.

---

1 table. Suggesting discipline with probable reference to Matthew 11:29-30: ‘Take my yoke upon you... for my yoke is easy’.
2 abundance.
3 pertaining.
4 medicinally stimulating.
5 the bay-leaf wreath of honour.
6 Christian restrictions on behaviour, which the ‘petty thoughts’ of the docile believer have made ‘good cable’.
7 close eyes.
Call in thy death's-head\(^8\) there; tie up thy fears;
He that forbears
To suit and serve his need
Deserves his load.\(^7\)
But as I rav'd, and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methoughts I heard one calling, Child!
And I replied, My Lord.

\(^{8}\) The skull that reminds the penitent of approaching death.

(pub. 1633)
The Pulley

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
    “Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can;
Let the world’s riches, which dispersed lie,
    Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;
Then beauty flow’d, then wisdom, honour, pleasure;
    When almost all was out, God made a stay,
Perceiving that alone of all his treasure,
    Rest* in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,
    “Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts instead of me,
    And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlessness;
    Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
    May toss him to my breast.”

(pub. 1633)

*“Rest” in the poem has two senses (“remainder” and “repose”); Herbert works them against one another. This balance of forces suggests the pulley, which can draw us to God one way or the other.
Love (3)

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
   Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-ey’d Love, observing me grow slack’
   From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
   If I lack’d anything’.

“A guest,” I answer’d, “worthy to be here”;
   Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah my dear,
   I cannot look on thee.”
Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
   “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marr’d them; let my shame
   Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
   “My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
   So I did sit and eat’.

(pub. 1633)

1 hesitating, as one feeling misgivings.
2 The first question of shopkeepers and tavern waiters to an entering customer would be ‘What’d ye lack?’.
3 In addition to the sacrament of Communion, the reference is also and ultimately to the final communion in heaven, when God ‘shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them’ (Luke 12:37).
Ben Jonson
(1572-1637)

Still to Be Neat

Still to be neat, still to be dressed
As you were going to a feast,
Still to be powdered, still perfumed;
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found, 5
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free-
Such sweet neglect more taketh me 10
Than all the adulteries of art.
They strike mine eyes, but not my heart.

(pub. 1609)

1 This song is sung in the play Epicoene at the request of Clerimont, supposed to be its composer; he is irked at the Lady Haughty, who, he says, overdoes the art of makeup.
From Volpone⁴
*Come my Celia, let us prove*

Come my Celia, let us prove⁵,
While we may, the sports of love.
Time will not be ours for ever:
He, at length, our good will sever.
Spend not then his gifts in vain;⁵
Suns that set may rise again,
But if once we lose this light
'Tis, with us, perpetual night.
Why should we defer our joys?
Fame and rumour are but toys.¹⁰
Cannot we delude the eyes
Of a few poor household spies?
Or his easier ears beguile,
So removed by our wile?
'Tis no sin love's fruit to steal,¹⁵
But the sweet theft to reveal;
To be taken, to be seen,
These have crimes accounted been.

(1606, pub. 1607)

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¹ From Volpone, one of Jonson's greatest comedies, first produced in 1605 and printed in 1607. The song occurs in III, vii, 166-83, where Volpone is wooing Celia impudently but in vain. It was inspired by Catullus, V, and in turn inspired Herrick.

² The opening lines are adapted from Catullus, the boldest and bawdiest of Latin lyricists. The whole song emphasises the theme of ‘carpe diem’, which is a common erotic incitement.
Inviting a Friend to Supper

Tonight, grave sir, both my poor house, and I
Doe equally desire your company:
Not that we think us worthy such a guest,
But that your worth will dignify our feast,
With those that come; whose grace may make that seem
Something, which, else, could hope for no esteem.
It is the faire acceptance, Sir, creates
The entertainment perfect: not the cates¹.
Yet shall you have, to rectify your palate,
An olive, capers, or some better salad
Ushering the mutton; with a short-legged hen,
If we can get her, full of eggs, and then,
Lemons, and wine for sauce: to these, a coney²
Is not to be despaired of, for our money;
And, though fowl, now, be scarce, yet there are clerks³,
The sky not falling, think we may have larks.
I’ll tell you of more, and lye, so you will come:
Of partridge pheasant, wood-cock, of which some
May yet be there; and godwit, if we can:
Knot, rail, and ruff too⁴. Howsoe’er, my man
Shall read a piece of VIRGIL, TACITUS,
LIVIE, or of some better book to us,
Of which we’ll speak our minds, amidst our meat;
And I’ll profess⁵ no verses to repeat:
To this, if ought appear, which I know not of,
That will the pastry, not my paper, show of⁶.
Digestive cheese, and fruit there sure will bee;
But that, which most doth take my Muse, and me,
Is a pure cup of rich Canary-wine,
Which is the Mermaids, now, but shall be mine:

¹ dishes.
² rabbit.
³ scholars (pronounced ‘clarks’).
⁴ The treat of the feast will be these various games birds.
⁵ promise.
⁶ Papers may appear, but they will be under pies (to keep them from sticking to the pan) not for declamation.
Of which had HORACE, or ANACREON7 tasted,
Their lives, as doe their lines, till now had lasted.
Tobacco, Nectar, or the Thespian spring8,
Are all but LUTHERS beer, to this I sing.
Of this we will sup free, but moderately,
And we will have no Pooly, or Parrot9 by;
Nor shall our cups make any guilty men:
But, at our parting, we will be, as when
We innocently met. No simple word
That shall be uttered at our mirthful board
Shall make us sad next morning, or affright
The liberty, that we'll enjoy to-night.

(pub. 1616)

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7 Horace and Anacreon (one in Latin, the other in Greek) wrote many poems in praise of wine. The Mermaid tavern was a favourite haunt of the poets; sweet wine from the Canary Islands was popular in England.
8 One of the springs on Mt. Helicon near the village of Thespiae, both reputed to be sources of poetic inspiration. Compared to Canary, all these other intoxicants are no better than ‘Luther’s beer’ (line 34).
9 Pooly and Parrot were government spies, though their conjunction also suggests a talkative bird, Poll Parrot. While a Roman Catholic and even after he formally left that communion, Jonson had reason to be wary of undercover agents.
Robert Herrick
(1591-1674)

Upon Julia’s Clothes

Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then (methinks) how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes.

Next, when I cast mine eyes, and see
That brave’ vibration each way free,
Oh, how that glittering taketh me!

(pub. 1648)

¹ glorious, splendid.
Delight in Disorder

A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness'.
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction:
An erring Lace, which here and there
Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher:
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly:
A winning wave (deserving Note)
In the tempestuous petticoat:
A careless shoestring, in whose tie
I see a wild civility:
Do more bewitch me, then when Art
Is too precise\(^5\) in every part.

(pub. 1648)

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\(^1\) Most of the terms used to describe the ladies' clothing have an ethical or social overtone.
\(^2\) A scarf of fine linen.
\(^3\) wandering, floating.
\(^4\) The lower part of the bodice.
\(^5\) 'Precise' and 'precision' were terms used freely of Puritans; Herrick, in praising feminine disarray, is defining the 'sprezzatura', or careless grace, of his own Cavalier art.
To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the Sun, 5
The higher he’s a-getting;
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he’s to setting.

That age is best, which is the first, 10
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time, 15
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

(pub. 1648)
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 love¹ 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 state⁴,
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 preserv’d virginity,

¹ Hull, where Marvell lived as a boy, is on the river Humber.
² The conversion of the Jews was to take place just before the end of the world.
³ That of his “vegetable” soul.
⁴ dignity.
And your quaint<sup>5</sup> honour 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<sup>6</sup>,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant<sup>7</sup> fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
Than languish in his slow-chapp'd<sup>8</sup> 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<sup>9</sup>.

(pub. 1681)

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<sup>5</sup> elegant, artificial.
<sup>6</sup> The original reading is “glew,” which has been justified as meaning “glow”.
<sup>7</sup> immediate and urgent.
<sup>8</sup> With slow-devouring jaws.
<sup>9</sup> In the final lines, lover and mistress triumphantly reverse the field, eating time avidly instead of being eaten by it, forcing the sun to race them instead of vainly imploring it to stand still.
The Garden

How vainly men themselves amaze
To win the palm, the oak, or bays,
And their uncessant labours see
Crown’d from some single herb or tree,
Whose short and narrow vergèd shade
Does prudently their toils upbraid;
While all flow’rs and all trees do close
To weave the garlands of repose!

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men;
Your sacred plants, if here below,
Only among the plants will grow.
Society is all but rude,
To’ this delicious solitude.

No white nor red was ever seen
So am’rous as this lovely green.
Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
Cut in these trees their mistress’ name;
Little, alas, they know or heed
How far these beauties hers exceed!
Fair trees, wheres’e’er your barks I wound,
No name shall but your own be found.

When we have run our passion’s heat,
Love hither makes his best retreat.
The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
Still in a tree did end their race:

1 Marvell wrote a Latin version of this poem, probably before the English one.
2 Crowns for victors in games, politics, and poetry.
3 Compared to.
4 Colors traditionally associated with female beauty.
5 Marvell proposes to carve in the bark of trees, not Sylvia or Laura, but Beech and Oak.
Apollo hunted Daphne\(^6\) so,
Only that she might laurel grow;
And Pan did after Syrinx\(^7\) speed,
Not as a nymph, but for a reed.

What wond'rous life in this I lead!
Ripe apples drop about my head;
The luscious clusters of the vine
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
The nectarine and curious\(^8\) peach
Into my hands themselves do reach;
Stumbling on melons as I pass,
Ensnar'd with flow'rs, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
Withdraws into its happiness;
The mind, that ocean where each kind\(^9\)
Does straight its own resemblance find\(^{10}\),
Yet it creates, transcending these,
Far other worlds, and other seas;
Annihilating\(^{11}\) all that's made
To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
Or at some fruit tree's mossy root,
Casting the body's vest\(^{12}\) aside,
My soul into the boughs does glide;
There like a bird it sits and sings,
Then whets\(^{13}\), and combs its silver wings;
And, till prepar'd for longer flight,
Waves in its plumes the various\(^{14}\) light.

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\(^6\) Daphne, pursued by Apollo, was turned into a laurel.
\(^7\) Syrinx, pursued by Pan, was turned into a reed.
\(^8\) exquisite.
\(^9\) species.
\(^10\) "That all animals of the land are in their kind in the sea, although received as a principle, is a tenent very questionable" (Browne).
\(^11\) Reducing to nothing, or, more probably, reducing to elements.
\(^12\) vesture, garment.
\(^13\) preens.
\(^14\) i.e., the broken lights of this world as compared to the white light of
Such was that happy garden-state,  
While man there walk’d without a mate;  
After a place so pure and sweet,  
What other help could yet be meet!\(^{15}\)

But 'twas beyond a mortal's share  
To wander solitary there:  
Two paradises 'twere in one  
To live in paradise alone.

How well the skillful gard'ner drew  
Of flow'rs and herbs this dial\(^{16}\) new,  
Where from above the milder sun  
Does through a fragrant zodiac run;  
And as it works, th' industrious bee  
Computes its time\(^ {17}\) as well as we!  
How could such sweet and wholesome hours  
Be reckon'd but with herbs and flow'rs?

(pub. 1681)

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\(^{15}\) See Genesis 2:18.  
\(^{16}\) A floral dial in the garden.  
\(^{17}\) Perhaps a pun on time and thyme.
John Milton
(1608-1674)

From Sonnets
XXIII — Methought I Saw My Late Espousèd Saint

Methought I saw my late espousèd Saint¹
Brought to me like Alcestis² from the grave,
Whom Jove's great Son to her glad Husband gave,
Rescu'd from death by force though pale and faint.
Mine as whom wash'd³ from spot of child-bed taint,
5 Purification in the old Law did save⁴,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was vail'd, yet to my fancied sight,
10 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shin'd
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she enclin'd,
I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night⁵.

(1658, pub. 1673)

¹ Katharine Woodcock, Milton's second wife, whom he married in 1656, when already blind. She gave birth to a daughter in October, 1657 (who also died), and she died in February, 1658. Saint bears witness to her piety and gentleness.

² In the Alcestis of Euripides, the heroine dies but is rescued from the lower world and restored to Admetus ("her glad husband") by Hercules, the son of Zeus ("Jove's great son").

³ The ritual of purification after a birth is set forth in Leviticus 12: 7-12. The blind Milton had never seen Katharine. She presents herself in his dream with every attribute of love and goodness, but veiled (like Alcestis), and clad in white (cf. "What are these which are arrayed in white robes? ... These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" — Revelation 7: 13-14: the true purification), white symbolizing also her purity of mind. As she here appears, Milton hopes to have full sight of her in heaven.

⁴ The Mosaic law prescribing periods for the purification of women after childbirth is found in Leviticus 12. Line 5: "My wife, like the woman whom, when washed from spot of childbed taint".

⁵ The night of his blindness as well as of his loss.
From *Sonnets*

**XVI — When I Consider How My Light Is Spent**

When I consider how my light’s spent,
E’re half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide,
Lodg’d with me useless, though my Soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present

My true account, least he returning chide;

“Doth God exact day-labour, light deny’d?”

I fondly ask; But patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need

Either man’s work or his own gifts, who best

Bear his milde yoak, they serve him best, his State

Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed

And post o’re Land and Ocean without rest:

They also serve who only stand and waite”.

(1652-1655, pub. 1673)

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1 The date of composition is uncertain. Milton’s blindness, to which this is the first reference in his poetry, became virtually complete in 1652, but if the arrangement of his sonnets is (as it elsewhere appears to be) chronological, the date must be, like that of Sonnet XVIII, 1655. First printed in *Poems*, 1673.

2 Power of vision, to be taken in conjunction with “this dark world.” In a letter of 1654 Milton refers to a very faint susceptibility to light still remaining to him.

3 We must not expect mathematical accuracy. But if we remember that Milton is speaking about his career in God’s service, take its beginning in the avowed dedication to that service in Sonnet VII (1632), and assume the scriptural life-span of three score years and ten (which would mean life till 1678), 1652 falls before, and even 1655 does not extend beyond, the half-way mark of Milton’s expected career of service.

4 The allusion is to the *Parable of the Talents* (Matthew 25:14-30); death, like the outer darkness into which the unprofitable servant was cast, stands for the utmost in punishment. The Talent was a measure of weight and hence of value; there is here, of course, a play on the word in its modern sense of mental gift or endowment, in Milton’s case his gift of poetry.

5 foolishly.
From *Sonnets

XV — On the Late Massacre in Piedmont

Avenge, O Lord thy slaughtered Saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold,
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old
When all our Fathers worshiped Stocks and Stones,
Forget not: in thy book record their groans
Who were thy Sheep and in their ancient Fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled
Mother with Infant down the Rocks. Their moans
The Vales redoubled to the Hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O’re all th’ Italian fields where still doth sway
The triple Tyrant: that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

(1655, pub. 1673)

1 The Waldensians or Vaudois were Protestants who had long lived in the territories of the Roman Catholic rulers of Piedmont, and were thought of by Protestants of Milton’s day as having preserved a simple scriptural faith from earlier times. Confined by treaty to certain mountain valleys, they had gradually intruded into the plain of Piedmont. Ordered to retire, they had been pursued into the mountains and there massacred by the Piemontese soldiery in April 1655. In documents penned by Milton as Latin secretary, Cromwell strongly protested against such treachery and cruelty. Later in the year, possibly after Morland returned with his report, Milton wrote his sonnet, first published in *Poems*, 1673.

2 This suggests Milton’s acceptance of the idea of pure, unidolatrous worship preserved by the Vaudois from primitive times (see above, introductory note).

3 Thy book refers to the books to be consulted at the Judgment (Revelation 20:12).

4 The incident is narrated, with an accompanying plate, in the *History of the Evangelical Churches in the Valleys of Piedmont* (1658), by Sir Samuel Morland, Cromwell’s emissary, who may well have given Milton the details on his return.

5 re-echoed.

6 The pope, wearing his tiara with three crowns.

7 The reader is expected to remember Tertullian’s famous phrase, “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church” and the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:3-9) where the seed that fell on good ground brought forth as much as a hundredfold. Such was to be the blood of these martyrs sown where the Pope (triple tyrant in his mitre with its three crowns) still rules: It was to make converts who, having learned God’s truth, would renounce the idolatry of Rome (figured, as Protestants believed, by the Babylon of Revelation 16:19, etc.) and thus escape the woe of God’s punishment upon it.
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

1 A drama on the Fall, entitled ‘Paradise Lost,’ was planned by Milton in 1640-42. Lines 32-41 of Book IV were composed about 1642, and were intended for the opening speech of this drama. After a long interruption he re-commenced the poem in epic form, perhaps about 1657, and completed it by 1663 or 1665. It was published in ten books in 1667; it was subsequently revised and redivided into twelve books for the “Second Edition” published in 1674. A note on “The Verse” explains: “The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin, — rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, as Homer, who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and the Lavinian shores, much buffeted on sea and land by violence from above, through cruel Juno’s unforgiving wrath, and much enduring in war also, till he should build a city and bring his gods to Latium; whence came the Latin race, the lords of Alba, and the walls of lofty Rome. Tell me, O Muse, the cause...”

2 Christ; see Romans 5:19.

3 The Muse of Christian poetry, first invoked by Milton in Nativity Ode, 15, also called Urania (P.L., VII, 1), the name belonging to the Greek muse of heavenly studies but distinguished from that muse.
That shepherd 5 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’ Aonian6 mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit7, 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,
Dove-like 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 highth of this great argument8
I may assert Eternal Providence 25
And justify9 the ways of God to men.

4 Sinai, where God appeared to Moses and gave him the tables of the Law, was a mountain in the range Oreb; Milton speaks of them rather as if they were two peaks, perhaps to parallel the cloven peak of Parnassus, one dwelling of the Greek muses.
5 Moses. Milton devoted Book VII to an account of the Creation.
6 Boeotian; referring to Mount Helicon.
7 Refers to the Spirit of God moving (or brooding) upon the waters at the Creation (Genesis 1:2) and appearing at Christ’s baptism in the shape of a dove (Matthew 3:16).
8 story or theme (not piece of argumentation).
9 declare (not plead) the justice of.
Thus Satan, talking to his nearest mate,
With head uplift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blaz’d; his other parts besides,
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge
As whom the fables name of monstrous size,
Titanian, or Earth-born, that warr’d on Jove,
Briareos or Typhon, whom the den
By ancient Tarsus held, or that sea-beast
Leviathan, which God of all his works
Created hugest that swim th’ ocean-stream.
Him haply slumb’ring on the Norway foam,
The pilot of some small night-founder’d skiff,
Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
Moors by his side under the lee, while night
Invests the sea, and wished morn delays.
So stretch’d out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay
Chain’d on the burning lake; nor ever thence

1 wide.
2 The Titans fought against their father Uranus (Heaven). Later they
themselves were overthrown by Zeus (Jove). Finally the Giants, sons of Earth
(Earth-born), fought unsuccessfully against Zeus and his fellow Olympians.
Titans and Giants are sometimes confused.
3 A hundred-handed monster, son of Uranus, and thus Titanian; in one
legend, the defender of Zeus, which cannot be intended here, in another, the
enemy of the gods. Typhon: a hundred-headed serpent monster, in one legend,
imprisoned in a den in Cilicia, whose capital was Tarsus; he stands for the
Giants. It is noteworthy that in addition to their size all the monsters resemble
Satan in being enemies to the divine power and subject to its punishment.
4 Name applied to various water beasts in Old Testament: described by
Isaiah as the dragon that is in the sea and said to be reserved for God’s special
vengeance; in Milton’s day, and by him, identified with the whale. A similar
episdoe to Milton’s of the skiff, night-founder’d (benighted, literally sunk in the
darkness of night) and anchored to a whale mistaken by its crew for an island, is
recounted by the Swedish writer Olaus Magnus in his History of the Northern
Nations, translated into English in 1658. Here the secondary suggestion is Satan’s
deceptiveness and his betrayal of those that trust him to their destruction.
5 References to the lake of fire occur in Revelation 19 and 20. Milton makes
the four rivers of Hell flow into the burning lake (P.L., II, 576-77). 210-13. It was
theologically necessary to indicate that whatever Satan did was not in spite of
God, but by his permissive will.
Had ris’n or heav’d his head, but that the will
And high permission of all-ruling Heaven
Left him at large to his own dark designs,
That with reiterated crimes he might
Heap on himself damnation, while he sought
Evil to others, and enrag’d might see
How all his malice serv’d but to bring forth
Infinite goodness, grace, and mercy shewn
On Man by him seduc’d, but on himself
Treble confusion, wrath and vengeance pour’d.
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty stature; on each hand the flames
Driv’n backward slope their pointing spires and, roll’d
In billows, leave i’ th’ midst a horrid vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent⁶ on the dusky air,
That felt unusual weight, till on dry land
He lights — if it were land that ever burn’d
With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
And such appear’d in hue as when the force
Of subterranean wind⁷ transports a hill
Torn from Pelorus⁸, or the shatter’d side
Of thund’ring Ætna⁹, whose combustible
And fuell’d entrails, thence conceiving fire,
Sublim’d¹⁰ with mineral fury, aid the winds,
And leave a singed bottom¹¹ all involv’d¹²
With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
Of unblest feet. Him follow’d his next mate,
Both glorying to have scap’d the Stygian flood¹³
As Gods, and by their own recover’d strength,
Not by the sufferance of Supernal Power.
"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime"14,
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heav’n? — this mournful gloom
For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
Who now is sovran can dispose and bid
What shall be right: farthest from him is best
Whom reason hath equall’d, force hath made supreme
Above his equals. Farewell, happy fields
Where joy for ever dwells! hail horrors, hail
Infernal world! and thou, profoundest Hell,
Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
A mind not to be chang’d by place or time.
The mind is its own place, and in itself
Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n.
What matter where, if I be still the same
And what I should be, all but less than he16
Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
We shall be free; th’ Almighty hath not built17
Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, though in Hell:
Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heav’n.
But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
Th’ associates and co-partners of our loss,
Lie thus astonish’d on th’ oblivious pool,
And call them not to share with us their part
In this unhappy mansion, or once more
With rallied arms to try what may be yet
Regain’d in Heav’n, or what more lost in Hell?18

(1650-1665, pub. 1667)

14 climate.
15 take in exchange for.
16 all but equal to him.
17 Hath not built for himself, begrudging possession to anyone else.
18 stunned: literally, thunder-struck.
19 oblivious causing forgetfulness.
Richard Lovelace
(1618-1657)

To Lucasta', Going to Wars

Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore;
I could not love thee, dear, so much,
Lov'd I not Honour more.

(pub. 1649)

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The identity of Lucasta is still debated, although Anthony Wood (Athenae Oxonienses [1691-92]) says she was Lucy Sacheverel, “whom he usually called Lux Casta”.

71
To Althea, from Prison

When Love with unconfinèd wings
Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
To whisper at the grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair,
And fetter'd to her eye,
The gods', that wanton in the air,
Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round,
With no allaying Thames¹,
Our careless heads with roses bound,
Our hearts with loyal flames;
When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
When healths and draughts go free,
Fishes, that tipple in the deep,
Know no such liberty.

When (like committed² linnets³) I
With shriller throat shall sing
The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
And glories of my king;
When I shall voice aloud how good
He is, how great should be,
Enlarged winds, that curl the flood,
Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage;

¹ Although recently questioned, it is probable that this was written in prison in 1642, Lovelace having been committed to the Gatehouse at Westminster for presenting the Kentish petition against proposed Parliamentary measures.
² Some versions read ‘birds’ instead of ‘gods’.
³ water.
⁴ imprisoned.
⁵ Caged finches.
If I have freedom in my love,
   And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above,
   Enjoy such liberty.

(1642, pub. 1649)
Sir John Suckling
(1609-1642)

Song: (“Why so pale and wan fond lover?”)

Why so pale and wan fond lover?
Prithee, why so pale?
Will, when looking well can’t move her,
Looking ill prevail?
Prithee, why so pale?  

Why so dull and mute, young sinner?
Prithee, why so mute?
Will, when speaking well can’t win her,
Saying nothing do’t?
Prithee, why so mute?  

Quit, quit, for shame, this will not move,
This cannot take her;
If of herself she will not love,
Nothing can make her;
The devil take her!  

(pub. 1638)

\(^1\) This song was first printed in Suckling’s play Aglaura (1638).
THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY
Alexander Pope
(1688-1744)

From *The Rape of the Lock*: Canto I — vv. 121-148

And now, unveil'd, the toilet stands display'd,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the nymph intent adores
With head uncover'd, the cosmetic pow'rs.
A heav'nly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various offerings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the goddess with the glitt'ring spoil.
This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transform'd to combs, the speckled and the white.
Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billet-doux.
Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
The busy Sylphs surround their darling care;

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1 First published anonymously in Lintot's *Miscellany* in May 1712, but revised, expanded, and published separately under Pope's name on March 2, 1714. To this edition Pope added a dedicatory letter.
2 Pope calls attention to the parallel between these sacred rites of pride and the Mass. Belinda is the priestess; the maid, the inferior priestess or acolyte. Pope also has in mind the hero arming for battle.
3 It has been suggested that Pope intended here not "Bibles", but “bibelets” (trinkets), but this interpretation has not gained wide acceptance.
These set the head, and those divide the hair,
Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the gown;
And Betty’s⁴ prais’d for labours not her own.

(1712, pub. 1714)

⁴ Betty: a generic name for a lady’s maid.
First follow NATURE, and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same:
Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
At once the source, and end, and test of art.
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show, and without pomp presides:
In some fair body thus th' informing soul
With spirits' feeds, with vigour fills the whole,
Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains;
Itself unseen, but in th' effects, remains.
Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
'Tis more to guide, than spur the Muse's steed;
Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.
Those RULES of old discover'd, not devis'd,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodis'd;
Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

(1709, pub. 1711)
**Thomas Gray**  
(1716-1771)

*Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat*  
*Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes*

Twas on a lofty vase’s side,  
Where China’s gayest art had dy’d  
The azure flow’rs that blow;  
Demurest of the tabby kind,  
The pensive Selima, reclin’d,  
Gazed on the lake below.

Her conscious tail her joy declar’d;  
The fair round face, the snowy beard,  
The velvet of her paws,  
Her coat, that with the tortoise vies,  
Her ears of jet, and emerald eyes,  
She saw: and purr’d applause.

Still had she gaz’d; but ‘midst the tide  
Two angel forms were seen to glide,  
The Genii of the stream;  
Their scaly armour’s Tyrian hue\(^1\)  
Thro’ richest purple to the view  
Betray’d a golden gleam.

The hapless Nymph with wonder saw:  
A whisker first and then a claw,  
With many an ardent wish,  
She stretch’d in vain to reach the prize.  
What female heart can gold despise?  
What cat’s averse to fish?

---

1 First published, anonymously, in Dodsley’s *A Collection of Poems by Several Hands*, 1748; addressed to a cat belonging to the poet’s friend Horace Walpole “Selima”, to whom Gray sent a copy, March 1, 1747.  
2 *bloom*.  
3 *purple*. The ancient city of Tyre in Phoenicia was famous for its purple dye.
Presumptuous Maid! with looks intent
Again she stretch’d, again she bent,
       Nor knew the gulf between.
(Malignant Fate sat by, and smil’d)
The slipp’ry verge her feet beguil’d,
       She tumbled headlong in.

Eight times emerging from the flood
She mew’d to ev’ry wat’ry god,
       Some speedy aid to send.
No Dolphin4 came, no Nereid5 stirr’d;
Nor cruel Tom, nor Susan6 heard.
       A Fav’rite has no friend!

From hence, ye Beauties, undeceiv’d,
Know, one false step is ne’er retriev’d,
       And be with caution bold.
Not all that tempts your wand’ring eyes
And heedless hearts is lawful prize,
       Nor all, that glisters, gold7.

(1747, pub. 1748)

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4 The allusion is to the story of the poet Arion, who was rescued from drowning by dolphins charmed with his song.
5 sea nymph.
6 “Tom” and “Susan” are servants’ names.
7 A proverbial expression. Cf. Chaucer, Canon’s Yeoman’s Tale, 243-44: “But al thyng which that shineth as the gold/Nis nat gold, as that I have herd it told”. Cf. also Spenser, The Faerie Queene, II, viii, 14: “Yet gold all is not, that doth golden seeme”. 
Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
   The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
   And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring landscape on the sight,
   And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
   And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
   The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
   Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
   Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid,
   The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

---

1 First published, anonymously, 1751, under the title ‘An Elegy wrote in a Country Churchyard’. The date of composition of the Elegy, apart from the concluding stanzas, cannot be exactly determined. The sole authority for the frequently repeated statement that Gray began the poem in 1742 is Mason’s conjecture in the memoir prefixed to his edition of The Poems of Mr. Gray, 1775. The Elegy was concluded at Stoke Poges in June, 1750. (See letter to Walpole, June 12, 1750.) The churchyard as described by Gray is typical rather than particular; of the five disputed ‘originals’ Stoke Poges bears the least resemblance to the graveyard in the Elegy. Five candidate churchyards for Gray’s setting include Stoke Poges (unlikely), Upton (near Slough), Grantchester and Madingley (near Cambridge), and Thanington (near Canterbury), but the features might as readily be non-specific.

2 curfew: originally rung at eight o’clock as a signal for extinguishing fires; after this practice had ceased, the word was applied to an evening bell. In his note to this first line Gray refers to Dante, Purgatorio, VIII, 5-6: ‘Squilla di lontano / Che paia l giorno pianger, che si muore’.

3 Made by sheep-bells.

4 Cf. Robert Colvill’s Britain, a Poem,” II, 45-57.

5 unlearned.
The breezy call of incense-breathing\textsuperscript{6} Morn,  
The swallow twitting from the straw-built shed,  
The cock’s shrill clarion, or the echoing horn;\textsuperscript{7}  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.\textsuperscript{20}

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:  
No children run to lisp their sire’s return,  
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.\textsuperscript{25}

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe\textsuperscript{8} has broke;\textsuperscript{9}  
How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bow’d the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!\textsuperscript{30}

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely\textsuperscript{10} joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals\textsuperscript{11} of the poor.\textsuperscript{35}

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow’r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,  
Awaits alike th’ inevitable hour\textsuperscript{12}.  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave\textsuperscript{13}.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,  
If Mem’ry o’er their tomb no trophies\textsuperscript{14} raise,

\textsuperscript{6} Cf. \textit{Paradise Lost}, IX, 193-4. Also Pope, \textit{Messiah}, 24: “With all the incense of the breathing spring”.
\textsuperscript{7} The cock’s shrill clarion: cf. \textit{Paradise Lost}, VII, 443-44: “the crested cock, whose clarion sounds/The silent hours”. Cf. Paul Whitehead’s “The State of Rome” (1739), lines 173-74: But hold, War’s Rumour! mark the loud Alarms! /Hark the shrill Clarion sounds to Arms, to Arms.
\textsuperscript{8} soil, turf.
\textsuperscript{9} Old strong form of the past participle, broken.
\textsuperscript{10} domestic.
\textsuperscript{11} parish registers of births, christenings, marriages, and deaths (Richard Leighton Greene, “Gray’s Elegy written in a Country Churchyard”, \textit{The Explicator} 24.6 [Feb. 1966]).
\textsuperscript{12} Cf. Henry Needler’s “Horace. Book IV. Ode VII. Paraphras’d,” lines 30-34.
\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Pope’s “The First Book of the Odyssey”, lines 391-392.
\textsuperscript{14} memorials.
Where thro' the long-drawn aisle and fretted\textsuperscript{15} vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust\textsuperscript{4}
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour’s voice provoke\textsuperscript{7} the silent dust,
Or Flatt’ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway’d,
Or wak’d to ecstasy the living lyre.

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne’er unroll;
Chill Penury repress’d their noble rage\textsuperscript{18},
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom’d caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flow’r is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village-Hampden\textsuperscript{19}, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious\textsuperscript{20} Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country’s blood. 60

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\textsuperscript{15} Adorned with carved or embossed work. Cf. \textit{Hamlet}, II, ii: “this majestical roof fretted with golden fire”.

\textsuperscript{4} Cf. Samuel Whyte’s “Elegy II” (1722), lines 119-20: “No breathing Marble o’er his Dust shall stand; / No storied Urn shall celebrate his Name...”.

\textsuperscript{7} In its original sense, \textit{to call forth, to challenge}.

\textsuperscript{18} As often in the poetry of the eighteenth century, poetic fire (\textit{furor poeticus}).

\textsuperscript{19} John Hampden (ca. 1595-1643), one of the noblest of English Parliamentary statesmen; a central figure of the English revolution in its earlier stages.

\textsuperscript{20} Joseph Trapp’s “Virgil’s Aeneis”. IV, 512-14: “He, to protract his aged Father’s Life, / Chose Skill in Med’cine, and the Pow’rs of Herbs; / And exercis’d a mute inglorious Art”.
Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their hist'ry in a nation's eyes,

Their lot forbade: nor circumscrib'd alone
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confin'd;
Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,

The struggling pangs of conscious truth21 to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's22 ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect,
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing, ling'ring look behind?

21 Truthful awareness of inward guilt.
22 Cf. Henry Jones' "On seeing a Picture of his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, which was presented to the University of Dublin" (1749), lines 61-64: Her favour'd Sons from 'midst the madding Crowd, / Her Sons select with gentle Hand she drew, / Secreted timely from th'austere and proud, / Their Fame wide-spreading, tho' their Numbers few.
On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90
Ev’n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev’n in our ashes live their wonted fires33.

For thee, who mindful of th’ unhonour’d Dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate, 95

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn." 100

“There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

“Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Mutt’ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or craz’d with care, or cross’d in hopeless love.

“One morn I miss’d him on the custom’d hill,
Along the heath and near his fav’rite tree; 110
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

———

33 Gray’s note refers to Petrarch’s sonnet 169: “Ch ’i veggio nel pensier, dolce
mio fuoco, / Fredda una lingua, et due begli occhi chiusi / Rimaner doppo noi
pien di faville”.

34 meadow. In the Eton MS. after line 100 there is the following stanza:
“Him have we seen the greenwood side along, / While o’er the heath we hied,
our labours done, / Oft as the woodlark pip’d her farewell song,/With wistful
eyes pursue the setting sun.” Mason is puzzled by Gray’s rejection of this stanza
for the published text. Sometimes compared to another elegy, John Milton’s
‘Lycidas,’ lines 25-31: Together both, ere the high lawns appear’d / Under the
opening eyelids of the morn, / We drove afield, and both together heard / What
time the gray-fly winds her sultry horn, / Bat’ting our flocks with the
fresh dews of night, / Oft till the star that rose at ev’ring bright / Toward
heav’n’s descent had slop’d his westering wheel.

86
The next with dirges due in sad array\(^{25}\)
Slow thro’ the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Grav’d on the stone beneath yon aged thorn\(^{26}\).

The Epitaph

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown\(^{27}\).
Fair Science\(^{28}\) frown’d not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark’d him for her own.

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav’n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis’ry all he had, a tear,
He gain’d from Heav’n (twas all he wish’d) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

(1742-1750, pub. 1751)

\(^{25}\) next following morning, sad serious.

\(^{26}\) In some of the first editions of the poem, the following stanza preceded the epitaph: ‘There scatter’d oft, the earliest of the year,/By hands unseen are show’rs of violets found;/The redbreast loves to build and warble there,/ And little footsteps lightly print the ground.’ According to a marginal note of Gray, it was ‘omitted in 1753.’ Mason explains the omission by saying that Gray found it formed ‘too long a parenthesis in this place.’ The epitaph is not in the early Eton manuscript of the poem.

\(^{27}\) Here lies the Latin ‘hic jacet’.

\(^{28}\) Cf. John Oldmixon’s ‘Epistle V: Queen Elizabeth to the Earl of Essex’ (1703), lines 37-40: Warm’d by my Smiles, and kindled into Man, / Thy Soul to feel Heroick Flames began: / Till then to Fortune, and to Fame, unknown, / Who since defended, and adorn’d the Throne.

\(^{29}\) knowledge in the general sense.

\(^{30}\) Gray’s note to this line refers to Petrarch’s Rime 114: ‘Paventosa sperne’.
William Cowper  
(1731-1800)

The Castaway

Obscurest night involv’d the sky,  
Th’ Atlantic billows roar’d,  
When such a destin’d wretch as I,  
Wash’d headlong from on board,  
Of friends, of hope, of all bereft,  
His floating home for ever left.

No braver chief could Albion boast  
Than he with whom he went,  
Nor ever ship left Albion’s coast,  
With warmer wishes sent.  
He lov’d them both, but both in vain,  
Nor him beheld, nor her again.

Not long beneath the whelming brine,  
Expert to swim, he lay;  
Nor soon he felt his strength decline,  
Or courage die away;

1 This, the last of Cowper’s original poems, is based on a passage in Anson’s Voyage Round the World, 1740-44 (1748), chapter VIII: “But in less than twenty-four hours we were attacked by another storm still more furious than the former; for it proved a perfect hurricane, and reduced us to the necessity of lying-to under bare poles... And as we dared not venture any sail abroad, we were obliged to make use of an expedient, which answered our purpose: this was putting the helm a-weather, and manning the foreshores. But though this method proved successful for the end intended, yet in the execution of it, one of our ablest seamen was canted overboard; and notwithstanding the prodigious agitation of the waves, we perceived that he swam very strong, and it was with the utmost concern that we found ourselves incapable of assisting him, and we the more grieved at his unhappy fate, since we lost sight of him struggling with the waves, and conceived from the manner in which he swam, that he might continue sensible, for a considerable time longer, of the horror attending his irretrievable situation”.

2 Lord George Anson (1697-1762), commander of an expedition against the Spanish ports in the Pacific, sailed around the world 1740-44.

88
But wag'd with death a lasting strife,
Supported by despair of life.

He shouted: nor his friends had fail'd
   To check the vessel's course,
But so the furious blast prevail'd,
   That, pitiless perforce,
They left their outcast mate behind,
And scudded still before the wind.

Some succour yet they could afford;
   And, such as storms allow,
The cask, the coop, the floated cord,
   Delay'd not to bestow.
But he (they knew) nor ship, nor shore,
Whate'er they gave, should visit more.

Nor, cruel as it seem'd, could he
   Their haste himself condemn,
Aware that flight, in such a sea,
   Alone could rescue them;
Yet bitter felt it still to die
Deserted, and his friends so nigh.

He long survives, who lives an hour
   In ocean, self-upheld;
And so long he, with unspent pow'r,
   His destiny repell'd;
And ever, as the minutes flew,
Entreated help, or cried — "Adieu!"

At length, his transient respite past,
   His comrades, who before
Had heard his voice in ev'ry blast,
   Could catch the sound no more.
For then, by toil subdued, he drank
The stifling wave, and then he sank.

No poet wept him: but the page
   Of narrative sincere;
That tells his name, his worth, his age,
Is wet with Anson's tear.
And tears by bards or heroes shed
Alike immortalize the dead.

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.  

No voice divine the storm allay'd,
No light propitious shone;
When, snatch'd from all effectual aid,
We perish'd, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelm'd in deeper gulfs than he.

(1799, pub. 1803)

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3 Cowper is quoted as saying (in 1773): 'My sin and judgment are alike peculiar. I am a castaway, deserted and condemned'. He was haunted by a conviction that he was predestined to damnation.

4 There is an allusion to the stilling of the storm narrated in Matthew 8: 23-6.
Robert Burns
(1759-1796)

To Mouse

Wee, sleeket, cowrin, tim’rous beastie, 
Oh, what a panic’s in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty 
Wi’ bickerin brattle!5
I wad be laith to rin an’ chase thee 
Wi’ murd’ring pattle6!
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, whyles5, but thou may thieve:
What then? poor beastie, thou maun6 live!
A daimen icker in a thrave7 15
’S a sma’ request;
I’ll get a blessin wi’ the lave8,
An’ never miss ’t!
Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly9 wa’s the win’s are strewin!
An’ naething, now, to big10 a new ane,
O’ foggage11 green!

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1 Burns’s brother Gilbert is responsible for the story that the poem was composed while the poet was ploughing, after he had turned up a mouse’s nest and had saved the mouse from the spade of the boy who was holding the horses.
2 hurring scamper.
3 loth.
4 A small long-handled spade for removing clay from the ploughshare.
5 sometimes.
6 must.
7 daimen: occasional, icker: ear of corn, a thrave: twenty-four sheaves.
8 rest.
9 feeble.
10 build.
11 green.
An' bleak December's winds ensuin
Baith snell' an' keen!
Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,
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 monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald13,
To thole14 the winter's sleety dribble
An' crannreuch cauld15.
But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane16
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft agley17,
An' le'a e us nought but grief an' pain
For promis'd joy.
Still thou art blest, compar'd 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!

(1785, pub. 1786)

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11 coarse grass.
12 piercing.
13 but: without. house or hald: house or habitation; cf. Address to the Deil, 104.
14 endure.
15 hoar-frost.
16 not alone.
17 amiss.
THE ROMANTIC PERIOD
William Blake
(1757-1827)

From Songs of Innocence
The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o’er the mead; 5
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing wooly bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice!
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee? 10

Little Lamb I’ll tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild, 15
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

(pub. 1789)

1 meadow.
From Songs of Innocence  
The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue,
Could scarcely cry "weep', 'weep', 'weep', 'weep!'”
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd', so I said.
Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a sleeping he had such a sight,
That thousands of sweepers Dick, Joe Ned & Jack
Were all of them lock’d up in coffins of black

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open’d the coffins & set them all free.
Then down a green plain leaping laughing they run
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom if he’d be a good boy,
He’d have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm,
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

(pub. 1789)

1 Il bambino cerca di ripetere il grido dello spazzacamino “Sweep! Sweep!” che risuonava per le strade di Londra, ma è troppo piccolo e non è in grado.

2 I riccioli venivano tagliati per non essere d’impedimento.
From *Songs of Experience*

*The Tyger*

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests 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, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & 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 water’d 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?

(1790-92, pub. 1794)

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1 Riferimento al mito di Icaro.
2 Riferimento al mito di Prometeo.
3 Riferimento a Lucifero.
4 Verbo ambiguo, può significare sia “arrendersi” che “scagliare”.
From *Songs of Experience*

*The Chimney Sweeper*

A little black' thing among the snow:
Crying “weep, weep”, in notes of woe!
“Where are thy father & mother? say?”
“They are both gone up to the church to pray.

“Because I was happy upon the heath,  
And smil’d among the winters snow:  
They clothed me in the clothes of death,  
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

“And because I am happy & dance & sing,  
They think they have done me no injury:  
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,  
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

(1790-92, pub. 1794)

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1 Uso dei colori estremamente funzionale; nero sia perché i vestiti sono sporchi di fuliggine, sia perché è il colore della morte. Infatti questi bambini sono condannati a morire presto a causa delle condizioni in cui vivevano.
From *Songs of Experience*

*London*

I wander thro’ each charter’d street,
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban’,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh,
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts’ the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.

(pub. 1794)
The Smile

There is a smile of love,
And there is a smile of deceit,
And there is a smile of smiles
In which these two smiles meet;

And there is a frown of hate,
And there is a frown of disdain,
And there is a frown of frowns
Which you strive to forget in vain,

For it sticks in the heart’s deep core,
And it sticks in the deep back bone,
And no smile that ever was smil’d,
But only one smile alone

That betwixt the cradle and grave
It only once smil’d can be,
But when it once is smil’d,
There’s an end to all misery.

(1800, pub. 1804)
William Wordsworth
(1770-1850)

Lines
Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On revisiting The Banks of the Wye during a tour. July 13, 1798

Five years have past; 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 hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, 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,

1 "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of 4 or 5 days, with my sister. Not a note of it is altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol" [nota di Wordsworth].

La prima visita del poeta alla valle del Wye e alle rovine di Tintern Abbey, nel Monmouthshire, risale ad un viaggio a piedi nell’Agosto 1793, compiuto da solo. La profonda diversità tra il paesaggio odierno e la “picture of the mind” (v. 61) dà vita ad una meditazione estremamente complicata, nella quale il poeta rivive il passato, analizza il presente e (tramite la presenza della sorella come intermediario) prefigura il futuro, e gi finalmente chiude nel lentamente il cerchio sulla stessa scena.
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 thro’ 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 colours 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, nor 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,

\[^2\] Dal verso 66 e seguenti inizia la famosa descrizione di Wordsworth
dei tre stadi della crescita dell’uomo, a partire dall’essere giovane (vv. 73-74) sino alla situazione attuale (v. 85) passando attraverso la fase post
adolescenziale (vv. 77-78, vv. 79-80).

\[^3\] lose heart.
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 recognise
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

4 Questa posizione, secondo la quale la "creative sensibility" contribuisce alla percezione, ritorna anche nel Prelude.
5 poteri creativi (“genial”, in questo caso, è l’aggettivo del sostantivo “genius”).
6 La sorella Dorothy.
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!

(Lug. 1798, pub. 1798)
From Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1802)

Emotion recollected in Tranquillity

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling always found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is necessary to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once.

(pub. 1798-1802)
A slumber did my spirit seal

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seem’d a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Roll’d round in earth’s diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

(1799, pub. 1800)
I wandered lonely as a cloud
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed and gazed but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

(1804, pub. 1807)

1 Si confrontino le pagine di Grasmere Journals di Dorothy Wordsworth, datate 15 Aprile 1802, nelle quali viene raccontata l'esperienza accaduta due anni prima nel Gowbarrow Park, a Ullswater; di particolar rilievo è il seguente passo: 'I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones...; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, that blew upon them over the lake; they looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing'. Per tale motivo alcuni lettori conoscono la poesia come Daffodils, un titolo usato, ad esempio, da Arthur Quiller-Couch nel suo The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900 (1919).

2 Idea di gioia che pervade tutta la poesia.

3 Occhio interiore: concetto centrale nella poetica worsworthiana.

4 vv. 21-22: Wordsworth disse che questi erano i due versi migliori della poesia.
Ode: Intimations of Immortality From Recollections of Early Childhood

The Child is Father of the Man;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; —  
Turn wheresoe’er I may,  
By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

---

1 Wordsworth, a proposito di tale oda, scrisse “two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part”. Iniziato il 27 marzo 1802 “At breakfast William wrote part of an ode” il poema fu composto fino alla quarta stanza prima del 4 aprile di quell’anno, quando Coleridge scrisse la prima versione della sua Dejection: An Ode, che riecheggia, in alcune frasi, la poesia dell’amico. Dopo due anni, all’inizio del 1804, Wordsworth completò l’ode.  

Molto più tardi, nel 1843, il poeta sottolineò come: “Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being... with a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines — ‘obstinate questionings / Of sense and outward things, / Fallings from us, vanishing’ etc.”.

2 Sono i versi conclusivi di My heart leaps up di Wordsworth, composta il 26 marzo 1802, il giorno prima d’iniziare a comporre l’ode.

3 un tempo (antico).
II

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep, —
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong:
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng.
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday; —
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

4 piccolo tamburello.
5 Molte, diverse interpretazioni di questo verso sono state date; la più semplice, e probabile, risulta essere: ‘from the fields where they were sleeping’. Wordsworth spesso associa il vento che soffia alla rinascita dello spirito e dell’ispirazione poetica (si veda, a tale proposito, i versi d’apertura di The Prelude).
IV

Ye blesséd Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
    My heart is at your festival,
    My head hath its coronal⁶,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.
    O evil day! if I were sullen
While Earth herself is adorning
    This sweet May-morning;
And the children are culling
    On every side
In a thousand valleys far and wide
    Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm: —
        I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
        — But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
    The pansy at my feet
    Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star⁷,
    Hath had elsewhere its setting
    And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
    And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
    From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close

⁶ Ghirlande di fiori intrecciati con le quali ornavano il copricapo i giovani pastori nel mese di Maggio.
⁷ Il sole, come metafora dell'animo.
Upon the growing Boy,  
But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

VI
Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim,  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII
Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!  
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
With light upon him from his father's eyes!  
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art;  
A wedding or a festival,  
A mourning or a funeral;  
And this hath now his heart,  
And unto this he frames his song:  
Then will he fit his tongue  
To dialogues of business, love, or strife;

8 Nel senso di simple and friendly.  
9 irritated o anche nel senso antico di checkered over.
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little Actor cons another part;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage”¹⁰
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy Soul’s immensity;
Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read’st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the Day, a Master o’er a Slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by;
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being’s height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

¹⁰ Da un sonetto di epoca elisabettiana del poeta Samuel Daniel. In quel periodo ‘humorous’ significa ‘capricious’ ed era riferito anche a vari personaggi e caratteri (‘humours’) rappresentati nel dramma.
IX

O joy! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction: not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest —
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: —

Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised"," che non sembrano reali.

High instincts before which our mortal Nature
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor Man nor Boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!

Hence in a season of calm weather
Though inland far we be,
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither,
Can in a moment travel thither,
And see the Children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
   And let the young Lambs bound
   As to the tabor's sound!
We in thought will join your throng,
   Ye that pipe and ye that play,
   Ye that through your hearts to-day
   Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
   Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
   We will grieve not, rather find
   Strength in what remains behind;
   In the primal sympathy
   Which having been must ever be;
   In the soothing thoughts that spring
   Out of human suffering;
   In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquish'd one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway;
I love the brooks which down their channels fret
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
   Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

(1802-04, pub. 1807)
The solitary reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands 10
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas 15
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings? 20
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate’er the theme, the Maiden sang 25
As if her song could have no ending.

---

4 Uno dei rarissimi poemi che non si basa sull’esperienza diretta del poeta. Wordsworth stesso riferì che l’occasione poetica gli fu suggerita dalla lettura di un passo del Tours to the British Mountains (1814) di Thomas Wilkinson, nel quale egli scrisse: “Passed a female who was reaping alone; she sung in Erse [the Gaelic language of Scotland] as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard; her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more”.

5 Il poeta non comprende nulla del canto della mietitrice, dal momento che ella canta in Erse.
I saw her singing at her work,
And o’er the sickle bending —
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

(Nov. 5 1805, pub. 1807)
Composed upon Westminster Bridge,  
September 3, 1802

Earth has not any thing to show more fair: 
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by 
A sight so touching in its majesty: 
This City now doth, like a garment, wear 
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare, 
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie 
Open unto the fields, and to the sky; 
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air. 
Never did sun more beautifully steep 
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill; 
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep! 
The river glideth at his own sweet will: 
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep; 
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

(1802, pub. 1807)

1 In realtà la data esatta di tale avvenimento è il 31 Luglio 1802 (non il 3 Settembre); l'occasione è un viaggio in Francia, al ritorno dal quale Wordsworth, provando sentimenti contrastanti, scrisse una serie di sonetti personali e politici, tra i quali spicca, per l'appunto, questo.

La sorella Dorothy, nel suo Grasmere Journal, alla data del 31 Luglio 1802, mentre lei e il fratello lasciavano Londra di buon mattino, annotò: “It was a beautiful morning. The city, St. Paul’s, with the river, and a multitude of little boats, made a most beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge. The houses were not overhung by their cloud of smoke, and they were spread out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a fierce light; that there was something like the purity of one of nature’s own grand spectacles”.

119
From *The Prelude*

*Book I — Introduction, Childhood, and School-time*

O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate’er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast City, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me: with a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again;
Trances of thoughts and mountains if the hearth
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; wither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the River point me put my course?
Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail,
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt, within,
A corresponding breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but it is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation, Thank to both,
And their congenial powers that, while thy join
In breaking up a long continued frost,
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours;
Days of sweet leisure taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers, of harmonious verse"  

(1798-1839, pub. 1850)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge
(1772-1834)

Kubla Khan
Or, A Vision in a Dream. A Fragment

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in 'Purchas's Pilgrimage': “Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall”. The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as things, with a parallel production of the

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1 “In Xamdu did Cublai Chan build a stately Palace, encompassing sixteen miles of plaine ground with a wall, wherein are fertile Meddowes, pleasant Springs, delightfull Streames, and all sort of beasts of chase and game, and in the middest thereof a sumptuous house of pleasure, which may be removed from place to place”, tratto da Purchas his Pilgrimage (1613) di Samuel Purchas. Il Kubla Khan ‘storico’ fondò la dinastia mongola in Cina nel 13 secolo.

2 In una nota a margine di una copia manoscritta di Kubla Khan Coleridge fornisce una precisa descrizione della natura del suo ‘sleep’:

“’This fragment with a good deal more, not recoverable, composed, in a sort of reverie brought by two grains of opium, taken to check a dysentery, at a farmhouse between Porlock and Linton; a quarter of mile from Culbone Church, in the fall of the year, 1797’.”
correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, instantly and eagerly wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!

Then all the charm
Is broken — all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,
And each mis-shape[s] the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes —
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo, he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.

[From Coleridge's *The Picture; or, the Lover's Resolution*, lines 91-100]

Yet form the still surviving recollections in his mind, the author has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been originally, as it were, given to him. Σαμερον οδιον αφοτ: but the tomorrow is yet to come.

3 La traduzione dal greco suona all'incirca così: “Canterò una canzone più dolce oggi”, ove, nell'edizione del 1834, Coleridge cambiò la parola “today” con “tomorrow” (rifacendosi, probabilmente, agli *Idilli* 1.145 di Teocrito).
As a contrast to this vision, I have annexed a fragment of a very different character, describing with equal fidelity the dream of pain and disease.4

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph5, 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 romantic6 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 momentally 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.

(ca. 1797-98, pub. 1816)
The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
In seven parts


\[1\] Coleridge descrive l’origine del poema nelle righe d’apertura del capitolo 14 della Biographia Literaria. In un commento rivolto al reverendo Alexander Dyce nel 1835 e in una nota a We are seven Wordsworth aggiunge alcuni dettagli. Il poema, basato su un sogno di Cruikshank, amico di Coleridge, doveva, originariamente, essere il frutto di una collaborazione tra i due amici per pagarvi le spese del tour fatto con Dorothy nel Novembre 1797. Prima di abbandonare definitivamente il progetto, Wordsworth suggerì l’uccisione dell’albatross e l’elemento della nave guidata da uomini morti; inoltre contribuì alla stesura dei versi 13-16 e 236-27. “The Ancient Mariner was founded on a strange dream, which a friend of Coleridge had, who fancied he saw a skeleton ship, with figures in it. We had both determined to write some poetry for a monthly magazine, the profits of which were to defer the expenses of a little excursion we were to make together. The Ancient Mariner was intended for this periodical, but was too long. I had very little share in the composition of it, for I soon found the style of Coleridge and myself would not assimilate. Beside the lines (in the fourth part) — ’And thou art long, and lank, and brown, /As in the ribbed sea-sand’ — I wrote the stanza (in the first part) He holds him with his glittering eye — / The Wedding-Guest stood still, / And listens like a three-years child: / The Mariner hath his will. — and four or five lines more in different parts of the poem, which I could not now point out. The idea of shooting an albatross was mine; for I had been reading Shelvock’s Voyages, which probably Coleridge never saw. I also suggested the reanimation of the dead bodies, to work the ship”.

La versione del The Rime of the Ancient Mariner contenuta nelle Lyrical Ballads (1798) contiene molte parole e spelling arcaici. Nelle edizioni posteriori Coleridge migliorò il poema, eliminando molti arcaismi, e aggiunse l’epigrafe in latino e le glosse a margine. Qui viene adottata la versione del 1834.
invigilandum est, modusque servandus, ut certa ab incertis, diem a nocte, distinguamus.

T. Burnet, Archaeol. Phil. p. 68.

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.

[L.B. 1798.]

Part I

An ancient Marinee 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 grey 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, grey-beard loon!’
Eftsoons’ his hand dropt he.

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

* immediatamente.
He holds him with his glittering eye —
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
And listens like a three years' child: 15
The Mariner hath his will.3

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner. 20

'The ship was cheered, the harbour cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk4, below the hill,
Below the lighthouse top.

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

The Sun came up upon the left, 25
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 5 —'
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.6

*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 35
The merry minstrelsy.

3 Il Mariner ha raggiunto il controllo della volontà dell'invitato a nozze
tramite l'ipnosi o, com'era chiamata all'epoca di Coleridge, “mesmerism”.
4 chiesa (scozzese).
5 La nave ha raggiunto l'equatore.
6 fagotto (strumento musicale).
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-balst 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 cliffs
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!*

* did discern (scozzese).
* swoon.
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 mariner's hollo!

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud⁹,
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 cross-bow
I shot the Albatross.

⁹ sartia (insieme di funi che sostengono l'albero maestro).
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 an 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 sky.

*And the Albatross begins to be avenged.*

Water, water, every where,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, every where,
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*

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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 assured 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.

Part III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
A weary time! a weary time!
How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

The ancient Mariner beholds a sign in the element afar off.

At first it seemed a little speck,

\[13^3\text{ Misura di profondità (\(\approx 1,829\) m).}
\[14\text{ ahimè (arcaico).}]}
And then it seemed a mist;
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist\(^5\).

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
As if it dodged a water-sprite\(^6\),
It plunged and tacked and veered.

*At its nearer approach, it seemeth him to be a ship; and at a dear ransom he freeth his speech from the bonds of thirst.*

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, 'A sail! a sail!'

*A flash of joy;*

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:
Gramercy\(^7\)! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

*And horror follows. For can it be a ship that comes onward without wind or tide?*

See! see! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal\(^8\);
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

The western wave was all a-flame.
The day was well nigh done!

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\(^5\) sapevo.
\(^6\) Essere sovrannaturale che governa gli elementi naturali.
\(^7\) Dal francese “grand-merci”: grazie.
\(^8\) per facci del bene.
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the Sun.

*It seemeth him but the skeleton of a ship.*

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven’s Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

*And its ribs are seen as bars on the face of the setting Sun.*

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those *her* sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

*The Spectre-Woman and her Death-mate, and no other on
board the skeleton ship.*

Are those *her* ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?
And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman’s mate?

*Her* lips were red, *her* looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thickens man’s blood with cold.

*Death and Life-in-Death have diced for the ship’s crew, and she (the latter) winneth the ancient Mariner.*

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49 ragnatele.
30 Da ricordare che, in inglese, la morte viene personificata al maschile.
The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

No twilight within the courts of the Sun.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

At the rising of the Moon,

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed white;
From the sails the dew did drip —
Till clomb above the eastern bar
The hornéd Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.\(^5\)

One after another,

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

His shipmates drop down dead.

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

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\(^{5}\) Segno di cattivo augurio.
But Life-in-Death begins her work on the ancient Mariner.

The souls did from their bodies fly, —
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!

Part IV

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a Spirit is talking to him;

I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown.' —
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm,

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;  
I looked upon the rotting deck,  
And there the dead men lay.

I looked to heaven, and tried to pray;  
But or ever a prayer had gush't,  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,  
And the balls like pulses beat;  
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky  
Lay like a load on my weary eye,  
And the dead were at my feet.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,  
Nor rot nor reek did they;  
The look with which they looked on me  
Had never passed away.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell  
A spirit from on high;  
But oh! more horrible than that  
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!  
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,  
And yet I could not die.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward; and every where the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival.

The moving Moon went up the sky,  
And no where did abide:  
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—

Her beams bemocked the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread;
But where the ship’s huge shadow lay,
The charméd water burnt always
A still and awful red.

*By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God’s creatures of the great calm.*

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white,
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watched their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coiled and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

*Their beauty and their happiness.*

*He blesseth them in his heart.*

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

*The spell begins to break.*

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea.
Part V

Oh, sleep! It is a gentle thing,
Beloved from pole to pole!
To Mary Queen the praise be given!
She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven,
That slid into my soul.

*By grace of the holy Mother, the ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain.*

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained.

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs:
I was so light — almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

*He heareth sounds and seeth strange sights and commotions in the sky and the element.*

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen",
To and fro they were hurried about
And to and fro, and in and out,

22 shone. I piccoli fuocherelli sono, probabilmente, fuochi di Sant'Elmo, ad ogni modo Coleridge potrebbe descrivere l'Aurora Boreale e anche i suoi lampi.
The wan stars danced between.

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
And the rain poured down from one black cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

The bodies of the ship’s crew are inspired, and the ship moves on;

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on! Beneath the lightning and the Moon
The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up-blew;
The mariners all ’gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools —
We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother’s son
Stood by me, knee to knee:
The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me.

But not by the souls of the men, nor by daemons⁷ of earth or

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⁷ Esseri soprannaturali a metà strada tra gli esseri mortali e gli dei (il
middle air, but by a blessed troop of angelic spirits, sent down by the invocation of the guardian saint.

'I fear thee, ancient Mariner!' 345
Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!
'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned — they dropped their arms,
And clustered round the mast;
Sweet sounds rose slowly through their mouths,
And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;
Slowly the sounds came back again,
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;
Sometimes all little birds that are,
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!35

And now 'twas like all instruments,
Now like a lonely flute;
And now it is an angel's song,
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,
A noise like of a hidden brook
In the leafy month of June,
That to the sleeping woods all night
Singeth a quiet tune.

tipo di spirito descritto da Coleridge ai vv. 131-34).
24 corpi.
25 warbling.
Till noon we quietly sailed on,
Yet never a breeze did breathe:
Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
Moved onward from beneath.

The lonesome Spirit from the south-pole carries on the ship as far as the Line, in obedience to the angelic troop, but still requireth vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
From the land of mist and snow,
The spirit slid and it was he
That made the ship to go.
The sails at noon left off their tune,
And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
Had fixed her to the ocean:
But in a minute she 'gan stir,
With a short uneasy motion —
Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound:
It flung the blood into my head,
And I fell down in a swound.

The Polar Spirit's fellow-daemons, the invisible inhabitants of the element, take part in his wrong; and two of them relate, one to the other, that penance long and heavy for the ancient Mariner hath been accorded to the Polar Spirit, who returneth southward.

How long in that same fit I lay,
I have not to declare;
But ere my living life returned,
I heard and in my soul discerned

have not the knowledge.
Two voices in the air.

‘Is it he?’ quoth one, ‘Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel bow he laid full low
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.’

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, ‘The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.’

Part VI

First voice
‘But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing —
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the ocean doing?’

Second voice
‘Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see ! how graciously
She looketh down on him.’

The Mariner hath been cast into a trance; for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure.
First voice

‘But why drives on that ship so fast,
Without or wave or wind?'

Second voice

‘The air is cut away before,
And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
Or we shall be belated:
For slow and slow that ship will go,
When the Mariner's trance is abated.’

The supernatural motion is retarded; the Mariner awakes,
and his penance begins anew.

I woke, and we were sailing on
As in a gentle weather:
’Twas night, calm night, the moon was high;
The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
All fixed on me their stony eyes,
That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
Had never passed away:
I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse is finally expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
I viewed the ocean green,
And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

Like one, that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring —
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze —
On me alone it blew.

*And the ancient Mariner beholdeth his native country.*

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill ? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

We drifted o’er the harbour-bar,
And I with sobs did pray —
O let me be awake, my God!
Or let me sleep alway.

The harbour-bay was clear as glass,
So smoothly it was strewn!
And on the bay the moonlight lay,
And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
That stands above the rock:
The moonlight steeped in silentness
The steady weathercock.

*The angelic spirits leave the dead bodies,*

And the bay was white with silent light,
Till rising from the same,
Full many shapes, that shadows were,
In crimson colours came.

*And appear in their own forms of light.*

A little distance from the prow
Those crimson shadows were:
I turned my eyes upon the deck —
Oh, Christ! what saw I there!

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
And, by the holy rood!
A man all light, a seraph*-man,
On every corse there stood.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand:
It was a heavenly sight!
They stood as signals to the land,
Each one a lovely light;

This seraph-band, each waved his hand,
No voice did they impart —
No voice; but oh! the silence sank
Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
I heard the Pilot’s cheer;
My head was turned perforce away
And I saw a boat appear.

The Pilot and the Pilot’s boy,

27 Un essere celestiale luminoso, di rango più elevato rispetto agli angeli.
I heard them coming fast:
Dear Lord in Heaven! it was a joy
The dead men could not blast.

I saw a third — I heard his voice:
It is the Hermit good!
He singeth loud his godly hymns
That he makes in the wood.
He'll shrieve my soul, he'll wash away
The Albatross's blood.

Part VII

The Hermit of the Wood,
This Hermit good lives in that wood
Which slopes down to the sea.
How loudly his sweet voice he rears!
He loves to talk with marineres
That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve —
He hath a cushion plump:
It is the moss that wholly hides
The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared: I heard them talk,
'Why, this is strange, I trow!
Where are those lights so many and fair,
That signal made but now?'

Approacheth the ship with wonder.

'Strange, by my faith!' the Hermit said —
'And they answered not our cheer!
The planks looked warped! and see those sails,
How thin they are and sere!
I never saw aught like to them,
Unless perchance it were
Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
My forest-brook along;
When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
And the owlet whoops to the wolf below,
That eats the she-wolf’s young.’

‘Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look —
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared’ — ‘Push on, push on!’
Said the Hermit cheerily.

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

*The ship suddenly sinketh.*

Under the water it rumbleth on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

*The ancient Mariner is saved in the Pilot’s boat.*

Stunned by that loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot’s boat.

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips — the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;
The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars: the Pilot's boy,
Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
'Ha! ha!' quoth he, 'full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land!
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

_The ancient Mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrieve him; and the penance of life falls on him._

'O shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man!'
The Hermit crossed his brow\(^28\).
'Say quick,' quoth he, 'I bid thee say —
What manner of man art thou?'

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
Which forced me to begin my tale;
And then it left me free.

_And ever and anon through out his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land;_

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns:
And till my ghastly tale is told,
This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land;
I have strange power of speech;

\(^28\) Gli fa il segno della croce sulla fronte. 'Shrieve me': ascolta la mia confessione e dammi l'assoluzione.
That moment that his face I see,
I know the man that must hear me:
To him my tale I teach. 590

What loud uproar bursts from that door!
The wedding-guests are there:
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are:
And hark the little vesper bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer! 595

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea:
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemed there to be. 600

O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company!—

To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends
And youths and maidens gay!

And to teach, by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth.

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!
He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all.  

The Mariner, whose eye is bright,  
Whose beard with age is hoar,  
Is gone: and now the Wedding-Guest  
Turned from the bridegroom’s door.  

He went like one that hath been stunned,  
And is of sense forlorn:  
A sadder and a wiser man,  
He rose the morrow morn.  

(1797, pub. 1798)  

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29 Coleridge scrisse, nel 1830, in risposta alla poetessa Anna Barbaud che lamentava il fatto che il “poem lacked a moral”: “I told her that in my own judgment the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of pure imagination. It ought to have had no more moral than the Arabian Nights’ tale of the merchant’s sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well and throwing the shell aside, and lo! a genie starts up and says he must kill the aforesaid merchant because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out one of the eye of the genie’s son”.  

30 forsake.
Frost at Midnight

The Frost performs its secret ministry,
Unhelped by any wind. The owlet’s cry
Came loud — and hark, again! loud as before.
The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
Have left me to that solitude, which suits
Abstruser musings: save that at my side
My cradled infant slumbers peacefully.

Tis calm indeed! so calm, that it disturbs
And vexes meditation with its strange
And extreme silentness. Sea, hill, and wood,
This populous village! Sea, and hill, and wood,
With all the numberless goings-on of life,
Inaudible as dreams! the thin blue flame
Lies on my low-burnt fire, and quivers not;
Only that film, which fluttered on the grate,
Still flutters there, the sole unquiet thing.

Methinks, its motion in this hush of nature
Gives it dim sympathies with me who live,
Making it a companionable form,
Whose puny flaps and freaks the idling Spirit
By its own moods interprets, every where
Echo or mirror seeking of itself,
And makes a toy of Thought.

But O! how oft,
How oft, at school, with most believing mind,
Presageful, have I gazed upon the bars,
To watch that fluttering stranger! and as oft
With unclosed lids, already had I dreamt
Of my sweet birthplace, and the old church-tower,
Whose bells, the poor man’s only music, rang

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1 La scena ha luogo nel cottage di Coleridge a Nether Stowey; il neonato del v. 7 è il figlio Hartely di diciassette mesi.
La poesia fu pubblicata con Fears in Solitude e France: An Ode.

2 “In all parts of the kingdom these films are called strangers and supposed to portent of the arrival of some absent friends” [Nota di Coleridge].

3 Coleridge nacque a Ottery St. Mary nel Devonshire, ma frequentò la scuola a Londra, dall’età di nove anni.
From morn to evening, all the hot Fair-day,  
So sweetly, that they stirred and haunted me  
With a wild pleasure, falling on mine ear  
Most like articulate sounds of things to come!  
So gazed I, till the soothing things, I dreame,  
Lulled me to sleep, and sleep prolonged my dreams!  
And so I brooded all the following morn,  
Awed by the stern preceptor's face', mine eye  
Fixed with mock study on my swimming book:  
Save if the door half opened, and I snatched  
A hasty glance, and still my heart leaped up,  
For still I hoped to see the stranger's face,  
Townsman, or aunt, or sister more beloved,  
My play-mate when we both were clothed alike!

Dear Babe, that sleepest cradled by my side  
Whose gentle breathings, heard in this deep calm,  
Fill up the interspers['e]d vacancies  
And momentary pauses of the thought!  
My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness, thus to look at thee,  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores, beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags: so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all, and all things in himself.  
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould  
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.  

4 Il severo precettore del Christ' Hospital fu il reverendo James Boyer, che Coleridge descrisse nel primo capitolo della sua Biographia Literaria.  
5 Quando sia Coleridge sia Anna, l'unica sorella, morta nel 1791, portavano ancora entrambi vestiti infantili.
Therefore all seasons shall be sweet to thee,
Whether the summer clothe the general earth
With greenness, or the redbreast sit and sing
Betwixt the tufts of snow on the bare branch
Of mossy apple-tree, while the nigh thatch
Smokes in the sun-thaw; whether the eave-drops fall
Heard only in the trances of the blast,
Or if the secret ministry of frost6
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet Moon.75

(Feb. 1798, pub. 1798)

6 La prima versione del poema si concludeva con i versi seguenti:
Or whether the secret ministry of cold
Shall hang them up in silent icicles,
Quietly shining to the quiet moon,
Like those, my babe! which ere tomorrow’s warmth
Have capp’d their sharp keen points with pendulous drops,
Will catch thine eye, and with their novelty
Suspend thy little soul; then make thee shout,
And stretch and flutter from thy mother’s arms
As though wouldst fly for very eagerness.
From *Biographia Literaria*
Chapter 13 — *[On the Imagination, or the Esemplastic Power]*

***The IMAGINATION, then, I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still, at all events, it struggles to idealize and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead.

FANCY, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space, and blended with, and modified by that empirical phenomenon of the will which we express by the word CHOICE. But equally with the ordinary memory it must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association.***

(1815, pub. 1817)
...the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moon-light or sun-set diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both....

...What is poetry? is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? that the answer to the one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts and emotions of the poet’s own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other, according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends and fuses by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power, first, put in action by the will and understanding and retained under their irremissive, thought gentle and unnoticed, control (laxis effertur habenis) reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general, with the concrete; the idea, with the image; the individual, with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness, with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession, with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our...

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1 In questo punto Coleridge introduce il concetto secondo il quale la poesia, nella sua forma suprema, racchiude e riconcilia in sé gli elementi opposti o discordanti; questo concetto, sotto i nomi di “ironia” e “paradosso”, diventa un criterio fondamentale dell’American New Critics.
sympathy with the poetry. “Doubtless”, as Sir John Davies observes of the soul (and his words may with slight alteration be applied, and even more appropriately to the poetic IMAGINATION).

Doubtless this could not be, but that she turns
Bodies to spirit by sublimation strange,
As fire converts to fire the things it burns,
As we our food into our nature change.

From their gross matter she abstracts their forms,
And draws a kind of quintessence from things;
Which to her proper nature she transforms
To bear them light on her celestial wings.

Thus does she, when from individual states
She doth abstract the universal kinds;
Which then re-clothed in divers names and fates
Steal access through our senses to our minds.

Finally, GOOD SENSE is the BODY of poetic genius, FANCY its DRAPERY, MOTION its LIFE, and IMAGINATION the SOUL that is everywhere, and in each; and forms all into one graceful and intelligent whole.

(1815, pub. 1817)

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* Adattamento del poema filosofico *Nosce Teipsum* (“Know thyself”) di John Davies, scritto nel 1599.
George Gordon Byron
(1788-1824)

She walks in beauty'

I
She walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

II
One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

III
And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,

1 É una delle poesie facenti parte delle Hebrew melodies (1815), scritte per esser adattate alla musica tradizionale ebraica dal giovane musicista Isaac Nathan. Byron scrisse questi versi il mattino seguente l'incontro con la giovane e bella cugina acquistata, Mrs. Anne Wilmot, vestita a lutto.

Infatti secondo l'amico James W. Webster: 'I did take him to Lady Sitwell's party in Seymour Road. He there for the first time saw his cousin, the beautiful Mrs. Wilmot. When we returned to his rooms in Albany, he said little, but desired Fletcher to give him a tumbler of brandy, which he drank at once to Mrs. Wilmot's health, then retired to rest, and was, I heard afterwards, in a sad state all night. The next day he wrote those charming lines upon her—She walks in Beauty like the Night...'.
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

(Giug. 1814, pub. 1815)
So We’ll Go No More A-Roving

So we’ll go no more a-roving
So late into the night,
Though the heart still be as loving,
And the moon still be as bright.

For the sword outwears its sheath, 5
And the soul outwears the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself have rest.

Though the night was made for loving,
And the day returns too soon, 10
Yet we’ll go no more a-roving
By the light of the moon.

(1817, pub. 1830)

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La poesia fu composta dopo un periodo febbrile di dissipazione durante il Carnevale a Venezia e inclusa in una lettera a Thomas Moore, datata 28 Febbraio 1817; fu pubblicata per la prima volta da Moore in Letters and Journals of Lord Byron (1830). Nella lettera, prima della poesia, Byron appose una nota: "At present, I am on the invalid regimen myself. The Carnival — that is, the latter part of it, and sitting up late o’ nights — had knocked me up a little. But it is over — and it is now Lent, with all its abstinence and sacred music... Though I did not dissipate much upon the whole, yet I find ‘the sword wearing out the scabbard,’ though I have but just turned the corner of twenty nine".

Sembra che, almeno in parte, il poema sia stato suggerito dal ritornello di una canzone scozzese, The Jolly Beggar: "And we’ll gang nae mair a roving / Sae late into the nicht".
From *Don Juan, Canto I*

**VI**

Most epic poets plunge "*in medias res*" (Horace makes this the heroic turnpike road),
And then your hero tells, whene'er you please,
What went before — by way of episode,
While seated after dinner at his ease,
Beside his mistress in some soft abode,
Palace, or garden, paradise, or cavern,
Which serves the happy couple for a tavern.

**VII**

That is the usual method, but not mine —
My way is to begin with the beginning;
The regularity of my design
Forbids all wandering as the worst of sinning,
And therefore I shall open with a line
(Although it cost me half an hour in spinning)
Narrating somewhat of Don Juan’s father,
And also of his mother, if you’d rather.

**VIII**

In Seville was he born, a pleasant city,
Famous for oranges and women — he
Who has not seen it will be much to pity,
So says the proverb — and I quite agree;
Of all the Spanish towns is none more pretty,
Cadiz perhaps — but that you soon may see;
Don Juan’s parents lived beside the river,
A noble stream, and call’d the Guadalquivir.

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1 *nel mezzo delle cose* (*Ars Poetica* di Orazio).
IX
His father's name was José — Don, of course, —
A true Hidalgo, free from every stain
Of Moor or Hebrew blood, he traced his source
Through the most Gothic gentlemen of Spain;
A better cavalier ne'er mounted horse,
Or, being mounted, e'er got down again,
Than José, who begot our hero, who
Begot — but that's to come — Well, to renew:

X
His mother was a learnéd lady, famed
For every branch of every science known
In every Christian language ever named,
With virtues equal'd by her wit alone,
She made the cleverest people quite ashamed,
And even the good with inward envy groan,
Finding themselves so very much exceeded
In their own way by all the things that she did.

XI
Her memory was a mine: she knew by heart
All Calderon and greater part of Lope's,
So that if any actor miss'd his part
She could have served him for the prompter's copy;
For her Feinagle's were an useless art,
And he himself obliged to shut up shop — he
Could never make a memory so fine as
That which adorn'd the brain of Donna Inez.
XII

Her favourite science was the mathematical,
Her noblest virtue was her magnanimity,
Her wit (she sometimes tried at wit) was Attic7 all,
Her serious sayings darken'd to sublimity;
In short, in all things she was fairly what I call
A prodigy — her morning dress was dimity,
Her evening silk, or, in the summer, muslin,
And other stuffs, with which I won't stay puzzling.

XIII

She knew the Latin — that is, “the Lord's prayer,”
And Greek — the alphabet — I'm nearly sure;
She read some French romances here and there,
Although her mode of speaking was not pure;
For native Spanish she had no great care,
At least her conversation was obscure;
Her thoughts were theorems, her words a problem,
As if she deem'd that mystery would ennoble 'em.

XIV

She liked the English and the Hebrew tongue,
And said there was analogy between 'em;
She proved it somehow out of sacred song,
But I must leave the proofs to those who've seen 'em;
But this I heard her say, and can't be wrong
And all may think which way their judgments lean 'em,
"T is strange — the Hebrew noun which means 'I am,'
The English always used to govern d — n."

XV

Some women use their tongues — she look'd a lecture,
Each eye a sermon, and her brow a homily,
An all-in-all sufficient self-director,

7 Ateniese. La frase di uso comune “Attic salt” fa riferimento al proverbiale ingegno degli ateniesi.
Like the lamented late Sir Samuel Romilly, the Law’s expounder, and the State’s corrector, whose suicide was almost an anomaly — one sad example more, that “All is vanity” (The jury brought their verdict in “Insanity”).

XVI

In short, she was a walking calculation, Miss Edgeworth’s novels stepping from their covers, or Mrs. Trimmer’s books on education, or “Coelebs’ Wife” set out in quest of lovers, Morality’s prim personification, in which not Envy’s self a flaw discovers; to others’ share let “female errors fall” for she had not even one — the worst of all.

XVII

Oh! she was perfect past all parallel — of any modern female saint’s comparison; so far above the cunning powers of hell, her guardian angel had given up his garrison; even her minutest motions went as well as those of the best time-piece made by Harrison: in virtues nothing earthly could surpass her, save thine “incomparable oil,” Macassar!

XVIII

Perfect she was, but as perfection is insipid in this naughty world of ours,
Where our first parents never learn’d to kiss
Till they were exiled from their earlier bowers,
Where all was peace, and innocence, and bliss
(I wonder how they got through the twelve hours),
Don Jôse, like a lineal son of Eve,
Went plucking various fruit without her leave.

(1818, pub. 1819)
Percy Bysshe Shelley
(1792-1822)

To Wordsworth

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love’s first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel’st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter’s midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,—
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

(ca. 1814-15, pub. 1816)
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.'

(1817, pub. 1818)

1 è un sonetto all’italiana.
Ozymandias era il nome greco per Ramses II d’Egitto (XIII sec, a.C.).
Secondo Diodoro Siculo, storico greco del I secolo a.C., la più grande
statua egiziana recava la seguente iscrizione: ‘I am Ozymandias, king of
kings; if anyone wishes to know what I am and where I lie, let him surpass
me in some of my exploits.’
Il sonetto fu scritto in amichevole competizione con Horace Smith, il
quale aveva composto un sonetto col medesimo soggetto, pubblicandolo
sull’Examiner il 1 Febbraio 1818.

2 è la mano dello scultore che ha ‘mocked’ (sia nel senso di imitare, sia
in quello di deridere) le passioni scolpite.
England in 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king; —
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn, — mud from a muddy spring, —
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow, —
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field; —
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield, —
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless — a book sealed;
A Senate, — Time's worst statute unrepealed,
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

(1819, pub. 1839)

1 Questo sonetto fu scritto dopo che la notizia del massacro di Peterloo, avvenuto il 16 Agosto 1819, raggiunse Shelley. Tale massacro avvenne nel campo di St. Peter's, vicino a Manchester, quando una pattuglia a cavallo caricò la folla che manifestava pacificamente in supporto della riforma parlamentare. "Peterloo" è la combinazione ironica tra "St. Peter's" e "Waterloo".

Il sonetto fu inviato a Leigh Hunt il 23 Novembre 1819, accompagnato dalle seguenti parole: "I don't expect you to publish it but you may show it to whom you wish". Fu pubblicato vent'anni dopo.

2 George III; il re morì l'anno successivo, cioè nel 1820, dopo esser stato dichiarato pazzo nel 1811.

3 Sia il re sia il Parlamento.

4 Dopo la fine della guerra contro Napoleone, nel 1815 fu approvata la Corn Law che teneva artificiosamente alto il prezzo del grano.

5 A doppio taglio, nel senso che l'esercito può essere impiegato sia per difendere la libertà del paese sia per opprimere i cittadini.

6 Leggi comprate con l'oro, che conducevano a spargimenti di sangue.

7 Si riferisce alla legge che escludeva chi non era anglicano dall'accedere ai pubblici servizi e dal frequentare le università.

8 Una rivoluzione.
Ode to the West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who charioteest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until

1 “This poem was conceived and chiefly written in a wood that skirts the Arno, near Florence, and on a day when that tempestuous wind, whose temperature is at once mild and animating, was collecting the vapours which pour down the autumnal rains. They began, as I foresaw, at sunset with a violent tempest of hail and rain, attended by that magnificent thunder and lightning peculiar to the Cisalpine regions.” [nota di Shelley].

Come in molte altre poesie romantiche (ad esempio i versi di apertura di The Prelude di Wordsworth, Dejection: An Ode di Coleridge, e la conclusione di Adonais di Shelley stesso) il vento, collegato al ciclo delle stagioni, è presentato come il corrispondente esterno di un cambiamento interno che porta dall’apatia a una vitalità spirituale, e dalla sterilità immaginativa all’esplosione del genio creativo, simile all’ispirazione dei profeti biblici. In ebraico, latino, greco e molte altre lingue, le parole corrispondenti per wind, breath, soul and inspiration sono identiche o simili. Infatti il vento dell’ovest di Shelley è uno “spirit” (dal latino spiritus), il “breath of Autumn’s being”, che in terra, in cielo e in acqua distrugge in autunno per ricreare a primavera. Intorno a quest’immagine centrale del poema si irradiano vari cicli di morte e rigenerazione — vegetale, umano e divino.

La stanza di 14 versi deriva dall’italiana terza rima (aba bcb cdc ecc) ed è composta dall’unione di 4 terzine, chiuse da un distico che rima con il secondo verso dell’ultima terzina: aba bcb cdc ded ee.

2 Le foglie autunnali che cadono dagli alberi sono un’immagine tradizionale di morte e sconfitta (cfr. Dante, Inferno, canto 3, 112-17, e John Milton, Paradise Lost, i, 302-4).

3 Fa riferimento al tipo di febbre che si ha durante la tubercolosi.

4 Shelley parla di foglie sia figurativamente che letteralmente; qui sembra suggerire una folla che soffre di peste.
Thine azure sister\(^5\) of the Spring shall blow
Her clarion\(^6\) o’er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and Preserver\(^7\); hear, oh, hear\(^8\)!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky’s commotion,
Loose clouds like earth’s decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean\(^9\);

Angels of rain and lightning there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head\(^{20}\)

Of some fierce Maenad\(^{10}\), even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith’s height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

\(^5\) Il tiepido vento dell’ovest in primavera, generalmente maschile nella letteratura greca e latina; viene reso femminile da Shelley.
\(^6\) La chiarina, o chiarino, è una piccola tromba dal suono acuto in uso fino al secolo XVIII.
\(^7\) Epiteti degli dei indù Shiva (il Distruttore) e Vishnu (il Protettore); la poesia di Shelley rivista sia l’immaginario cristiano che quello orientale.
\(^8\) Cfr, il Salmo 61: ‘Ascolta il mio grido Signore: accetta la mia preghiera’.
\(^9\) Le nuvole frammentate (le foglie) sono strappate dalle nuvole più alte e grandi (i rami degli alberi), formate dal vapore che sale, nel sole, dal mare.
\(^10\) Una devota che danza freneticamente adorando il dio Dioniso (Bacco), il dio greco del vino e della vegetazione. Come dio della vegetazione si narra che egli morisse in autunno per poi risorgere in primavera.
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams";

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae’s bay”;
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave’s intenser day”;

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic’s level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves”': oh, hear!

11 Le correnti che scorrono nel mare Mediterraneo, a volte con una differenza di colore facilmente individuabile.
12 Baia ad ovest di Napoli, visitata da Shelley l’8 dicembre 1818. Vi erano i resti di grandi ville romane sottacqua. A proposito di tale escursione, Shelley scrisse a T.L. Peacock che, navigando nella zona, il mare era: “so translucent that you could see the hollow caverns clothed with glaucous sea-moss, and the leaves and branches of those delicate weeds that pave the unequal bottom of the water” e ancora “passing the Bay of Baiae, and observing the ruins of its antique grandeur standing like rocks in the transparent sea under our boat” (Letters, II, 61).
13 Shelley una volta osservò che, riflessi nell’acqua, i colori ‘are more vivid yet blended with more harmony’.
14 ‘The phenomenon alluded to at the conclusion of the third stanza is well known to naturalists. The vegetation at the bottom of the sea, of rivers, and of lakes, sympathises with that of the land in the change of seasons, and is consequently influenced by the winds which announce it’ [nota di Shelley].
IV
If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V
Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy⁷⁹! O, Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

(1819, pub. 1820)
**John Keats**  
(1795-1821)

*On first looking into Chapman’s Homer*

Much have I travell’d in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow’d Homer ruled as his desmesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes

---

1 Charles Cowden Clarke introdusse Keats alla lettura di Omero nella solida traduzione del poeta elisabettiano George Chapman. Essi lessero il testo durante la notte e Keats tornò a casa all’alba del giorno seguente. Alle dieci del mattino questo sonetto fu recapitato a Clarke stesso.

2 Il pianeta Urano fu scoperto nel 1781 da F.W. Herschel.

3 Balboa, e non Cortes, scoprì l’Oceano Pacifico.

Probabilmente Keats confuse due passaggi della *History of America* di Robertson; il primo, per l’appunto, della scoperta dell’Oceano Pacifico da parte di Balboa: “At length the Indians assured them, that from the top of the next mountain they should discover the ocean which was the object of their wishes. When, with infinite toil, they had climbed up the greater part of the steep ascent, Balboa commanded his men to halt, and advanced alone to the summit, that he might be the first who should enjoy a spectacle which he had so long desired. As soon as he beheld the South Sea stretching in endless prospect below him, he fell on his knees, and lifting up his hands to Heaven, returned thanks to God, who had conducted him to a discovery so beneficial to his country, and so honourable to himself. His followers, observing his transports of joy, rushed forward to join in his wonder, exultation, and gratitude” (Bk. III). Il secondo, invece, presenta Città del Messico vista attraverso gli occhi di Cortes: “In descending from the mountains of Chalco, across which the road lay, the vast plain of Mexico opened gradually to their view. When they first beheld this prospect, one of the most striking and beautiful on the face of the earth, when they observed fertile and cultivated fields, stretching farther than the eye could reach; when they saw a lake resembling the sea in extent, encompassed with large towns, and discovered the capital city rising upon an island in the middle, adorned with its temples and turrets; the scene so far exceeded their
He star’d at the Pacific — and all his men
Look’d at each other with a wild surmise —
Silent, upon a peak in Darien⁴.

(Ott. 1816, pub. 1816)

imagination, that some believed the fanciful descriptions of romance were realized, and that its enchanted palaces and gilded domes were presented to their sight; others could hardly persuade themselves that this wonderful spectacle was any thing more than a dream. As they advanced, their doubts were removed, but their amazement increased. They were now fully satisfied that the country was rich beyond any conception which they had formed of it⁴ (Bk. V).

⁴ Montagna che si trova sopra l'Istmo di Darien, oggi conosciuto come stretto di Panama.
When I have fears that I may cease to be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean’d my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Hold like rich garners the full ripen’d grain;
When I behold, upon the night’s stair’d face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love; — then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

(Gen. 1818, pub. 1848)

1 Il primo e uno dei più riusciti tentativi da parte di Keats di sonetto shakespeareano, non solo nella scelta del metro ma anche dei temi. Si ricordi, a tale proposito, il sonetto XII (When I do count the clock that tells the time).

Il sonetto fu inviato a Reynolds in una lettera datata 31 Gennaio 1818.

characters: lettere dell’alfabeto stampate.
La Belle Dame sans Merci: A Ballad

I
Oh, what can ail thee, knight at arms,
   Alone and palely loitering;
The sedge has wither’d from the lake,
   And no birds sing.

II
Oh, what can ail thee, knight at arms,
   So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel’s granary is full,
   And the harvest’s done.

III
I see a lilly on thy brow,
   With anguish moist and fever dew;
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
   Fast withereth too.

1 Il titolo, anche se non il soggetto, fu preso da un poema medievale di
   Alain Charter. La storia di un mortale distrutto dal suo amore per una
   femme fatale è ricorrente nel mito, nelle favole e nelle ballate. Ad ogni
   modo Keats aggiunge ancor maggior pathos, tramite l’uso di un verso molto
   breve a conclusione di ogni stanza.

2 Segni esteriori di una malattia che lo consuma incessantemente.

Keats imita una procedura frequente nelle ballate popolari, quella
della forma dialogica; infatti le prime tre stanze sono rivolte al cavaliere,
mentre quelle restanti costituiscono la sua risposta.

Inoltre in The Eve of St. Agnes di Keats l’innamorato canta questa
vecchia canzone mentre sta svegliando la sua amata.

178
IV
I met a lady in the meads
    Full beautiful, a fairy's child;
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
    And her eyes were wild.

V
I made a garland for her head,
    And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
    And made sweet moan.

VI
I set her on my pacing steed,
    And nothing else saw all day long;
For sidelong would she lean, and sing
    A fairy's song.

VII
She found me roots of relish sweet,
    And honey wild, and manna dew;
And sure in language strange she said —
    I love thee true.

VIII
She took me to her elfin grot,
    And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes —
    With kisses four.

IX
And there she lulled me asleep,

---

1 cintura (di fiori).
And there I dream’d — Ah woe betide!
The latest4 dream I ever dream’d
On the cold hill side.

X
I saw pale kings, and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried — "La belle dame sans merci
Hath thee in thrall!"

XI
I saw their starv’d lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke, and found me here
On the cold hill side.

XII
And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither’d from the lake,
And no birds sing.

(Apr. 1819, pub. 1820)

4 last
Ode to a Nightingale

I
My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness,
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

II
O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Charles Brown, con il quale Keats viveva a Hampstead, scrisse a proposito della stesura di questa poesia: "In the spring of 1819 a nightingale had built her nest near my house. Keats felt a tranquil and continual joy in her song; and one morning he took his chair from the breakfast table to the grass-plot under a plum-tree, where he sat for two or three hours. When he came into the house, I perceived he had some scraps of paper in his hand, and these he was quietly thrusting behind the books. On inquiry, I found those scraps, four or five in number, contained his poetic feeling on the song of our nightingale".
Erba velenosa.
Verso il Lete, fiume dell'Ade le cui acque donavano l'oblio.
Dea romana della vegetazione, qui utilizzata per rappresentare i fiori stessi.
Keats scrisse a Fanny, il 1 Maggio 1819: "O there is nothing like fine weather... and, please heaven, a little claret-wine cool out of a cellar a mile deep — with a few or a good many ratafia cakes — a rocky basin to bathe in, a strawberry bed to say your prayers to Flora in" (Letters, II, 56).
La Provenza, nel sud della Francia, era rinomata, nel tardo Medioevo, per i suoi trobadori, scrittori e cantanti di poesie d'amore.
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene\textsuperscript{6},
   With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
   And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
   And with thee fade away into the forest dim: \hspace{2cm} 20

III
Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
   What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
   Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
   Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies\textsuperscript{7};
   Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
   And leaden-eyed despairs,
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
   Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow. \hspace{2cm} 30

IV
Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
   Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy\textsuperscript{8},
   Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
   And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
   Cluster’d around by all her starry Fays\textsuperscript{9};
   But here there is no light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
   Through verdurous\textsuperscript{10} glooms and winding mossy way \hspace{2cm} 40

\begin{footnotes}
\item Fontana delle Muse sul Monte Elicona, in Boezia, da dove, secondo il mito, sporgevano le acque che donavano l’ispirazione; qui applicato, metaforicamente, al vino.
\item Tom, il fratello di Keats, era morto l’inverno precedente, devastato dalla tubercolosi.
\item Non ubriacato dal vino (il “vintage” della stanza II), ma sulle ali invisibili (“viewles”) dell’ispirazione poetica (Bacco, il dio del vino, era, a volte, rappresentato su un carri trainato da ‘pards’, leopardi).
\item fairies.
\item Dal fogliame verde.
\end{footnotes}
V
I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover’d up in leaves;
And mid-May’s eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

VI
Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death
Call’d him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain —
To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII
Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down;
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,

11 in the dark.
Cfr. Milton, Paradise Lost, III, 38-40: ‘As the wakeful Bird / Sings darkling, and in shadiest Covert hid / Tunes her nocturnal Note’.

12 Già chiamata “easeful Death” in Why did I laugh tonight? No voice will tell e Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou are.
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.  

VIII

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam’d to do, deceiving elf.
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
Up the hill-side; and now ’tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music; — Do I wake or sleep?  

(Maggio 1819, pub. 1819)
Ode on a Grecian Urn

I
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 loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

II
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,

1 Questa urna, con le varie scene rappresentate su di essa, ricorda parti di diversi vasi, sculture e dipinti, ma esiste in tutti i suoi particolari solo nell’immaginazione di Keats. Nell’urna, che cattura momenti di vita e li immobilizza nel marmo, Keats trova il perfetto correlativo per la sua preoccupazione e il suo desiderio del permanente in un mondo soggetto al tempo e al cambiamento. L’interpretazione dei particolari che egli descrive è, ad ogni modo, oggetto di continue dispute, dal primo verso — “still” è un avverbio (“as yet”) o un aggettivo (“motionless”)? — sino agli ultimi due. Tali diverse interpretazioni sono un’ulteriore testimonianza della ricchezza dal punto di vista significativo delle cinque stanzze, e dell’importanza cruciale dell’ode all’interno della critica della lirica inglese.

2 Silvano, rustico.

3 Arcadia, distretto del Peloponneso, spesso utilizzato come simbolo ideale dell’ambiente agreste. Tempe è una valle in Tessaglia, famosa per la sua bellezza.

4 Orecchio “fisico”, contrapposto a quello ideale dello “spirit” e dell’immaginazione.
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!

III

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

IV

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 drest? 
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 for evermore 
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell 
Why thou art desolate, can e’er return.

V

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

5 attico; l’Attica era la regione greca in cui sorgeva Atene. 
6 braid. 
7 Questa frase ricorre anche in Epistle to Reynolds di Keats, scritte nel marzo 1818: “Things cannot to the will / Be settled, but they tease us out
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.

(1819, pub. 1820)
To Autumn

I
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
  Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
  With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss’d cottage-trees,
  And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
  With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
  For Summer has o’er-brimm’d their clammy cells.

II
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
  Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
  Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap’d furrow sound asleep,
  Drows’d with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
  Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

1 Tre giorni dopo che quest’ode fu composta, Keats, il 22 Settembre 1819, scrisse a J.H. Reynolds: “How beautiful the season is now — How fine the air. A temperate sharpness about it. Really, without joking, chaste weather — Dian skies — I never lik’d stubble fields so much as now — Aye better than the chilly green of the spring. Somehow a stubble plain looks warm — in the same way that some pictures look warm — this struck me so much in my Sunday’s walk that I composed upon it”.

2 falce.
III
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river sallows\(^3\), borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn\(^4\);
Hedge-cricket\(s\) sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

(\text{Sett. 19 1819, pub. 1820})

\(^3\) salici.
\(^4\) baluardo.
Elizabeth Barrett Browning
(1806-1861)

From Sonnets from the Portuguese¹
XLIII — How do I love thee?

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with a passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints, — I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! — and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

(1845-47, pub. 1850)

¹ Raccolta di quarantaquattro sonetti nella quale Elizabeth Browning ripercorre le tappe del suo amore per Robert Browning; nella finzione letteraria il canzoniere viene presentato come una traduzione dal portoghese.
Alfred Tennyson  
(1809-1892)

Ulysses

It little profits that an idle king,  
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,  
Match’d with an aged wife, I mete and dole  
Unequal laws unto a savage race,  
That hoard, and sleep, and feed1, and know not me.  
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy’d  
Greatly, have suffer’d greatly, both with those  
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when  
Thro’ scudding drifts the rainy Hyades2  
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;  
For always roaming with a hungry heart  
Much have I seen and known; cities of men  
And manners, climates, councils, governments,  
Myself not least, but honour’d of them all;  
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

1 Secondo Dante, dopo la caduta di Troia, Ulisse non ha mai fatto ritorno alla sua Itaca; invece egli persuase alcuni compagni a seguirlo in cerca di nuove avventure in un viaggio sino allo stretto di Gibilterra. Incitando il suo equipaggio pronunziò la celeberrima frase: “Fatti non foste a viver come bruti ma per seguir virtute et canoscenza” (Inferno, canto XXVI).

Tennyson modifica il racconto dantesco integrandolo con il resoconto di Omero (Odissea, 19-24); per il poeta inglese Ulisse pronuncia il suo discorso qualche tempo dopo il ritorno ad Itaca e, presumibilmente, dopo aver ripreso possesso del comando dell’isola.

Lo stesso Tennyson ammise che il poema testimonia il suo "need of going forward and braving the struggle of life" dopo la perdita dell’amico Arthur Henry Hallam; infatti Ulysses fu scritto nelle settimane immediatamente successive alla notizia della sua morte (1833). Era stato proprio Hallam ad avvicinare Tennyson alla lettura di Dante.

2 Si confronti Hamlet 4.4.33-35: “What is a man, / If his chief good… / Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more”.

3 Le “Hyades” sono un gruppo di stelle la cui comparsa nel cielo era considerata foriera di pioggia.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!'
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star;'
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle, —
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me —
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads — you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

4 Si confronti il discorso di Ulisse nel Troilus and Cressida, 3.3. 150-153:
"Perseverance, dear my lord, / Keeps honour bright, to have done, is to hang / Quite out of fashion, like a rusty mail / in monumental mockery".
5 Trasposizione moderna dell'espressione dantesca "seguir virtute et canoscenza".
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles',
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' 65
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 70

(1833, pub. 1842)

6 La parte più esterna dell'oceano che, nella cosmologia greca,
   racchiudeva il cerchio piatto della terra e nella quale tramontavano le
   stelle.  
7 Nella mitologia greca i Campi Elisi (Island of the Blessed), un
   paradiso ove vi era un'estate perpetua, queste isole erano collocate oltre le
   colonne d'Ercole, nella parte più estrema dell'oceano. Erano popolate da
   tutti i grandi eroi, che, senza essere morti, erano stati portati in questo
   luogo dagli dei e ivi resi immortali. Nelle versioni più tarde del mito, gli
   eroi diventavano immortali dopo essere morti. Achille e tutti gli altri
   guerrieri uccisi durante la guerra di Troia facevano parte della schiera di
   questi eroi.
**Break, Break, Break**

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill:
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

(1834, pub. 1842)

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1 “Made in a Lincolnshire lane at five o'clock in the morning, between blossoming hedges” [nota di Tennyson]. La poesia fu scritta in memoria dell’amico, Arthur Hallam, morto nel 1833.
From *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

7 — *Dark house, by which once more I stand*

Dark house\(^1\), by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp’d no more —
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here\(^3\); but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly thro’ the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

(pub. 1850)

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\(^1\) Raccolta poetica, nella quale Tennyson racconta la morte dell’amico Arthur Henry Hallam, partendo dalla disperazione iniziale per giungere sino alla speranza, dal momento che la volontà di Dio è imperscrutabile.

Infatti, a proposito di tale raccolta Tennyson scrisse che essa è “a poem, not a biography... The different moods of sorrow as in a drama are dramatically given, and my conviction that fear, doubts, and suffering will find answer and relief only through Faith in a God of Love. I is not always the author speaking of himself, but the voice of the human race speaking through him”.

\(^2\) La casa in Wimpole Street a Londra, dove Hallam visse.

\(^3\) Eco lontana delle parole pronunciate dall’angelo sul sepolcro vuoto del Cristo: “Egli non è più qui; è risorto!”. La casa è buia e vuota come una tomba
From *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

54 — O, yet we trust that somehow good

O, yet we trust that somehow good¹
Will be the final goal of ill,
To pangs of nature, sins of will,
Defects of doubt, and taints of blood;

That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy’d,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;

That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell’d in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another’s gain.

Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last — far off — at last, to all,
And every winter change to spring.

So runs my dream; but what am I?
An infant crying in the night;
An infant crying for the light,
And with no language but a cry.

(pub. 1850)

¹ Confidiamo che vi sia una ragione al male.
From *In Memoriam A.H.H.*

106 — *Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky*

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
   The flying cloud, the frosty light;
   The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
   Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
   The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
   For those that here we see no more,
   Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
   And ancient forms of party strife;
   Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care the sin,
   The faithless coldness of the times;
   Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
   The civic slander and the spite;
   Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
   Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
   Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.
Ring in the valiant man and free,
    The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

(pub. 1850)
Robert Browning
(1812-1889)

My Last Duchess

Ferrara
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

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1 La poesia si basa su alcuni avvenimenti della vita di Alfonso II, duca di Ferrara dal 1599 al 1597, ed ultimo discendente degli Este. Nel 1598 sposò la quattordicenne Lucrezia, figlia di Cosimo I de’ Medici, la quale morì in circostanze poco chiare nel 1599, dopo solo tre anni di matrimonio. Dopo la sua morte, il duca combinò un secondo matrimonio con Barbara d’Austria, che incontrò ad Innsbruck nel 1565. Browning immagina l’incontro tra il duca di Ferrara e il messaggero Nikolaus Mardrus mandato per contrattare le nuove nozze da Ferdinando II, duca del Tirolo.

2 Immaginario pittore, che avrebbe immortalato la giovane moglie.

3 Alfonso cerca, secondo le parole di Browning stesso, ‘an excuse — mainly to himself — for taking revenge on one who had unwittingly
Too easily impressed; she liked what'ever
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour 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 pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed

wounded his absurdly pretentious vanity, by failing to recognise his superiority in even the most trifling matters'.

4 in verità (ant.).

5 Quando fu chiesto a Browning di spiegare il significato dell'espressione 'I gave commands' inizialmente spiegò: 'I meant that the commands were that she should be put to death', aggiungendo, poi, 'with a characteristic dash of expression, and as if the thought had just started in his mind, 'Or he might have had her shut up in a convent' (Hiram Conon, An Introduction to the Study of Robert Browning's Poetry, 3 ed. [Boston, 1899]: VIII).
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 Innsbruck⁶ cast in bronze for me!

(1842, pub. 1843)
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-blanced 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 Agean, 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.

(ca. 1851, pub. 1867)
George Meredith
(1828-1909)

From *Modern Love*¹
XVI — In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour

In our old shipwrecked days there was an hour
When in the firelight steadily aglow,
Joined slackly, we beheld the red chasm grow
Among the clicking coals. Our library-bower
That eve was left to us: and hushed we sat 5
As lovers to whom Time is whispering.
From sudden-opened doors we heard them sing:
The nodding elders mixed good wine with chat.
Well knew we that Life’s greatest treasure lay
With us, and of it was our talk. “Ah, yes!
Love dies!” I said: I never thought it less.
She yearned to me that sentence to unsay.
Then when the fire domed blackening, I found
Her cheek was salt against my kiss, and swift
Up the sharp scale of sobs her breast did lift: — 15
Now am I haunted by that taste! that sound!

(pub. 1862)

¹ Raccolta di 50 sonetti, che narra la vicenda dolorosa di una coppia il cui matrimonio sta naufragando. Probabilmente Meredith si ispirò, almeno in parte, alla sua esperienza personale, quando all’inizio della sua promettente carriera letteraria sposò, a soli ventun anni, una delle figlie di Thomas Love Peacock. Dopo nove anni di matrimonio costellati da innumerevoli litigi e incomprensioni ella fuggì in Europa con un altro artista; i due sposi non si riconciliarono mai.
Dante Gabriel Rossetti  
(1828-1882)

The Blessed Damozel' 

The blessed damozel leaned out  
   From the gold bar of Heaven;  
Her eyes were deeper than the depth  
   Of waters stilled at even;  
She had three lilies in her hand,  
   And the stars in her hair were seven.  

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,  
   No wrought flowers did adorn,  
But a white rose of Mary's gift,  
   For service meetly worn;  
Her hair that lay along her back  
   Was yellow like ripe corn.  

Herseemed2 she scarce had been a day  
   One of God's choristers;  
The wonder was not yet quite gone  
   From that still look of hers;  
Albeit, to them she left, her day  
   Had counted as ten years.  

(To one, it is ten years of years.

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1 Versione poetica del termine 'damsel', giovane donna non maritata. 
La poesia, come Rossetti stesso ammise, fu ispirata da Raven di Poe (pubblicato nel 1845): 'I saw that Poe had done the utmost it was possible to do with the grief of the lover on earth, and so I determined to reverse the conditions, and give utterance to the yearning of the loved one in heaven' [nota di Rossetti].

La poesia si presenta con una struttura di tipo medievale, così come nella scelta di alcuni simboli propri del periodo, ai quali si affianca una sensibilità derivata, in parte, da Keats e dalla sua celebrazione della bellezza.

Inoltre gli studi giovanili condotti da Rossetti sul Paradiso di Dante hanno influenzato la concezione generale del poema.

2 it seemed to her.
...Yet now, and in this place,  
Surely she leaned o'er me — her hair  
Fell all about my face...  
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.  
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house  
That she was standing on;  
By God built over the sheer depth  
The which is Space begun;  
So high, that looking downward thence  
She scarce could see the sun. —

It lies in Heaven, across the flood  
Of ether, as a bridge.  
Beneath, the tides of day and night  
With flame and darkness ridge  
The void, as low as where this earth  
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met  
'Mid deathless love's acclams,  
Spoke evermore among themselves  
Their heart-remembered names;  
And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped  
Out of the circling charm;  
Until her bosom must have made  
The bar she leaned on warm,  
And the lilies lay as if asleep  
Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw  
Time like a pulse shake fierce  
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove  
Within the gulf to pierce  
Its path; and now she spoke as when  
The stars sang in their spheres.
The sun was gone now; the curled moon
Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf; and now
She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice of the stars
Had when they sang together.3

(Ah sweet! Even now, in that bird's song,
Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened? When those bells
Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
Down all the echoing stair?)

'I wish that he were come to me,
For he will come,' she said.
'Have I not prayed in heaven? — on earth,
Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength?
And shall I feel afraid?

'When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

'We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

'We two will lie i' the shadow of

---

3 Rossetti aveva probabilmente in mente sia la concezione della musica delle sfere di Pitagora, sia il passo biblico (Giacobbe, 38. 7) collegato al cantare delle stelle il giorno della creazione.
That living mystic tree\(^4\)
Within whose secret growth the Dove\(^5\)
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

'And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know.'

(Alas! We two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

'We two,' she said, 'will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalene,
Margaret and Rosalyss\(^6\).

'Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

'He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:

\(^4\) Si confronti *Apocalisse* 22. 2: ‘In mezzo alla piazza della città, da una parte e dall'altra del fiume, cresceva l'albero che dà la vita. Esso dà i suoi frutti dodici volte all'anno, per ciascun mese il suo frutto. Il suo fogliame guarisce le nazioni’.

\(^5\) Lo Spirito Santo.

\(^6\) I nomi delle sante sono stati scelti per la loro musicalità.
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

‘Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranked unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles’.

‘There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me: —
Only to live as once on earth
With Love, — only to be,
As then awhile, for ever now
Together, I and he.’

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild, —
‘All this is when he comes.’ She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill’d
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil’d.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept*. (I heard her tears.)

(1846, pub. 1850)

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7 strumenti a corde simili alle chitarre.
8 Tipico esempio di donna angelicata a metà strada tra la Laura petrarchesca e la Beatrice dantesca che, alla fine, si rivela molto reale nella sua infruttuosa attesa alla balconata, piangendo amaramente.
From *The House of Life*

*The Sonnet*

A Sonnet is a moment’s monument,
Memorial from the Soul’s eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its Powering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul, — its converse, to what Power ’tis due: —
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love’s high retinue,
It serve, or, ’mid the dark wharf’s cavernous breath³,
In Charon’s palm it pay the toll to Death.

(1848-80, pub. 1870-1881)

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1 *The House of Life* fu scritto tra il 1848 e il 1880; nella sua versione finale risulta composto da ben 101 sonetti. La sequenza è divisa in due parti; la prima, dal sonetto I al LIX, è intitolata *Youth and Change*, mentre la seconda (sonetti dal LX al CI) *Change and Fate*. Secondo William Michael Rossetti il titolo della raccolta deriva dall’astrologia, che divide il cielo in dodici case o “sfere di influenza”, la prima delle quali è spesso chiamata, per l’appunto, *house of life*.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti negò ogni implicazione di tipo autobiografico nella stesura del canzoniere: “The ‘life’ recorded is neither my life nor your life, but life purely and simply as tripled with love and death”; nonostante questa sua affermazione sono innumerevoli gli elementi che fanno ritenere che l’ispirazione per tali poesie fu, in gran parte, autobiografica. In particolare modo ebbbero un’importanza fondamentale l’amore e il rimpianto per la moglie morta, Elizabeth Siddal, e, dopo il 1868, la sua passione per Jane, la moglie di William Morris.

2 I riti lustrali sono, generalmente, di purificazione.

3 I vv. 11-14 rendono espliciti i temi maggiori di *The House of Life*.

4 Caronte, il traghettatore delle anime sul fiume Stige.
Christina Rossetti  
(1830-1894)

Song

When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree.  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain;  
I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on as if in pain.  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth not rise nor set,  
Haply I may remember  
And haply may forget.

(1848, pub. 1862)

1 William Michael Rossetti, fratello di Christina e suo editore, affermò:  
“This celebrated lyric... has perhaps been oftener quoted, and certainly  
oftener set to music, than anything else by Christina Rossetti”.

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A Life's Parallels

Never on this side of the grave again,
On this side of the river,
On this side of the garner of the grain,
Never, —

Ever while time flows on and on and on,
That narrow noiseless river,
Ever while corn bows heavy-headed, wan,
Ever, —

Never despairing, often fainting, rueing,
But looking back, ah never!
Faint yet pursuing, faint yet still pursuing
Ever.

(pub. 1881)
Cardinal Newman

In the grave, whither thou goest

O weary Champion of the Cross, lie still:
Sleep thou at length the all-embracing sleep:
Long was thy sowing day, rest now and reap:
Thy fast was long, feast now thy spirit's fill.
Yea, take thy fill of love, because thy will
Chose love not in the shallows but the deep:
Thy tides were springtides, set against the neap
Of calmer souls: thy flood rebuked their rill.
Now night has come to thee—please God, of rest:
So some time must it come to every man;
To first and last, where many last are first.
Now fixed and finished thine eternal plan,
Thy best has done its best, thy worst its worst:
Thy best its best, please God, thy best its best.

(pub. 1890)
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;¹
   It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
   Crushed. Why do men then now not reck 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.

(1877, pub. 1918)

¹ Hopkins stesso spiegò quest'immagine in una lettera: ‘I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel. ... Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too’.
² Dalla spremitura delle olive.
³ despite.
The Windhover
To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning’s minion, kingdom
— of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon,
in his riding

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, — the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: sheer plod makes plough down sillion
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermillion.

(1877, pub. 1918)
Pied' Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things —
    For skies of couple-colour 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 all trades, 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.

(1877, pub. 1918)
THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
Neutral Tones

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
— They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles of years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

(1867, pub. 1898)

\* scolded, rebuked, blamed
The Convergence of the Twain
(Lines on the loss of the Titanic)

I

In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of Life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II

Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires, Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III

Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls — grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV

Jewels in joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.

V

Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?”

1 Celeberrima è la vicenda del Titanic, il transatlantico più lussuoso e all'avanguardia del tempo; dichiarato inaffondabile si inabissò, dopo essersi scontrato con un iceberg, la notte del 15 Aprile 1912, dopo esser salpato da Southampton in direzione degli Stati Uniti. La maggior parte dei passeggeri, per la precisione 1500 su 2200, morì nell'incidente.

2 Probabilmente “fuochi nei quali nulla sopravvive”, sebbene la salamandra sia un animale simile alla lucertola, reputato capace di vivere nel fuoco; quindi “salamandrine” potrebbe anche significare “capaci di resistere o vivere nel fuoco”.

3 Variante di “thread”.
VI

Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will\(^4\) that stirs and urges everything

VII

Prepared a sinister mate
For her — so gaily great —
A Shape of Ice, for the time fat and dissociate.

VIII

And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX

Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history.

X

Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one August event,

XI

Till the Spinner of the Years
Said “Now!” And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

\(^4\) La forza, cieca, ma capace di acquisire lentamente coscienza nel corso della
Storia, che, nella visione di Hardy, guida il mondo intero.
If

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you
But make allowance for their doubting too,
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream — and not make dreams your master,
If you can think — and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breath a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

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1 Kipling scrisse questa poesia con in mente Dr. Leander Starr Jameson, che, nel 1895, guidò 500 uomini contro i Boeri in sud Africa; questo avvenimento fu uno dei fattori scatenanti della Guerra Boera (1899-1902). La sconfitta di Jameson, ad ogni modo, fu interpretata come una vittoria in Inghilterra e lui considerato un eroe.

2 Gioco con le monete.
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue, 25
Or walk with kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
If all men count with you, but none too much,
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run, 30
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And — which is more — you’ll be a Man, my son!

(1895, pub. 1910)
POETRY OF WORLD WAR I

Rupert Brooke
(1887-1915)

The Soldier

If I should die, think only this of me:
    That there’s some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
    In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
    Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam;
A body of England’s, breathing English air,
    Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
    A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
  Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
    And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

(1914, pub. 1915)

\(^{1}\) wander.
Sigfried Sassoon  
(1886-1967)  

Glory of Women  

You love us when we’re heroes, home on leave,  
Or wounded in a mentionable place.  
You worship decorations; you believe  
That chivalry redeems the war’s disgrace.  
You make us shells. You listen with delight,  
By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.  
You crown our distant ardours while we fight,  
And mourn our laurelled memories when we’re killed.  
You can’t believe that British troops ‘retire’  
When hell’s last horror breaks them, and they run,  
Trampling the terrible corpses — blind with blood.  

O German mother dreaming by the fire,  
While you are knitting socks to send your son  
His face is trodden deeper in the mud.  

(1917, pub. 1918)
Isaac Rosenberg
(1890–1918)

Break of Day in the Trenches

The darkness crumbles away —
It is the same old druid: Time as ever.
Only a live thing leaps my hand —
A queer sardonic rat —
As I pull the parapet’s poppy
To stick behind my ear.
Droll rat, they would shoot you if they knew
Your cosmopolitan sympathies.
Now you have touched this English hand
You will do the same to a German
Soon, no doubt, if it be your pleasure
To cross the sleeping green between.
It seems you inwardly grin as you pass
Strong eyes, fine limbs, haughty athletes
Less chanced than you for life,
Bonds to the whims of murder,
Sprawled in the bowels of the earth,
The torn fields of France.
What do you see in our eyes
At the shrieking iron and flame
Hurled through still heavens?
What quaver — what heart aghast?
Poppies whose roots are in man’s veins
Drop, and are ever dropping;
But mine in my ear is safe,
Just a little white with the dust.

(Giug. 1916, pub. 1922)
Wilfred Owen
(1893-1918)

Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles’ rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells, 5
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes 10
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls’ brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

(1917, pub. 1920)
When You are Old

When you are old and grey 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.

(1891, pub. 1892)
The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in the sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man;
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

(Orig. 1919, pub. 1920-1921)
David Herbert Lawrence
(1885-1930)

Piano

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;
Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling
strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles
as she sings.

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betray me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for
the past.

(1906–1908, pub. 1918)

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1 Si confronti, per il facsimile di una copia manoscritta di questa
poesia, Vivian de Sola Pinto, “D.H. Lawrence Letter-Writer and Craftsman
in Verse,” Renaissance and Modern Studies 1 (1957), pp. 5-34.

2 with great feeling.
Bavarian Gentians

Not every man has gentians\(^1\) in his house
in Soft September, at slow, Sad Michaelmas.

Bavarian gentians, big and dark, only dark
darkening the day-time torch-like with the smoking blueness of
Pluto's\(^2\) gloom,
ribbed and torch-like, with their blaze of darkness spread
blue
down flattening into points, flattened under the sweep of white
day
torch-flower of the blue-smoking darkness, Pluto's dark-blue
daze,
black lamps from the halls of Dis\(^3\), burning dark blue,
giving off darkness, blue darkness, as Demeter's pale lamps
give off light,
lead me then, lead me the way.

Reach me a gentian, give me a torch!
let me guide myself with the blue, forked torch of this flower
don the darker and darker stairs, where blue is darkened
on blueness.
even where Persephone goes, just now, from the frosted
September
to the sightless realm where darkness is awake upon the dark
and Persephone herself is but a voice
or a darkness invisible enfolded in the deeper dark
of the arms Plutonic, and pierced with the passion of dense
gloom,
among the splendour of torches of darkness, shedding darkness
on the lost bride

\(^1\) blue-flowered herbs
\(^2\) Plutone era il dio degli Inferi della mitologia classica; era conosciuto anche come "Dite".
\(^3\) Plutone rapì Persefone, figlia di Demetra, dea delle messi, per renderla la sua regina, ma le consentì di tornare nel mondo dei vivi ogni anno da Maggio sino ad Agosto.
ANTOLOGIA
DELLA POESIA INGLESE
per i corsi di letteratura inglese della laurea triennale

a cura di
CLARA ASSONI e DANIELA PAGANI