Poetic Traditions and Tools

Compiled and Edited and
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The author and editor, David Holmes, was born on August 12th, 1940, in Winnipeg, Canada, and graduated from McMaster University in 1963, followed by further studies in Philosophy and Literature at Ludwig Maximilians University, in Germany, and Upsaala University, in Sweden. Beginning in 1966, he began lecturing at The University of Maryland, Munich Campus, where for twenty-five years, he taught courses in World Literature, English Literature, American Literature, Introduction to Literature, Poetry and Poetics, Creative Writing, and Main Currents in American Intellectual Thought. After a period of Buddhist Studies in Kandy, Sri Lanka, under Ven. Nyanaponika Maha Thera, Ven. Ampitiya Sri Rahula Maha Thera, and Bhikkhu Bodhi, he moved to Bangkok, Thailand, in 1992, and joined the Faculty of Arts at Chulalongkorn University, where he taught courses in The History and Development of British and American Poetry, The History and Development of the British and American Novel, The Twentieth Century British Novel, and The Twentieth Century American Novel. After retirement from Chula, he helped coordinate English classes in conjunction with the KMUTT Faculty of Architecture's Art History Program. Since 2002, he has been devoting his time to researching and writing and to Buddhist practice. He is a supporter of the Buddhist Publication Society which is a main contributor to Theravada Buddhist texts throughout the world today

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Introduction

This book was compiled and edited by David Holmes, during half-a-lifetime of teaching Poetry and Poetics, first, at The University of Maryland, Munich Campus, and, later, at Chulalongkorn University, Faculty of Arts, explaining how poetry arises, where its traditions come from, and how English poetry eventually developed, as an independent body of literature on its own.

The text is arranged in two parts: the first is about traditional poetic origins and formulae, especially from the past; and the second is about the use of poetic language, tools and devices, leading up to the more recent present.

The first section gives a historical scan or overview; the second part goes into closer observation and analysis of the art of poetry in an attempt to lead the reader into developing a critical ability to see the difference between what is merely good and what is truly excellent.

This manuscript has been in preparation, for many years, in the process of development and refinement, to the point which, hopefully, in the end, will allow the discerning reader to be able to discern for himself what is good poetry, what is great poetry and what is truly excellent poetry.

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Poetic Traditions and Tools

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Part One:

This first part looks at the arising of traditional poetic forms and origins as they grew up in the past, long before English ever existed as a language, let alone having an independent body of literature on its own. The first part gives a historical scan or overview of early poetic origins in translation, moving from Asia, gradually westward, until we finally reach the end of the world on the shores of the British Isles. The second part goes into closer focus, observation, examination and analysis of the art of English poetic techniques and devices as we see them developing and being used in the poetry of the more recent present.

Early Poetic Origins in Translation

The Trouble with Translation of Poetry:

Much is lost in poetry in translation because

- you can't get the rhymes and sounds exactly right
- it's hard to approximate the rhythms and meters
- much is lost in connotation and association
- the cultural context is different
- linguistic subtleties get lost;
- word-for-word translation is too flat
- transliteration can change the meaning
- and leave out essential references.

Translators often change the language and form

- to appeal to their contemporary audience
- so the result is a travesty rather than a translation.

In fact, it's a wonder translation works at all. Sometimes, it doesn't. Many poems are untranslatable, which speaks for their linguistic uniqueness.

One translator has said when the violin repeats what the piano has just played, it makes the same notes but not the same sounds. (John Ciardi *The Inferno*) No matter how close a translation may come to approximating the original, it will still come out sounding different.

But since we cannot speak *all* the languages, some translation becomes necessary and helpful, to give us an idea of what was and has been happening in other poetic cultures.

Note: It's better to have a poet do the translation than just a mere linguistic translator, but the danger is the poet is likely to take artistic liberties and create a new poem rather than re-present the old one in a new language.

Chinese Poetry

Goes back to roots before the 12th century BC

- Reached its golden age in the T'ang Dynasty (618-906)
- Traditionally related to a musical context.
- Based on alternation of words with different tone or pitch
- Rather than meter and end rhyme
- Characterized by grammatical sparseness
- and telegraphic compaction.

While Chinese poetry had little direct influence on our own, we can see that the origins of poetry are similar whenever they spring up.

For more on this topic, see the Introduction to *Sunflower Splendor: 3000 Years of Chinese Poetry.*

Chinese

From *Chou and the South*

In the South be drooping trees,
long the bough, thick the vine,
Take thy delight,
my prince, in happy ease.

In the South be drooping boughs
the wild vine covers,
that hold delight, delight, good sir,
for eager lovers.

Close as the vine clamps the trees
so complete is happiness,
Good sir, delight delight in ease,
In the South be drooping trees.

(ca. 500 BC ?)

From the *Shih Ching*, the *Classic Anthology* of Chinese Literature, a compilation of 305 poems dating from the 12th Century B.C., collected in their final form at the time of Confucius: 551-479 B.C.

From *The Chinese of the Classic Anthology*
Defined by Confucius

Pine boat a-shift
on drift of tide,
for flame in the ear, sleep riven,
driven; rift of the heart in dark
no wine will clear,
nor have I will to playe.

Mind that's no mirror to gulp down all's seen,
brothers I have, on whom I dare not lean,
angered to hear a fact, ready to scold.

My heart no turning-stone, mat to be rolled,
right being right, not whim nor matter of count,
true as a tree on mount.

Mob's hate, chance evils many, gone through,
aimed barbs not few;
at bite of the jest in heart
start up as to beat my breast.

O'ersoaring sun, moon malleable
alternately
lifting a-sky to wane;
sorrow about the heart like an unwashed shirt, I
clutch here at words,
having no force to fly.

(500 BC ?)

Transliterated by Ezra Pound

Chinese

The Ancient Style

Cross river, to pluck hibiscus
Orchid marsh, many-scented path
To whom shall I give them?
My love resides far distant
Turning, I look towards home
A long vast, endless road
Apart, our hearts are one
Grieving 'til we grow old.

(ca. 200 BC ?)

Based on a translation by Dell R. Hales.

Note the style characterized by 5 words or characters per line characteristically divided by a Caesura. This is a transliteration of poem 3 of "Nineteen Poems in Ancient Style" which became the predominant model for the next thousand years. (*Sunflower Splendor*, 537)

Green Rushes

Green rushes with red shoots,
Long leaves bending to the wind--
You and I in the same boat
Plucking rushes at the Five Lakes.

We started at dawn from the orchid-island;
We rested under the elms till noon.
You and I plucking rushes
Had not plucked a handful when night came!

Anonymous, T'ang Dynasty

Trans. by Arthur Waley

Indian

Although Vedic origins go back as far as 6000 years, classical Vedic literature dates from about 1500 BC-200 BC and is basically religious in nature, while the Sanskrit period dates from about 200 BC- 1100 AD and becomes basically secular in nature.

There is a vast body of Indian literature, which seems to have been beyond the ken of Western thinking, and, perhaps, therefore, to have had little direct effect on the development of Western literature, apart from some exotic borrowings in the Romantic period and the inherent linguistic conventions carried along on the route of development of Indo-European languages.

In addition to the *Vedas*, the *Rig-Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bagavad Gita*, one Indian moral, oral epic which is well-known throughout all of South East Asia and even further-a-field is the story of *The Ramayana*, set in Northern India, between the twelfth and tenth centuries before Christ, which begins as follows:

Rich in royal worth and value, rich in holy Vedic lore
Dasa-ratha ruled his empire in the happy days of yore

Loved of men in fair Ayodhya, sprung of ancient solar race,
Royaql Rrishi in his duty, saintly rishi in his grace,

Great as Indra in his prowess, bounteous as Kuvera kind,
Dauntless deeds subdued his foemen, lofty faith subdued his mind.

Like the ancient monarch Manu, father of the human race, Dasa-ratha
Rules his people with a father's loving grace,

Truth and action swayed each action and each based motive quelled
Peoples love and monarch's duty every thought and deed impelled,

And his town, like Indra's city, tower and dome and turret brave,
Rose in proud and peerless beauty on Saraya's 7 limpid wave!

Peaceful lived the righteous people, rich in wealth and merit high,
envy dwelt not in their bosoms and their accents shaped no lie,

Fathers with their happy owned their cattle corn and gold'
Galling penury and famine in Ayodhya had no hold,

Neighbors lived I n mutual kindness helpful with their ample wealth,
None who begged the wasted refuse, none who lived by fraud or sleuth!

And they wore the gem and earring, wreath and fragrant sandal paste…

Pali

Buddhist Scriptures

More than 3500 years ago, chanting was an integral part of religious ceremony and ritual in Northern India.

When Buddhism arose, the Buddha's followers

chanted his words of wisdom
in short poem-like stanzas
as a part of their daily discipline,
as a preparation for
purification of the mind
in their meditation exercises.

An example from the *Dhammapada* might be

"Yatha pi rahado gambhiro
vippasanno anavilu
Evam dhammani sutvana
uippasidanti pandilta."

The original language was Pali, the language of the Buddha.

Transliterated, the above means

Just as a clear lake is deep and still,
So, on hearing the Buddha's teachings,
the wise become exceedingly peaceful.

There was little direct influence of Buddhist meters on English poetry, but the following examples help show how an independent body of literature can spring up on its own, in different parts of the world as an expression of linguistic development, religious expression and cultural need.

The Buddhist scriptures are eleven times the length of the Christian Bible and every word emanates from the mind of Buddha to give it a coherence and unity unparalleled in world literature. Some other examples for the *Dhamma*, transliterated by the editor follow:

Through continued effort and earnestness
discipline and self control,
the wise man makes himself
an island which no flood overwhelms.

*

Like swans that quit their pools
and abandon home after home
the meditative are not attached

*

Just as a garland of flowers
is made up of single blooms
so the life of a mortal man
is the sum of his good deeds.

*

Just as a flower can be beautiful
but have no scent,
so fruitless are the well-spoken-words
of one who does not put them into practice

*

Neither in the sky, nor in mid-ocean
nor in a mountain cave,
is there any place on earth,
where you can escape the consequences
of an evil deed.

*

As with a staff, the herdsman
drives his cattle to pasture,
so do old age and death
drive out the lives of men.

*

He who is corrupt
like a creeper strangling a tree,
Does to himself
what his enemy would wish for him.

Birds escape from the net,
but few go to a blissful state.

Japanese Poetry

Japanese didn't record their language until circa. 712 AD, when the *Kojik*i, the first Japanese book appeared, followed by the *Man' yoshu*, in the eight century, when the Chinese influence was small though the Japanese, in due time, came to follow Chinese models.

The establishment at Kyoto, in 794, was a turning point, when Chinese Buddhism began to influence Japanese literature more strongly.

Poetry was written in Japan, as in China, by the court nobles and was limited to a very elite group.

In the medieval period, Japanese poetry reached new heights in the haikus of Basho (1664-1694) where the early Japanese influence comes together with the compaction of Chinese poetry in the condensed Zen, moment-of-heightened-perception poems, leading to or accompanying Buddhist Enlightenment, putting the whole of poetic experience into a 17 syllable nutshell.

Japanese

Ancient Period to 794 AD
from the *Man' Yoshu*

The mallards call with evening from the reeds
And float with dawn midway on the water;
They sleep with their mates, it is said,
With white wings overlapping and tails a sweep
Lest frost should fall upon them.

Tajihi

Oh, the pain of my love that you know not --
A love like the maiden lily
Blooming in the thicket of the summer moor.

Lady Otomo

Nothing but pain and shame in this world of men
But I cannot fly away
Wanting the wings of a bird.

Yamanoue Okura

Japanese

Heian Period, (794 to 1185 AD)
from the *Kokimishu.*

They say there is
A still pool even in the middle of
The rushing whirlpool----
Why is there none in the whirlpool
of my love?

Anonymous

So lonely am I
My body is a floating weed
Severed at its roots.
Where the water to entice me
I would follow it, I think.

Ono no Komachi

The weeds grown so thick
You cannot even see the path
That leads to my house:
It happened while I waited
For someone who would not come.

Sojo Henjo

Japanese

From the Six Collections
the *Gosenshu*, 951 AD

To what shall I compare
This world?
To the white wake behind
A ship that has rowed away
At dawn!

The Priest Mansei
Trans. Arthur Waley

The day has ended
And the visitors have left--
In the mountain village
All that remains is the howl
Of storm winds from the peak.

Minamoto no Yorizane
Trans. by Donald Keene

From the *Shikashu*, ca. 1151

The cries of the insects

Are buried at the roots of
The sparse pampas grass--
The end of autumn is in
The color of the last leaves.

The Priest Jakuren, died 1202
Trans. by Donald Keene

Japanese

From the *Shinkokinsho* (1205)

The hanging raindrops
Have not dried from the needles
Of the fir forest
Before the evening mist
of autumn rises.

The Priest Jakuren (died 1202)
Trans. by Kenneth Rexroth

The blossoms have fallen.
I stare blankly at a world
Bereft of color:
In the wide vacant sky
the spring rains are falling.

Princess Shikushi (died 1201)
Trans. by Donald Keene

In a tree standing
Beside a desolate field,
The voice of a dove,
Calling to its companions --
Lonely, terrible evening.

Saigyo
Trans. by Donald Keene

Tokugawa Period (1600-1868)

Basho, the master of Haiku (1644-1694)

The first snow:
The leaves of the daffodils
Are bending.

(Cited from R.. H. Blythe, *Zen in English Literature*, 29)

*

The autumn tempest
It blows along
Even wild boars.

(Blythe, 47)

*

I heard the unblown flute
In the deep summer shadows
Of the temple of Suma.

(Blythe 48)

*

A cuckoo cried!
The moon filters through
The vast bamboo grove.

*

Nothing in the voice
of the cicada imitates
How soon it will die.

(Blythe 265)

Late Takugawa Period
Later Haikus

Spring rain: and as yet
the little froglet's bellies
haven't got wet.

Yosa Buson
(1716-1789)

*

A bush warbler comes
and starts to wipe its muddy feet
among the blossoming plums.

Kobayashi Issa
(1763-1828)

*

In its eye
the far off hills are mirrored --
dragonfly!

Kobayashi Issa
(1763-1828)
Trans. by Harold G. Henderson

The Cultural Roots of Western Poetry

Poets in other regions and cultures, in Asia and Europe and the Middle East, were writing sophisticated poetry long before English developed as the language of country peasants in rural Britain.

The most direct roots are found in Homer and the Greeks who showed us how to use literary devices and techniques. The Romans followed Greek examples, and the Italians developed them. The Rest of Europe followed suit. Eventually, Anglo Saxon and Middle English evolved to the point where verse began to be recited, recorded and written in recognizable English forms.

We must never forget that English literature was a later development, and that we learned the basics from our neighbors, before we began to experiment and develop a body of literature we could call our own.

Greek

Ancient Greek poetry appears to have no direct line to previous literature, except that it developed out of an oral tradition, also common in Indian regions, which was recited and sung, meant for public performance, and handed down from generation to generation.

Much lyrical poetry has been lost; we have only fragments, written down and recorded much later.

Early Greek Epics related tales accompanied by the lyre, sung by wandering bards, who recited according to oral tradition and stayed outside of the material, which was religious in nature, as in, for example, the Homeric *Illiad* and *Odyssey*.

Odes were sung by a choir, accompanied by dance, in stanzas rather than long narratives. Form was varied and complex, Content dealt with heroes or gods, expressing fundamental truths. The poet recited his words as though he spoke with authority, as though from the Gods, subjects were religious and lyrical, intended to be sung at public ceremonies.

Monody was a later development, where the poet expressed his thoughts for his own satisfaction and pleasure and was less restricted in form and subject than in the Homeric epics, but still sung to the lyre, and still performed publicly.

Elegies later developed out of Monodies, written in couplets and accompanied by the flute to be performed at banquets and sung at feasts.

Epigrams became a shortened version of the elegy, which summed a subject up and expressed it in full in a minimum of lines, composed for personal enjoyment rather than public performance.

Epigrams became epitaphs written on grave-stones.

Maxims were tight epigrams which summed up an obvious truth, a philosophical point, a didactic lesson, or a concentrated moral, in a minimum of words.

Thus, Greek poetry, as it developed, though it remained lofty and religious in theme and tone, became more and more moral and philosophical, intellectual and personal.

For more on this topic: see C.M. Bowra's introduction to the *Oxford Book of Greek Verse*.

Below are some examples taken from the Greek poetic tradition:

Examples of Epic Poetry
from Homer's *Odyssey*

Ulysses builds his Ship

The Nymph turnd home. He fell to felling downe,
And twentie trees he stoopt in litle space,
Plaind, usde his Plumb, did all with artfull grace.
In meane time did Calypso wimbles bring.
He bor'd, closde, naild, and orderd every thing.
And looke how much a ship-wright will allow
A ship of burthen (one that best doth know
What fits his art), so large a Keele he cast--
Wrought up her decks and hatches, side-boords, mast,
With willow watlings armd her to resist
The billowes' outrage, added all she mist--
Sail-yards and sterne for guide. The Nymph then brought
Linnen for sailes, which with dispatch he wrought--
Gables, and halsters, tacklings. All the Frame
In foure dayes' space to full perfection came.
The fifth day they dismist him from the shore,
Weeds, neate and odorous, gave him, victles' store,
Wine and strong waters, and a prosperous wind.
To which Ulysses (fit to be divin'd)
His sailes exposd, and hoised. Off he gat ...

The Wrecking of the Ship

This spoke, a huge wave tooke him by the head
And hurld him o're-boord: ship and all it laid
Inverted quite amidst the waves, but he
Farre off from her sprawld, strowd about the sea,
His Sterne still holding, broken off; his Mast
Burst in the midst, so horrible a blast

Of mixt winds strooke it. Sailes and saile-yards fell
Amongst the billowes, and himselfe did dwell
A long time under water, nor could get
In haste his head out--wave with wave so met
In his depression, and his garments too
(Given by Calypso) gave him much to do,
Hindring his swimming; yet he left not so
His drenched vessell, for the overthrow
Of her nor him, but gat at length againe
(Wrestling with Neptune) hold of her, and then
Sate in her Bulke, insulting over Death--
Which (with the salt streame prest to stop his breath)
He scap't and gave the sea again to give
To other men. His ship so striv'd to live,
Floting at randon, cufft from wave to wave,
As you have seene the Northwind when he drave
In Autumne heapes of thorne-fed Grashoppers
Hither and thither; one heape this way beares,
Another tha, and makes them often meete
In his confusde gales; so Ulysses' fleete
The winds hurl'd up and downe: now Boreas
Tost it to Notus, Notus gave it passe
To Eurus; Eurus Zephyr made pursue
The horrid Tennis.

Alternate Translation

Ulysses builds his Raft

Now toils the Heroe; trees on trees o'erthrown
Fall crackling round him, and the forests groan:
Sudden, full twenty on the plain are strow'd,
And lopp'd, and lighten'd of their branchy load.
At equal angles these dispos'd to join,
He smooth'd, and squar'd 'em, by the rule and line.
(The wibles for the work Calypso found)
With those he pierc'd 'em, and with clinchers bound.
Long and capacious as a shipwright forms
So large he built the Raft: then ribb'd it strong
From space to space, and nail'd the planks along;
These form'd the sides: the deck he fashio'd last;
Then o'er the vessel rais'd the taper mast,
With crossing sail-yards dancing in the wind;
And to the helm the guiding rudder join'd.
(With yielding osiers fenc'd, to break the force
Of surging waves, and steer the stady course)
Thy loom, Calypso! for the future sails
Supply's the cloth, capacious of the gales.
With stays and cordage last he rigg'd the ship,
And roll'd on leavers, launch'd her in the deep.

The Wrecking of the Raft

A mighty wave rush'd o'er him as he spoke,
The Raft it cover'd, and the mast it broke;
Swept from the deck, and from the rudder torn,
Far on the swelling surge the chief was born:
While by the howling tempest rent in twain
Flew sail and sail-yards ratling o'er the main.
Long press'd he heav'd beneath the weighty wave,
Clogg'd by the cumbrous vest Calypso gave:
At length emerging, from his nostrils wide
And gushing mouth, effus'd the briny tyde.
Ev'n then, not mindless of his last retreat,
He seis'd the Raft, and leapt into his seat,
Strong with the fear of death. The rolling flood
Now here, now there, impell'd the floating wood ...

Trans. by Alexander Pope

Which of these above translations is the more accessible?

Would either of them speak to today's audience?

Homeric Fragments

Mute fishes, too, with eyes of gold in laid,
Through paridisal water swum and played.

Anonymous
Unknown date and origin

Fragment

Violet haired, holy, sweetly smiling Sappho

Anonymous
Unknown date and origin

Evening

Thou, Hesper, bringest homeward all
  That radiant dawn sped far and wide,
The sheep to fold, the goat to stall,
  The children to their mother's side.

Sappho (ca. 600 BC)

Young Love

Sweet mother, let the weaving be
  My hand is faint to move.
Frail Aphrodite masters me
  I long for my young love.

Sappho

Expanded from the Greek of Sappho

Mother, I cannot mind my wheel;
My fingers ache, my lips are dry:
Oh! if you felt the pain I feel!
But, Oh, who ever felt as I?

No longer could I doubt him true;
All other men may use deceit:
He always said my eyes were blue,
And often swore my lips were sweet.

Trans. by Walter Savabe Landor

From the Greek of Alcaman
The Halcyons

No more, O maiden voice, sweet as honey, soft as
love is,
No more my limbs sustain me.--A halcyon on the wing
Flying o'er the foam-flowers, in the halcyon coveys,
Would I were, and knew not care, the sea-blue bird of
spring!

Trans. by H. T. Wade-Gery

On the Mountains

Where, on the mountain peaks high up,
Their torch-lit feasts the gods amuse,
Often you took a great gold cup,
A vessel such as shepherds use,
And milked a lioness with your hands, to make
A round of silver-bright cheese-cake.

Trans. by C. M. Bowra

Night

The far peaks sleep, the great ravines,
The foot-hills, and the streams.
Asleep are trees, and hivèd bees,
The mountain beasts, and all that dark earth teems,
The glooming seas, the monsters in their deeps:
And every bird, its wide wings folded, sleeps.

Trans. H. T. Wade-Gery

Extract from Hesoid

He hurts himself who aims
  His fellow man to gall:
For wicked plotting maims
  The plotter most of all.

Works and Days, date unknown)
Trans. Sir William Marris

The Ages of Man

Sweat, thought and prayer - engage
Youth, middle years and age.

Hesoid (date unknown)
Trans. Sir William Marris

To Celia

Drinke to me, only, with thine eyes,
  And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kisse but in the cup,
  And Ile not looke for wine.
The thirst, that from the soule doth rise,
  Doth aske a drinke divine:
But might I of Jove's Nectar sup,
  I would not change for thine.
I sent thee, late, a rosie wreath,
  Not so much honoring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
  It could not withered bee.
But thou thereon did'st only breath,
  And sent'st it backe to mee:
Since when it growes, and smells, I sweare,
  Not of it selfe, but thee.

Trans. by Ben Jonson
Adapted from the Greek of Philostratus.

Hebrew

There is, of course, also the well-known body of literature that arose out of the Judeo-Christian Tradition.

From the *Holy Bible*

Ecclesiastes II:I-8

Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many dayes.

Give a portion to seven and also to eight; for thou knowest not what evill shall be upon the earth.

If the clouds be full of raine, they emptie themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the South, or toward the North, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.

He that observeth the wind, shall not sow: and he that regardeth the clouds, shall not reape.

As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones doe growe in the wombe of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the workes of God who maketh all.

In the morning sowe thy seede, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing is it for the eyes to behold the sunne.

But if a man live many yeeres, and rejoyce in them all; yet let him remember the dayes of darkeness, for they shall be many. All that commeth is vanitie.

***Job* 3:3-26:**

Job curses the day of his birth.

Let the day perish, wherein I was borne, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-childe conceived.

Let that day bee darkenesse, let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.

Let darkenes and the shadowe of death staine it, let a cloud dwell upon it, let the blacknes of the day terrifie it.

as for that night, let darkenesse seaze upon it, let it not be joyned unto the dayes of the yeere, let it not come into the number of the moneths.

Loe, let that night be solitarie, let not joyfull voice come therein.

Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.

Let the starres of the twilight thereof be darke, let it looke for light, but have none, neither let it see the dawning of the day:

Because it shut not up the doores of my mothers wombe, nor hid sorrowe from mine eyes.

Why died I not from the wombe? why did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the bellie?

Why did the knees prevent mee? or why the breasts, that I should sucke?

For now should I have lien still and beene quiet, I should have slept; then had I bene at rest,

With Kings and counsillers of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves,
Or with Princes that had golde, who filled their houses with silver:
Or as an hidden untimely birth, I had not bene; as infants which never saw light.
There the wicked cease from troubling: and there the wearie be at rest.
There the prisoners rest together, they hear not the voice of the oppressor.
The small and great are there, and the servant is free from his master.
Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter in soul?
Which long for death, but it commeth not, and dig for it more then for hid treasures:
Which rejoice exceedingly, and are glad when they can finde the grave?
Why is light given to a man, whose way is hed, and whom God hath hedged in?
For my sighing commeth before I eate, and my roarings are powred out like the waters.
For the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of, is come unto me.
I was not in safetie, neither had i rest, neither was I quiet: yet trouble came.

Job I4

Man that is borne of a woman, is of few dayes, and full of trouble.
Hee commeth forth like a flower, and is cut downe: he fleeth also, as a shaddow and continueth not.
And doest thou open thine eies upon such an one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?
Who can bring a cleane thing out of an uncleane? not one.
Seeing his daies are determined, the number of his moneths are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot passe.
Turne from his that hee may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.
For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut downe, that it will sprout againe, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.
Though the roote therof waxe old in the earth, and the stocke therof die in the ground:
Yet throught he sent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughes like a plant.
But man dyeth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is hee?

As the waters faile from the sea, and the floud decayeth and dryeth up:
So man lyeth downe, and riseth not, till the heavens be no more,
they shall not awake; nor bee raised out of their sleepe.
O that thou wouldest hide mee in the grave, that thou wouldest
eepe me secret, untill thy wrath bee past, that thou wouldest
appoint me a set time, and remember me.
If a man die, shall he live againe? All the dayes of my appointed
time will I waite, till my change come.
Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire
to the worke of thine hands.
For nowe thou numbrest my steppes, doest thou not watch over my sinne?
My transgression is seled up in a bagge, and thou sowest up mine iniquitie.
And surely the mountaine falling commeth to nought: and the
rocke is removed out of his place.
The waters weare the stones, thou washest away the things
which growe out of the dust of the earth, and thou destroyest the
hope of man.
Thou prevailest for ever against him, and hee passeth: thou
changest his countenance, and sendest him away.
His sonnes come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are
brought lowe, but he perceiveth it not of them.
But his flesh upon him shall have paine, and his soule within
him shall mourne.

Authorized Version of The Bible

Imitated from the Hebrew
via *The Authorized Version*

Psalm 90: I-5: Man frail and God eternal

Our God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And out eternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne
Thy saints have dwelt secure,
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And out defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood
Or earth receiv'd her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

Thy word commands our flesh to dust,
`Return ye sons of men':
All nations rose from earth at first
And turn to earth again.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an ev'ning gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

The busy tribes of flesh and blood
With all their lives and cares
Are carry'd downwards by thy flood
And lost in following years.

Time like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away,
They fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the op'ning day.

Like flow'ry fields the nations stand
Pleas'd with the morning light,
The flower'rs beneath the mower's hand
Lie with'ring ere tis night.

Our God out help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guard while troubles last,
And our eternal home.

Trans. by Isaac Watts

Islamic

Muhammad's revelations date from 610-632 BC In the beginning, they existed orally but were transcribed in Arabic between 610, and a compilation of these writings took place between 630 and the 650s. The purpose is religious. Except for certain parallels to the *Christian Bible*, and certain borrowings from tales and references in the romantic period, the Islamic tradition had not much influence on the development of Western literature.

Koran: Selected Suttas

In the name of the merciful and compassionate God,
Praise belongs to God, the Lord of the worlds
He, the merciful, the compassionate,
He, the ruler of the Day of Judgment!
Thee we serve and thee we ask for aid.
Guide us in the right path,
The path of those Thou art gracious too;
Not those thou are wrought with;
Nor those who err.

*

In the name of the god most merciful.
Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of the people.
King of the people.
From the evils of sneaky whisperers
Who whisper in the chests of the people
Be they of jinns or the people.

*

To God belongs the future and the heavens
And the earth. As far as he is concerned,
The end of the world is s blink of the eye away
Or even closer. God is omnipotent.

*

God brought you out of your mother's bellies
knowing nothing. And he gave you the hearing,
the eyesight and the brains so that you may appreciate.

Do you see not the birds committed to fly in the sky?
None holds them up in the air except God. This should be proof enough for those who believe.

Anglo Saxon Poetry

The Anglo Saxon invaders of Britain, who preceded the Norman French, had their own linguistic and literary traditions, which continued to existed outside of the French speaking court and noble circles.

Summer

Sumer is icumen in,
Lhude sing cuccu;
Groweth seed and bloweth med
And springeth the wude nu.
Sing cuccu!

Awe bleteth after lomb,
Lhouth after calve cu;
Bulluc sterteth, bucke verteth,
Murie sing cuccu.

Cuccu, cuccu, wel singes thu, cuccu:
Na swike thu naver nu;
Sing cuccu, nu, sing cuccu,
Sing cuccu, sing cuccu, nu.

Anonymous (c. 1260)

Modern day English speakers can only guess at what these words may mean, but the stanza form above at least looks familiar.

This is where English literature started, but it was to assimilate a lot of literary devices from the Greek and Latin traditions as it went along.

The Romans borrowed from the Greeks and spread Latin culture all throughout Europe until it finally reached the barbaric shores of Britain.

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Latin

Old Man of Verona

Claudian (365?-410? AD)

Felix, qui propriis aevum transegit in arvis,
Ipsa domus puerum quem vicet, ipsa senem.

Happy the man whose hopes and fears
A few paternal acres bound,
Who lives in childhood and in age
On his own ground.

The staff that helps him marks the sand
Where as a babe he used to lie,
And from his cottage porch he counts
The years go by ...

Unskilled in lawyer's arts he stays
A stranger to the neighbouring town,
And free from smoking chimneys calls
The sky his own.

He reckons, not by consuls' names,
But by the crops the seasons bring,
He knows the autumn by its fruit,
By flowers the spring.

He and the monarchs of the wood
Together in their age agree;
The acorn that he planted once
He sees a tree.

But still his limbs are firm and hale,
And though he is a grandsire now
His children's children at his knee
His strength allow.

Let others sail to distant lands
And seek for gold 'mid toil and strife,
They waste their days upon the road;
He lives his life.

Trans. by F. A. Wright

From the Latin of Catullus
***Carmina,* V**

Come and let us live my Deare,
Let us love and never feare,
What the sowrest Fathers say:
Brightest Sol that dyes to day
Lives againe as blith to morrow,
But if we darke sons of sorrow
Set, ô then, how long a Night
Shuts the Eyes of our short light!
Then let amorous kisses dwell
On our lips, begin and tell
A Thousand, and a Hundred, score
An Hundred, and a Thousand more,
Till another Thousand smother
That, and that wipe of another.
Thus at last when we have numbered
Many a Thousand, many a Hundred;
Wee'l confound the reckoning quite,
And lose our selves in wild delight:
While our joyes so multiply,
As shall mocke the envious eye.

Trans. by Richard Crashaw

Carmina, V, to Lesbia

Yes! my Lesbia! let us prove
All the sweets of life in love.
Let us laugh at envious sneers;
Envy is the fault of years.
Vague report let us despise;
Suns may set and suns may rise:
We, when sets *our* twinkling light,
Sleep a long-continued night.
Make we then, the most of this--
Let us kiss, and kiss, and kiss.
While we thus the night employ,
Envy cannot know our joy.
So, my Lesbia! let us prove
All the sweets of life in love.

Trans. by Walter Savage Landor

From the Latin of Horace

***Odes*, Book I, 5**

Rendred almost word for word without rhyme according to the Latin Measure, as near as the Language will permit:

What slender Youth bedew'd with liquid odours
  Courts thee on Roses in some pleasant cave,
  Pyrrha for whom bindst thou
  In wreaths thy golden Hair,
Plain in thy neatness; O how oft shall he
On Faith and changed Gods complain: and Seas
  Rough with black winds and storms
  Unwonted shall admire:
Who now enjoyes thee credulous, all Gold,
Who alwayes vacant alwayes amiable
  Hopes thee; of flattering gales
  Unmindfull. Hapless they
To whom thou untry'd seem'st fair. Me in my vow'd
Picture the sacred wall declares t'have hung
  My dank and dropping weeds
  To the stern God of Sea.

Trans. by John Milton

From the *Oxford Book of Verse in Translation*

From the Latin of Horace

Odes, Book I, 5

To Pyrrha

Say what slim youth, with moist perfumes
  Bedaub'd, now courts thy fond embrace,
There, where the frequent rose-tree blooms,
  And makes the grot so sweet a place?
Pyrrha, for whom with such an air
Do you bind back you golden hair?

So seeming in your cleanl vest,
  Whose plainness is the pink of taste -
Alas! how oft shall he protest
  Against his confidence misplac't,
And love's inconstant pow'rs deplore,
And wondrous winds, which, as they roar,

Throw black upon the alter'd scene--
  Who now so well himself deceives,
And thee all sunshine, all serene
  For want of better skill believes,
And for his pleasure has presag'd
Thee ever dear and disengag'd.

Wretched are all within thy snares,
  The inexperienc'd and the young!
For me the temple witness bears
  Where I my dropping weeds have hung,
And left my votive chart behind
To him that rules both wave and mind.

Trans. by Christopher Smart

Compare the above translation to the one on the previous page

Horace from *Odes*, Book III, 2

  How blest is he, who for his Country dies;
Since Death pursues the Coward as he flies.
The Youth, in vain, would fly from Fate's Attack,
With trembling Knees, and Terror at his Back;
Though Fear should lend him Pinions like the Wind,
Yet swifter Fate will seize him from behind.

  Virtue repuls't, yet knows not to repine;
But shall with unattainted Honour shine;
Nor stoops to take the Staff, nor lays it down,
Just as the Rabble please to smile or frown.

  Virtue, to crown her Fav'rites, loves to try
Some new unbeaten Passage to the Sky;
Where Jove a Seat among the Gods will give
To those who die, for meriting to live.

  Next, faithful Silence hath a sure Reward:
Within our Breast be ev'ry Secret barr'd:
He who betrays his Friend, shall never be
Under one Roof, or in one Ship with me.
For, who with Traytors would his Safety trust,
Lest with the Wicked, heaven involve the Just?
And, though the Villain 'scape a while, he feels
Slow Vengeance, like a Blood-hound at his Heels.

Trans. by Jonathan Swift

Horace from *Epodes*, II

The Praises of a Countrie Life

Happie is he, that from all businesse cleere,
As the old race of Mankind were,
With his owne Oxen tills his Sires left lands,
And is not in the Usurers bands:
Nor Souldier-like started with rough alarmes,
Nor dreads the Seas inraged harmes:
But flees the Barre and Courts, with the proud bords,
And waiting Chambers of great Lords.
The Poplar tall, he then doth marrying twine
With the growne issue of the Vine;
And with his hooke lops off the fruitless race,
And sets more happy in the place:
Or in the bending Vale beholds a-farre
The lowing herds there grazing are:
Or the prest honey in pure pots doth keepe
Of Earth, and sheares the tender Sheepe:
Or when that Autumne, through the fields lifts round
His head, with mellow Apples crown'd,
How plucking Peares, his owne hand grafted had,
And purple-matching Grapes, hee's glad!
With which, Priapus, he may thanke thy hands,
And, Sylvane, thine that keptst his Lands!
Then now beneath some ancient Oke he may,
Now in the rooted Grasse, him lay,
Whilst from the higher Bankes doe slide the floods,
The soft birds quarrell in the Woods,
The Fountaines murmure as the streames doe creepe,
And all invite to easie sleepe.
Then when the thundring Jove, his Snow and showres
Are gathering by the Witnry houres;
Or hence, or thence, he drives with many a Hound
Wild Bores into his toyles pitch'd round:
Or straines on his small forke his subtill nets
For th'eating Thrush, or Pit-falls sets:
And snares the fearfull Hare, and new-come Crane,
And 'counts them sweet rewards so ta'en:
Who (amongst these delights) would not forget
Loves cares so evill, and so great?
But if, to boot with these, a chaste Wife meet
For houshold aid, and Children sweet;
Such as the Sabines, or a Sun-burnt-blowse,
Some lustie quick Apulians spouse,
To deck the hallow'd harth with old wood fir'd
Against the Husband comes hone tir'd;
That penning the glad flock in hurdles by
Their swelling udders doth draw dry:

And from the sweet Tub Wine of this yeare takes,
  And unbought viands ready makes:
Not Lucrine Oysters I could then more prize,
  Nor Turbot, nor bright Golden eyes:
If with East floods, the Winter troubled much,
  Into our Seas send any such:
Th'Ionian God-wit, nor the Ginny hen
  Could not goe downe my belly then
More sweet then Olives, that new gather'd be
  From fattest branches of the Tree:
Or the herb Sorrell, that loves Meadows still,
  Or Mallowes loosing bodyes ill:
Or at the Feast of Bounds, the Lambe then slaine,
  Or Kid forc't from the Walfe againe.
Among these Cates how glad the sight doth come
  Of the fed flocks approaching home!
To view the weary Oxen draw, with bare
  And fainting necks, the turned Share!
The wealthy houshold swarme of bondmen met,
  And 'bout the steeming Chimney set!
These thoughts when Usurer Alphius, now about
  To turne mere farmer, had spoke out,
'Gainst th'Ides, his moneys he gets in with paine,
  At th'Calends, puts all out again.

Trans. by Ben Johnson

From the Latin of Seneca

Chorus from *Thyestes*, Act II

Let him that will, ascend the tottering Seat
Of Courtly Grandeur, and become as great
As are his mountain Wishes; as for me,
Let sweet Repose, and Rest my portion be;
Give me some mean obscure Recess, a Sphere
Out of the road of Business, or the fear
Of Falling lower, where I sweetly may
My Self, and dear Retirement still enjoy.
Let not my Life, or Name, be known unto
The Gradees of the Times, tost to and fro
By Censures, or Applause; but let my Age
Slide gently by, not overthwart the Stage
Of Publick Interest; unheard, unseen,
And unconcern'd, as if I ne're had been,
And thus while I shall pass my silent days
In shady privacy, free from the Noise
And busles of the World, then shall I
A good old Innocent Plebeian dy.
Death is a mere Surprize, a very Snare,
To him that makes it his lifes greatest care
To be a publick Pageant, known to All,
But unacquainted with Himself, doth fall.

Trans. by Sir Matthew Hale

Now read the translation that follows:

Chorus from *Thyestes*, Act II

Upon the slippery tops of human State,
  The guilded Pinnacles of Fate,
Let others proudly stand, and for a while
  The giddy danger to beguile,
With Joy and with disdain look down on all,
  Till their Heads turn, and they fall.
Me, O ye Gods, on Earth, or else so near
  That I no fall to Earth may fear,
And, O ye Gods, at a good distance seat
  From the long Ruins of the Great,
Here wrapt in th' Arms of Quiet let me lye;
  Quiet, Companion of Obscurity.
Here let my life, with as much silence slide,
  As time that measure it does glide.
Nor let the breath of Infamy or Fame,
From Town to Town echo about my Name.
Nor let my homely Death embroidered be
  With Scutcheon or with Elogie.

An old Plebeian let me die,
Alas, all then are such as well as I.
To him, alas, to him, I gear,
The face of Death will terrible appear,
Who in his life flattering his Senseless pride
By being known to all the World beside,
Does not himself, when he is Dying know
Nor what he is, nor whither he's to go.

Trans. by Abraham Cowley

Latin Romanesque

Alba (Anonymous,10th cent.)

Phoebi claro nondum orto iubare,
Fert aurora lumen terris tenue:
Spiculator pigris clamat "surgite."
L'alba part umet mar atra sol
Poy pasa bigil mira clar tenebras.

Before the sun's clear orb is bright
Dawn spreads her formless light on earth.
The watcher calls the sleeper "Wake!"
Dawn brings the sun across the glistening sea;
Her vigil done, clear-eyed she fronts the dark.

How like a hostile net it creeps
To overwhelm the sluggards' beds
Whose clamorous sentry calls to rise.
Dawn brings the sun across the glistening sea;
Her vigil done, clear-eyed she fronts the dark.

The northwind quits the northland now,
The Pole star softens its bright rays,
The Wain swings eastward in its arc.
Dawn brings the sun across the glistening sea;
Her vigil done, clear-eyed she fronts the dark.

Trans. by John D. Ogden

Elegy

Abelard

Vel confossus pariter
Morerer feliciter

Cum, quid amor faciat,
Maius hoc non habeat,
Et me post te vivere
Mori sit assidue,
Nec ad vitam anima
Satis sit dimidia.

Low in thy grave with thee
Happy to lie,
Since there's no greater thing left Love to do;
And to live after thee
Is but to die,
For with but half a soul what can Life do?

So share thy victory,
Or else thy grave,

Either to rescue thee, or with thee lie:
Ending that life for thee,
That thou didst save,
So death that sundereth might bring more nigh.

Peace, O my stricken lute!
Thy strings are sleeping.
Would that my heart could still
Its bitter weeping!

Trans. by Helen Waddell

Jacopo da Lentino (c. 1180-c. 1240)

Canzonetta

My lady mine, I send
These sighs in joy to thee;
Though, loving till the end,
There were no hope for me
That I should speak my love;
And I have loved indeed,
Though, having fearful-heed,
It was not spoken of.

Thou art so high and great

That whom I love I fear;
Which thing to circumstate
I have no messenger:
Wherefore to Love I pray,
On whom each lover cries,
That these my tears and sighs
Find unto thee a way.

Well have I wish'd, when I
At heart with sighs have ached,
That there were in each sigh
Spirit and intellect,
The which, where thou dost sit,
Should kneel and sue for aid,
Since I am thus afraid
And have no strength for it.

Thou, lady, killest me,
Yet keepest me in pain,
For thou must surely see
How, fearing, I am fain.
Ah! Why not send me still
Some solace, small and slight,
So that I should not quite
Despair of thy good will?

*

Late Latin

Take Thou This Rose

Carmina Burana (13th cent.)

Suscipe Flos florem quia flos designat amorem.
Illo de flore nimio sum captus amore.

Take thou this rose, O Rose,
Since Love's own flower it is,
And by that rose
Thy lover captive is.

Smell thou this rose, O Rose,
And know thyself as sweet
As down as sweet.

Look on this rose, O Rose,
And looking, laugh on me,

And in thy laughter's ring
The nightingale shall sing.

Kiss thou this rose, O Rose,
That it may know the scarlet of thy mouth.

O Rose, this painted rose
  Is not the whole,
Who paints the flower
  Paints not its fragant soul.

Trans. by Helen Waddell

Just about this period, it becomes hard for the reader in English to distinguish whether a poem was originally written in Latin or Italian. In fact, it little matters, because the two traditions have already merged.

Italian

Sonnet Written in Siena

If I were fire, I'd burn the world away;
  If I were wind, I'd turn my storms thereon;
  If I were water, I'd soon let it drown;
If I were God, I'd sink it from the day;
If I were Pope, I'd never feel quite gay
  Until there was no peace beneath the sun;
  If I were emperor, what would I have done?--
I'd lop men's heads all round in my own way.
If I were Death, I'd look my father up;
  If I were Life, I'd run away from him;
    And treat my mother to like calls and runs.
If I were Cecco (and that's all my hopeP,
  I'd pick the nicest girls to suit my whim,
    And other folk should get the ugly ones.

Cecco Angiolieri: Born 1260

Trans. by D. G. Rossetti

From the Italian of Tasso

Aminta, Chorus I

O lovely age of gold!
Not that the rivers rolled
With milk, or that the woods wept honeydew;
Not that the ready ground
Produced without a wound,
Or the mild serpent had no tooth that slew;
Not that a cloudless blue
For ever was in sight,
Or that the heaven, which burns
And now is cold by turns,
Looked out in glad and everlasting light;
No, nor that even the insolent ships from far
Brought war to no new lands nor riches worse than war:

But solely that that vain
And breath-invented pain,
That idol of mistake, that worshipped cheat,
That Honour,--since so called
By vulgar minds appalled,--
Played not the tyrant with our nature yet.
It had not come to fret
The sweet and happy fold
Of gentle human-kind;
Nor did its hard law bind
Souls nursed in freedom; but that law of gold,
That glad and golden law, all free, all fitted,
Which Nature's own hand wrote,--What pleases is permitted.

Trans. by Leigh Hunt

From the Italian of Tasso

In Armida's Garden

The joyous birds, hid under greenewood shade,
Sung merrie notes on every branch and bow,
The winde (that in the leaves and waters plaid)
With murmur sweete, now song, and whistled now,
Ceased the birds, the winde loud ansere made:
And while they sung, it rumbled soft and low;
  Thus, were it happe or cunning, chance or art,
  The winde in this strange musicke bore his part.

With partie coloured plumes and purple bill,
A wondrous bird among the rest there flew,
That in plaine speech sung lovelaies loud and shrill,
Her leden was like humaine language trew,
So much she talkt and with such wit and skill,
That strange it seemed how much good she knew,
  Her feathred fellowes all stood husht to heare,
  Dombe was the winde, the waters silent weare.

The gentlie budding rose (quoth she) behold,
That first scant peeping foorth with virgin beames,
Halfe ope, halfe shut, her beauties doth upfold
In their deare leaves, and lesse seene, fairer seames,
And after spreeds them foorth more broad and bold,
Then languisheth and dies in last extreames,
  Nor seemes the same, that decked bed and boure
  Of many a ladie late, and paramoure:

So, in the passing of a day, doth pas
The bud and blossome of the life of man,
Nor ere doth flourish more, but like the gras
Cut downe, becommeth withred, pale and wan:
O gather then the rose while time thou has,
Short is the day, done when it scant began,
  Gather the rose of love, while yet thou mast
  Loving, belov'd; embrasing, be embrast.

Trans. By Edward Fairfax

From the Italian of St. Francis of Assisi

Cantica: Our Lord Christ of Order

Set Love in order, thou that lovest Me.
  Never was virtue out of order found;
And though I fill thy heart desirously,
  By thine own virtue I must keep My ground:
When to My love thou dost bring charity,
  Even she must come with order fit and gown'd.
        Look how the trees are bound
        To order, bearing fruit;
        And by one thing compute,
In all things earthly, order's grace or gain.

Trans. by D. G. Rossetti

Early French

Anonymous Lyric

Poor Me

Why does my husband beat me?
Poor me, I brood.

For I've done nothing wrong to him,
No scandal caused or done by whim,
But hug my sweet friend limb to limb
In solitude.
Why does my husband beat me?
Poor me, I brood.

If he won't let me go my way
Leading a merry life in play,
I'll see he's called a cuckold today
For sure, the prude!
Why does my husband beat me?
Poor me, I brood.

I now know what I'll do--it's clear--
And how I'll get revenge right here:
I'll go to bed with my lover dear,
A wee bit nude.
Why does my husband beat me?
Poor me, I brood.

Trans. by Richard Beaumont

French Provencal

Alba

When the nightingale to his mate
Sings day-long and night late
My love and I keep state
In bower,
In flower,
'Till the watchman on the tower
Cry:

`Up! Thou rascal, Rise,
I see the white
Light
And the night
Flies.'

ArnautDaniel

Trans. by Ezra Pound

French

Joachim du Bellay wrote this in French: (?1522-1560)

A Sonnet to Heavenly Beauty

If this our little life is but a day
  In the Eternal,--if the years in vain
  Toil after hours that never come again,--
If everything that hath been must decay,
Why dreamest thou of joys that pass away,
  My soul, that my sad body doth restrain?
  Why of the moment's pleasure art thou fain?
Nay, thou has wings,--nay, seek another stay.

There is the joy whereto each soul aspires,
And there the rest that all the world desires,
  And there is love, and peace, and gracious mirth;
And there in the most highest heavens shalt thou
Behold the Very beauty, whereof now
  Thou worshippest the shadow upon earth.

Trans. by Andrew Lang

English

Pastime

Pastime with good company
I love and shall, until I die.
Grudge who list, but none deny!
So God be pleased, thus live will I.
For my pastance,
Hunt, sing and dance,
My heart is set.
All goodly sport
For my comfort
Who shall me let?

Youth must have some dalliance,
Of good or ill some pastance.
Company me thinks the best,
All thoughts and fancies to digest;
For idleness
Is chief mistress
Of vices all.
Then who can say
But mirth and play
Is best of all?

Company with honesty
Is virtue, vices to flee;
Company is good and ill,
But every man has his free will.
The best ensue,
The worst eschew!
My mind shall be,
Virtue to use,
Vice to refuse;
Thus shall I use me.

Henry VIII (1491-1547)

Locate some examples of early 16th century English diction.

Traditional Poetic Forms and Conventions

The Vernacular of Versification

Invocation

Epithet

Paean

Epithalamium

Prothalamion

Aubade

Pastoral

Lyric

Ode

Idyl

Elegy

Epitaph

Eulogy

Panegyric

Thanatopsis

Various Verse Forms

The Vernacular of Versification

What is dirty doggerel? Crude vernacular? The layman is sometimes confused by terms bandied about by scholars and critics. The exposition which follows will help by explaining some such terms:

PROSE is written language without rhyme or rhythm. Books are commonly written in prose explication, though prose can also loosely mean the spoken language of educated men.

VERNACULAR usually means crude, vulgar speech or dialect as spoken by a common people, but sometimes it is used to denote everyday vocabulary in general.

DOGGEREL is crude, flawed verse showing values and sentiments of a common people.

VERSE in its loosest sense means poetry but it also means STANZA or a pattern of lines and rhymes. Verse normally refers to RHYMES of dubious literary value whereas **STANZA** refers to lines of quality.

VERSIFICATION means the art or practice of writing verse in the occasional sense. A poet of stature would prefer to call his art PROSODY, which is the same thing with a more dignified name.

PROSODY is the practice and study of the methods used in implementing RHYME, METER and **STANZA FORM** in poetry.

PROSAIC denotes flat, unimaginative language which does not flow rhythmically or make creative use of sound (although some prose may do so).

POETRY means the imaginative combination of ideas, sounds and meters in a coherent, unified form to give heightened aesthetic pleasure. Poetry goes beyond **PROSODY** because it also uses diction imagery and musical devices as tools to give its language a richness and density that goes far beyond that of PROSE.

POETICS studies the techniques and devices that go into the composition of poetry; for example the use of connotation, sense imagery, figurative speech, and the use of sound devices and pattern or form to help the poet achieve his artistic purpose.

Such terms can obviously be discussed and defined in greater length, but the above explication should help avoid confusing such terms, which often to the student seem to be almost identical and interchangeable.

INVOCATION is a request to the Muse(s) at the beginning of a poem to ask for assistance, so the poet can speak through divine inspiration with the words of a seer, transcending his mortal limits and having a direct line to the Gods.

"Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son Achilleus
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the Achaians
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades..."

The Iliad
Homer.

"Tell me, Muse of the man of many ways, who was driven
far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's citadel.
Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of
Many the pains he suffered in his spirit..."

The Odyssey
Homer.

"Arms and the man I sing, the first who came
Compelled by fate, an exile out of Troy
To Italy...
Help me O Muse, recall the reasons: why.
Why did the queen of heaven drive a man
So known for goodness..."

The Aeneid
Virgil

Invocation to Paradise Lost

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our
woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret
top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen
seed,
In the beginning how the Heav'ns and
Earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that
flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhime.

Milton

Note the first two lines contain an example of **ZEUGMA:**
which means
the yoking of 2 words
in different senses
for example
"fruit [of] disobedience."

Invocation to Epithalamium

Ye learned sisters which have oftentimes
Been to me aiding, others to adorn,
Whom ye thought worthy of your graceful rimes,
That even the greatest did not greatly scorn
To hear their names sung in your simple lays,
But joyed in their praise:
And when ye list your own mishaps to mourn,
Which death, or love, or fortune's wreck did raise,
Your string could soon to sadder tenour turn,
And teach the woods and waters to lament
Your doleful dreariment;
Now lay those sorrowful complaints aside,
And having all your heads with garland crowned,
Help me mine own love's praises to resound,
Ne let the same of any be envied:
So Orpheus did for his own bride,
So I unto myself alone will sing;
The woods shall to me answer and my echo ring.

Spencer

Homeric Epithet: an adjective or adjective phrase to describe the characteristic(s) of a thing. For example,

Swift-footed Hermes
Blue-eyed Athena
All-seeing Love
Rosy-fingered dawn
Fish-infested sea
wine dark sea
cow-eyed Hera
Crafty Odysseus

A **Paean** is a Song of Praise of Joy

Epithalamium (EPITHALAMION): A song sung outside the bridal chamber before a wedding (see Pindar, Sappho, Theocritus).

From Epithalamium

Early before the world's light-giving lamp
His golden beam upon the hills doth spread,
Having dispersed the night's uncheerful damp,
Do ye awake, and with fresh lustihead
Go to the bower of my beloved love,
My truest turtle dove;
Bid her awake; for Hymen is awake,
And long since ready forth his mask to move,
With his bright head that flames with many a flake,

And many a bachelor to wait on him,
In their fresh garments trim.
Bid her awake therefore and soon her dight,
For lo? the wished day is come at last,
That shall for all the pains and sorrows past
Pay to her usury of long delight;
And whilst she doth her dight,
Do ye to her of joy and solace sing,
That all the woods may answer and your echo ring.

Bring with you all the nymphs that you can hear
Both of the rivers and the forests green,
And of the sea that neighbours to her near,
All with gay garlands goodly well be seen.
and let them also with them bring in hand
Another gay garland
For my fair love of lilies and of roses,
Bound true-love-wise with a blue silk ribband.
And let them make great store of bridal posies,
And let them eke bring store of other flowers
To deck the bridal bowers.
And let the ground whereas her foot shall tread,
For fear the stones her tender foot should wrong,
Be strewed with fragrant flowers all along,
And diapered like the discoloured mead.
Which done, do at her chamber door await,
For she will waken straight,
The whiles do ye this song unto her sign;
The woods shall to you answer and your echo ring.

Ye nymphs of Mulla, which with careful heed
The silver scaly trouts do tend full well,

And greedy pikes which use therein to feed,
(Those trouts and pikes all others do excel)
And ye likewise which keep the rushy lake,
Where none do fishes take,
Bind up the locks the which hang scattered light...

Edmund Spenser

In The Marriage of T.K. and C.C.
The Morning Stormy

Such should this day be, so the sun should hide
His bashful face, and let the conquering Bride
Without a rival shine, whilst he forbears
To mingle his unequal beams with hers;
Or if sometimes he glance his squinting eye
Between the parting clouds, 'tis but to spy,
Not emulate her glories, so comes dressed
In veils, but as a masquer to the feast.
Thus heaven should lower, such stormy gusts should blow
Not to denounce ungentle Fates, but show
The cheerful Bridegroom to the clouds and wind
Hath all his tears, and all his sighs assigned.
Let tempests struggle in the air, but rest
Eternal calms within thy peaceful breast,
Thrice happy Youth; but ever sacrifice
To that fair hand that dried thy blubbered eyes,
That crowned thy head with roses, and turned all
The plagues of love into a cordial,
When first it joined her virgin snow to thine,
Which when today the Priest shall recombine,
From the mysterious holy touch such charms
Will flow, as shall unlock her wreathed arms,
And open a free passage to that fruit
Which thou hast toiled for with a long pursuit.
But ere thou feed, that thou may'st better taste
Thy present joys, think on thy torments past.
Think on the mercy freed thee, think upon
Her virtues, graces, beauties, one by one,
So shalt thou relish all, enjoy the whole
Delights of her fair body, and pure soul.
Then boldly to the fight of love proceed,
'Tis mercy not to pity though she bleed,
We'll strew no nuts, but change that ancient form,
For till tomorrow we'll prorogue this storm,
Which shall confound with its loud whistling noise
Her pleasing shrieks, and fan thy panting joys.

Thomas Carew

The Milkmaid’s Epithalamium

Joy to the bridegroom and the bride
That lie by one another's side!
O fie upon the virgin beds,

No loss is gain but maidenheads.
Love quickly send the time may be
When I shall deal my rosemary!

I long to simper at a feast,
To dance, and kiss, and do the rest.
When I shall wed, and bedded be
O then the qualm comes over me,
And tells the sweetness of a theme
That I ne'er knew but in a dream.

You ladies have the blessed nights,
I pine in hope of such delights.
And silly damsel only can
Milk the cows' teats and think on man:
And sigh and wish to taste and prove
The wholesome sillabub of love.

Make haste, at once twin-brothers bear;
And leave new matter for a star.
Women and ships are never shown
So fair as when the midwife hears your moan,
I'll sigh for grief that I have none.

And you, dear knight, whose every kiss
Reaps the full crop of Cupid's bliss,
Now you have found, confess and tell
That single sheets do make up hell.
And then so charitable be
To get a man to pity me.

Thomas Randolph

A **Prothalamion** is a hymn to marriage.

Aubade is a poem about the dawn or the coming of morning or the parting of lovers at morning.

Parting at Morning

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the montain's rim:
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me."

Aubade

I work all day, and get half drunk at night.
Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
Till then I see what's really always there:
Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
Making all thought impossible but how
And where and when I shall myself die.
Arid interrogation: yet the dread
of dying, and being dead,
Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
--The good not done, the love not given, time
Torn off unused--nor wretchedly because
An only life can take so long to climb
Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
But at the total emptiness for ever,
The sure extinction that we travel to
And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
Not to be anywhere,
And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid
No trick dispels. Religion used t try,
That vast moth-eaten musical brocade
Created to pretend we never die,
And specious stuff that says No rational being
Can fear a thing it will not feel, not seeing
That this is what we fear--no sight, no sound,
No touch or taste or smell, nothing to think with,
Nothing to love or link with,
The anaesthetic from which none come round.

And so it stays just on the edge of vision,
A small unfocused blur, a standing chill
That slows each impulse down to indecision.
Most thinks may never happen: this one will,
and realization of it rages out
In furnace-fear when we are caught without
People or drink. Courage is no good:
It means not scaring others. Being brave
Lets no one off the grave.
Death is no different whined at than withstood.

slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,

Have always known, know that we can't escape,
Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.
Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring
Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

`

Philip Larkin

A Late Aubade

You could be sitting now in a carrel
Turning some liver-spotted page,
Or rising in an elevator-cage
Toward Ladies' Apparel.

You could be planting a raucous bed
Of salvia, in rubber gloves,
Or lunching through a screed of someone's loves
With pitying head,

Or making some unhappy setter
Heel, or listening to a bleak
Lecture on Schoenberg's serial technique.
Isn't this better?

Think of all the time you are not
Wasting, and would not care to waste,
Such things, thank God, not being to your taste.
Think what a lot

Of time, by woman's reckoning,
You've saved, and so may spend on this,
You who had rather lie in bed and kiss
Than anything.

It's almost noon, you say? If so,
Time flies, and I need not rehearse
The rosebuds-theme of centuries of verse.
If you *must* go,

Wait for a while, then slip downstairs
And bring us up some chilled white wine,
And some blue cheese, and crackers, and some fine
Ruddy-skinned pears.

Richard Wilbur

A **Pastoral Lyric** is a poem which idealizes a rural scene from a bygone utopian age.

"Bucolic" means the same as pastoral.

The Passionate Shepherd to His Love

Come and live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks
By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair-lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs.
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me and be my love.

The shepherd swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning.
If these delights thy mind may move,
The live with me and be my love.

Marlowe

The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.
Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold,
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields

To wayward winter reckoning yields.
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, they shoes, thy beds of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy clasp and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Sir Walter Raleigh

LYRIC means beautiful sounding words, originally meant to be accompanied by the "lyre," hence song lyrics and lyricists.

A Fragment

I walked along a stream for pureness rare,
Brighter than sunshine, for it did acquaint
The dullest sight with all the glorious prey,
That in the pebble-paved channel lay.

No molten crystal, but a richer mine,
Even Nature's rarest alchemy ran there,
Diamonds resolved, and substance more divine,
Through whose bright gliding current might appear
A thousand naked nymphs, whose ivory shine,
Enamelling the banks, made them more dear
Than ever was that glorious palace gate,
Where the day-shining sun in triumph sat.

Upon this brim the eglantine and rose,
The tamarisk, olive, and the almond tree,
As kind companions in one union grows,
Folding their twining arms, as oft we see
Turtle-taught lovers either other close,
Lending to dullness feeling sympathy.
And as a costly valance o'er a bed,
So did their garland tops the brook o'erspread.

Their leaves that differed both in shape and show,

(Though all were green) yet difference such in green,
Like to the checkered bent of Iris' bow,
Prided the running main as it had been--

Marlowe

An **ECOLOGUE** is a formal pastoral poem. See "*Ecologue"* also by Marlowe.

ODE: an extended lyric of complex pattern and form written to express a sentimental idea, thought or theme.

Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravished 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-fringed 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?

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

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

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 dresst?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of its folks, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a sour to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

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

John Keats

Ode to a Nightingale

1

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.

2

O, for a draught of vintage? that hath been
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
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:

3

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 specter-thin, and dies;
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 tomorrow.

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pars,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
Clustered around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is not light,
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

5

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 covered up in leaves;
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of lies on summer eves.

6

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Called 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.

7

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,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-time hath
Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8

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 fained 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?

John Keats

Ode on Melancholy

1

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolfsbane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kissed
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
Make not your rosary of yew-berries,
Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be
Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
and drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

2

But when the melancholy fit shall fall

Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
Imprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

3

She dwells with Beauty--Beauty that must die;
and Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Aye, in the very temple of Delight
Veiled Melancholy has her sov'reign shrine,
Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

John Keats

Ode to Psyche

O Goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
  By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
  Even into thin own soft-conched ear:
Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see
  The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
  And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
    A brooklet, scarce espied:

'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed,
  Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian,
They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass;
  Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
  Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber,
And ready still past kisses to outnumber
  At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love:
    The winged boy I knew;
  But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
    His Psyche true!

O latest born and loveliest vision far
  Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire-region'd star,
  Or Vesper, amorous flow-worm of the sky;
Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
        Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan
        Upon the midnight hours;
No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
  From chain-swung censer teeming;
No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
  Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
  Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
  Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
Yet even in these days so far retir'd
  From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
  Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspir'd.
So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
Upon the midnight hours;
Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
  From swinged censer teeming;
Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
  Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
  In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown
        with pleasant pain,
  Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
Fair, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees
  Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
And in the midst of this wide quietness
A rosy sanctuary will I dress
With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
  With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
  Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
And there shall be for thee all soft delight
  That shadowy thought can win,
A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
  To let the warm Love in!

John Keats

Ode on Solitude

Happy the man whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground.

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

Bless'd who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day;

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

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

Is this like the Odes that you know?
Does it fit the standard pattern?

An **IDYL** is a picturesque poem about a rural scene or rustic life, praising beauty, innocence, tranquility and happiness. See "*Idyls of the King"* by Tennyson.

ELEGY means a formal lyric suggested by the tragedy of life or by death in the form of a lamentation.

From the Latin of Ovid

Elegies, Book I, 13

Now ore the sea from her old Love comes she
That drawes the day from heavens cold axletree.
Aurora whither slidest thou? downe again
And birdes for Memnon yearely shal be slaine.
Now in her tender armes I sweetly bide,
If ever, now well lies she by my side.

The aire is cold, and sleepe is sweetest now
And birdes send forth shrill notes from every bough:
Whither runst thou, that men, and women love not?
Hold in thy rosy horses that they move not.
Ere thou rise, starres teach sea-men where to saile,
But when thou commest they of their courses faile.
Poore travailers though tierd, rise at thy sight,
And souldiours make them ready to fight.
The painefull hinde by thee to field is sent,
Slowe Oxen early in the yoake are pent.
Thou cousenst boyes of sleepe, and doest betray them
To Pedants that with cruell lashes pay them.
Thou mak'st the surety of the Lawyer runne,
That with one word hath night himselfe undone.
The Lawyer and the client hate thy view,
Both whom thou raisest up to toyle anew.
By thy meanes women of their rest are bard,
Thou setst their labouring hands to spin and card.
All could I beare, but that the wench should rise
Who can endure save him with whom none lyes?
How oft wisht I, night would not give thee place,
Nor morning starres shunne thy uprising face.
How oft that either winde would breake thy coach,
Or steeds might fall forc'd with thick clouds approach.
Whether goest thou hatefull Nimph? Memnon the elfe
Receiv'd his cole-black colour from thy selfe.
Say that thy love with Caephalus were not knowne,
Then thinkest thou thy loose life is not showne?
Would Tithon might but talke of thee a while,
Not one in heaven should be more base and vile.
Thou leavest his bed, because hee's faint through age,
And early mountest thy hatefull carriage.
But heldst thou in thine armes some Cephalus,
Then wouldst thou cry, stay night and runne not thus.
Doest punish me, because yeares make him waine?
I did not bid thee wed an aged swaine.
The Moone sleepes with Endymion every day,
Thou art as faire as she, then kisse and play.
Jove that thou shoulst not hast but waite his leasure,
Made two nights one to finish up his pleasure.
I chid no more, she blusht and therefore heard me,
Yet lingered not the day, but morning scard me.

Trans. by Christopher Marlowe

From the Latin of Ovid

Elegies, Book I, 5

In summers heate and mid-time of the day
To rest my limbes upon a bed I lay,
One window shut, the other open stood,
Which gave such light as twincles in a wood,
Like twilight glimps at setting of the Sunne
Or night being past, and yet not day begunne.
Such light to shamefast maidens must be showne,
Where they may sport, and seeme to bee unknowne.
Then came Corinna in a long loose gowne,
Her white neck hid with tresses hanging downe:
Resembling fayre Semiramis going to bed
Or Layis of a thousand wooers sped.
I snacht her gowne, being thin, the harme was small,
Yet striv'd she to be covered there withall.
And striving thus as one that would be cast,

Betray'd her selfe, and yelded at the last.
Starke naked as she stood before mine eye,
Not one wen in her body could I spie.
What armes and shoulders did I touch and see,
How apt her breasts were to be prest by me?
How smooth a belly under her wast saw I?
How large a legge, and what a lustie thigh?
To leave the rest, all lik'd me passing well,
I cling'd her naked body, downe she fell,
Judge you the rest: being tirde she bad me kisse,
Jove send me more such after-noones as this.

Trans. by Christopher Marlowe

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 glimmering 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 tower
  The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
  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.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
  The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
  No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

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.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
  Their furrow oft the stubborn flebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
  How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

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

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
  And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
  The paths of flory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
  If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
  The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Can storied urn or animated bust
  Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honor's voice provike the silent dust,
  Or Flattery sooth the dull cold ear of Death?

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
  Some heart once preganant with celestial fire;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,
  Or waked 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 repressed their noble rage,
  And froze the genial current of the soul.

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

Some village-Hampden, that with dauntless breast
  The little Tyrant of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
  Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.

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 history in a nation's eyes,

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

The struggling pangs of conscious truth 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's ignoble strife,
  Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered 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 night,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,
  Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unlettered 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 resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
  Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
  Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
  Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

For thee, who mindful of th' unhonored Dead
  Dost in these lines their artles stale relate,
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
  Some kindred Spirit shall inquire thy fate,

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.

"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 craed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

Thomas Gray

Elegiac Stanzas

Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
I saw thee every day; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!
So like, so very like, was day to day!
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;
It trembled, but it never passed away.
How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;
I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;--
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease,
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made:
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,--'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been the Friend,
If he had lived, of Him who I deplore,
This work of thine I blame not, but commend;
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work!--yet wise and well,
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing her sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves,
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.--
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

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
O 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,
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 often-times
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, al 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
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free

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

William Wordsworth

Elegy

The wood is bare: a river-mist is steeping
  The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves:
Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping
        Over their fallen leaves;

That lie upon the dank earth brown and rotten,
  Miry and matted in the soaking wet:
Forgotten with the spring, that is forgotten
        By them that can forget.

Yet it was here we walked when ferns were springing,
  And through the mossy bank shot bud and blade:--
Here found in summer, when the birds were singing,
        A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and greener;
  And now, in this disconsolate decay,
I come to see her where I most have seen her,
        And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,

The fancy of her figure on me falls:
Yet walks she with the slow step of a mourner,
Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track of feeling,
A path of memory, that is all her own:
Whereto her phantom beauty ever stealing
Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the branches
Drip heavy tears upon her downcast head;
And bleed from unseen wounds that no sun stanches,
For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that summer planted:
And birds that love the South have taken wing
The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene enchanted,
Weeps, and despairs of spring.

Robert Bridges

An **EPITAPH** is an inscription placed on a grave or a tomb:

Shakespeare's Epitaph

"Good friend, for Jesus' sake forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here.
Blest be the man that spares these stone
And curst be he that moves my bones."

From the *Greek Anthology*

An Epitaph

My name--my country--what are they to thee?
What--whether base or proud, my pedigree?
Perhaps I far surpass'd all other men--
Perhaps I fell below them all--what then?
Suffice it, stranger! that thou seest a tomb--
Thou know'st its use--it hides--no matter whom.

His Own Epitaph

One Aeschylus, Athenian born,
Son Of Euphorion,
Lies under this memorial stone
In Gela's fields of corn.

At Marathon a sacred wood
His courage will declare,
Or ask the Medes, with braided hair.
Who tried and found it good.

Trans. by T. F. Higham

Epitaph from the Greek of Meleager:

Upon a Maid that Dyed the Day She Was Marryed

That Morne which saw me made a Bride,
The Ev'ning witnest that I dy'd.
Those holy lights, wherewith they guide
Unto the bed the bashfull Bride;
Serv'd, but as Tapers, for to burne,
And light my Reliques to their urne.
This Epitaph, which here you see,
Supply'd the Epithalamie.

Trans. Robert Herrick

Epitaph

Stop, Christian passerby!--Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seemed he.
O lift one thought in prayer for S.T.C.,
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death
Mercy for praise--to be forgiven for fame
He asked and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Epitaphs

For My Grandmother

This lovely flower fell to seed;
Work gently, sun and rain;
She held it as her dying creed
That she would grow again.

For a Lady I Know

She even thinks that up in heaven
Her class lies late and snores,
While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores.

Countee Cullen

Just for fun, write your own epitaph.

A **LAMENT** is a poem which expresses grief and suffering due to personal loss or the loss of a loved one.

A Lament

O World! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more--O never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar,
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more--O never more.

Percy Bysshe Shelly

Lament of the Frontier Guard From the Chinese of Li Po

By the North gate, the wind blows full of sand,
Lonely from the beginning of time until now!
Trees fall, the grass goes yellow with autumn.

I climb the towers and towers
To watch out the barbarous land:
Desolate castle, the sky, the wide desert.
There is no wall left to this village.
Bones white with a thousand frosts,
High heaps, covered with trees and grass;
Who brought this to pass?
Who had brought the flaming imperial anger?
Who has brought the army with drams and with kettle-drums?
Barbarous kings.
A gracious spring, turned to blood-ravenous autumn,
A turmoil of wars-men, spread over the middle kingdom,
Three hundred and sixty thousand,
And sorrow, sorrow like rain.
Sorrow to go, and sorrow, sorrow returning.
Desolate, desolate fields,
And no children of warfare upon them,
No longer the men for offence and defence.
Ah, how shall you know the dreary sorrow at the North Gate,
With Rihaku's name forgotten,
And we guardsmen fed to the tigers.

Trans. by Ezra Pound

Lament

Listen, children:
Your father is dead.
From his old coats
I'll make you little jackets;
From his old pants.
There'll be in his pockets
Things he used to put there,
Keys and pennies
Covered with tobacco;
Dan shall have the pennies
To save in his bank;
Anne shall have the keys
To make a pretty noise with.
Life must go on,
Though good men die;
Anne, eat your breakfast;
Dan, take your medicine;
Life must go on;
I forget just why.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Exeunt

Piecemeal the summer dies;
At the field's edge a daisy lives alone;
A last shawl of burning lies
On a gray field-stone.

All cries are thin and terse;
The field has droned the summer's final mass;
A cricket like a dwindled hearse
Crawls from the dry grass.

The Death of a Toad

A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got
To the garden verge, and sanctuaried him
Under the cineraria leaves, in the shade
Of the ashen heartshaped leaves, in a dim,
Low, and a final glade.

The rare original heartsblood goes,
Spends on the earthen hide, in the folds and wizenings, flows
In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes. He lies
As still as if he would return to stone,
And soundlessly attending, dies
Toward some deep monotone,

Toward misted and ebullient seas
And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies.
Day dwindles, drowning, and at length is gone
In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear
To watch, across the castrate lawn,
The haggard daylight steer.

Richard Wilbur

A **Dirge** is a song sung to Lament and Eulogize the passing of the dead.

The Death of Robin Hood

Dirge

Weep, weep, ye woodmen, wail;
  Your hands with sorrow wring!
Your master Robin Hood lies dead,
  Therefore sigh as you sing.

Here lies his primer and his beads,
  His bent bow and his arrows keen,
His good sword and his holy cross.
  Now cast on flowers fresh and green;

And, as they fall, shed tears and say
  Well-a, well-a-day! well-a, well-a-day!
Thus cast ye flowers, and sing,
  And on to Wakefield take your way.

Anthony Munday

Dirge

"Rough wind that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm whose tears are vain,
Bare woods whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main--
Wail for the world's wrong!"

Percy Bysshe Shelly

Requiescat

Strew on her roses, roses,
  And never a spray of yew!
In quiet she reposes;
  Ah, would that I did too!

Her mirth the world required;
  She bathed it in smiles of glee.
But her heart was tired, tired,
  And now they let her be.

Her life was turning, turning,
  In mazes of heat and sound.
But for peace her soul was yearning,
  And now peace laps her round.

Her cabin'd, ample spirit,
  It flutter'd and fail'd for breath.
To-night it doth inherit
  The vasty hall of death.

Matthew Arnold

Dirge Without Music

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.
So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:
Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely.
Crowned with lilies and with laurel they go; but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.
Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.
A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew,
A formula, a phrase remains--but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,--
They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses. Elegant and curled
Is the blossom. Fragrant is the blossom. I know. But I do not approve.
More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave
Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Threnody is another word that means a Song of lamentation for the dead.

Eulogy: Formalized poem in praise of a person or thing, often of one deceased.

Memorial Verses
April, 1850

Goethe in Weimar sleeps, and Greece,
Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
But one such death remain'd to come;
The last poetic voice is dumb--
We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

When Byron's eyes were shut in death,

We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law;
And yet with reverential awe
We watch'd the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said:
Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
Physician of the iron age,
Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
He took the suffering human race,
He read each wound, each weakness clear;
And struck his finger on the place,
And Said: ‘Thou ailest here, and here!’
He look'd on Europe's dying hour
Of fitful dream and feverish power;
His eye plunged down the weltering strife,
The turmoil of expiring life,--
He said: ‘The end is everywhere,
Art still has truth, take refuge there!’
And he was happy, if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror, and insane distress,
And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!--Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
For never has such soothing voice
Been to your shadowy world convey'd
Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
Wordsworth has gone from us--and ye,
Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
He too upon a wintry clime
Had fallen--on this iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth,
Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd; for there was shed

On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.
Ah! since dark days still bring to light
Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
Time may restore us in his course
Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force;
But where will Europe's latter hour
Again find Wordsworth's healing power?
Others will teach us how to dare,
And against fear our breast to steel;
Others will strengthen us to bear--
But who, ah! who, will make us feel?
The cloud of mortal destiny,
Others will front it fearlessly--
But who, like him, will put it by?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave
O Ratha, with thy living wave!
Sing him thy best! for few or none
Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

Matthew Arnold

In Memory of W.B. Yeats (died Jan. 1939)

I

He disappeared in the dead of winter:
The brooks were frozen, the air-ports almost deserted,
And snow disfigured the public statues;
The mercury sank in the mouth of the dying day.
O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

Far from his illness
The wolves ran on through the evergreen forests,
The peasant river was untempted by the fashionable quays;
By mourning tongues
The death of the poet was kept from his poems.

But for him it was his last afternoon as himself,
An afternoon of nurses and rumours;
The provinces of his body revolted,
The squares of his mind were empty,
Silence invaded the suburbs,
The current of his feeling failed; he became his admirers.

Now he is scattered among a hundred cities
and wholly given over to unfamiliar affections;

To find his happiness in another kind of wood
And be punished under a foreign code of conscience.
The words of a dead man
Are modified, in the guts of the living.

But in the importance and noise of to-morrow
When the brokers are roaring like beasts on the floor of the Bourse,
And the poor have the sufferings to which they are fairly accustomed,
And each in the cell of himself is almost convinced of his freedom;
A few thousand will think of this day
As one thinks of a day when one did something slightly unusual.

O all the instruments agree
The day of his death was a dark cold day.

II

You were silly like us: your gift survived it all;
The parish or rich women, physical decay,
Yourself; mad Ireland hurt you into poetry.
Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still,
For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives
In the valley of its saying where executives
Would never want to tamper; it flows south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it survives,
A way of happening, a mouth.

III

Earth, receive an honoured guest;
William Yeats is laid to rest:
Let the Irish vessel lie
Emptied of its poetry.

Time that is intolerant
Of the brave and innocent,
And indifferent in a week
To a beautiful physique,

Worships language and forgives
Everyone by whom it lives;
Pardons cowardice, conceit,
Lays its honours at their feet.

Time that with this strange excuse
Pardoned Kipling and his views,
And will pardon Paul Claudell,
Pardons him for writing well.

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Follow, poet, follow right
To the bottom of the night,
With your unconstraining Voice
Still persuade us to rejoice;

With the farming of a verse
Make a vineyard of the curse,
Sing of human unsuccess
In a rapture of distress;

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

W. H. Auden

Herman Melville
(For Lincoln Kirstein)

Towards the end he sailed into an extraordinary mildness
and anchored in his home and reached his wife
and rode within the harbour of his hand,
And went across each morning to an office
As though his occupation were another island.

Goodness existed: that was the new knowledge
His terror had to blow itself quite out
To let him see it; but it was the gale had blown him
Past the Cape Horn of sensible success
Which cries: `This rock is Eden. Shipwreck here.'
But deafened him with thunder and confused with lightening:
--The maniac hero hunting like a jewel
The rare ambiguous monster that had maimed his sex,
Hatred for hatred ending in a scream,
The unexplained survivor breaking off the nightmare--
All that was intricate and false; the truth was simple.

Evil is unspectacular and always human,

And shares our bed and eats at our own table,
And we are introduced to Goodness every day,
Even in drawing-rooms among a crowd of faults;
He has a name like Billy and is almost perfect
But wears a stammer like a decoration:
And every time they meet the same thing has to happen;
It is the Evil that is helpless like a lover
And has to pick a quarrel and succeeds,
And both are openly destroyed before our eyes.

For now he was awake and knew
No one is ever spared except in dreams;
But there was something else the nightmare had distorted--
Even the punishment was human and a form of love:
The howling storm had been his father's presence
And all the time he had been carried on his father's breast.
Who now had set him gently down and left him.
He stood upon the narrow balcony and listened:
And all the stars above him sang as in his childhood
`All, all is vanity,' but it was not the same;
For now the words descended like the calm of mountains--
--Nathaniel had been shy because his love was selfish--
But now he cried in exultation and surrender
"The Godhead is broken like bread. We are the pieces."

And sat down at his desk and wrote a story.

W.H. Auden

PANEGYRIC: formal written praise of a person living or dead (nowadays it means puffed-up praise!) Look up "Thanatopsis" by W.C. Bryant.

RIME ROYAL: 7 line iambic pentameter stanza, with a rhyme of ababbcc, associated with King James I and also used by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Morris.

RONDEAU: French verse pattern of 15 lines
9th and 15th = short refrain
rhyming aabba aabc aabbac

RONDEL: Variation of Rondeau
11 lines associated with Swinburne
rhyming abac bababac

SESTINA: French verse pattern
of 6 six-line stanzas
and a three line **ENVOY = conclusion**

and highly complex rhyme pattern

SPENCERIAN STANZA: Iamabic pentameter, ababbcbcc
last line an
ALEXANDRINE (6 feet and 12 syllables)

OTTAVA RIMA: 8 iambic pentameter lines, rhyming abababcc, originated with Boccacio, also used by Spencer, Milton, Keats, Byron's 'Don Juan.'

Sestina: Altaforte
Loquitur: En Bertrans de Born.

Dante Alighieri put this man in hell for that he was a stirrer up of strife.
Eccovi! Judge Ye! Have I dug him up again?
The scene is at his castle, Altaforte. "Papiols" is his jongleur.
"The Leopard," the *device* of Richard Coeur de Lion.

Damn it all! all this our South stinks peace.
You whoreson dog, Papiols, come! Let's to music!
I have no life save when the swords clash.
But ah! when I see the standards gold, flair, purple, opposing
And the broad fields beneath them turn crimson,
Then howl I my heart nigh mad with rejoicing.

In hot summer have I great rejoicing
When the tempests kill the earth's foul peace,
And the lightnings from black heav'n flash crimson,
And the fierce thunders roar me their music
And the winds shriek through the clouds mad, opposing,
And through all the riven skies God's swords clash.

Hell grant soon we hear again the swords clash!
And the shrill neighs of destriers in battle rejoicing,
Spiked breast to spiked breast opposing!
Better one hour's stdour than a year's peace
With fat boards, bawds, wine and frail music!
Bah! there's no wine like the blood's crimson!

And I love to see the sun rise blood-crimson.
And I watch his spears through the dark clash
And it fills all my heart with rejoicing
And pries wide my mouth with fast music
When I see him so scorn and defy peace,
His lone might 'gainst all darkness opposing.

The man who fears was and squats opposing
My words for stour, hath no blood of crimson
But is fit only to rot in womanish peace

Far from where worth's won and the swords clash
For the death of such sluts I go rejoicing;
Yea, I fill all the air with my music.

Papiols, Papiols, to the music!
There's no sound like to swords opposing,
No cry like the battle's rejoicing
When our elbows and swords drip the crimson
And our charges 'gainst "The Leopard's" rush clash.
May god damn for ever all who cry "Peace!"

And let the music of the swords make them crimson!
Hell grant soon we hear gain the swords clash!
Hell blot black for alway the though "Peace!"

Ezra Pound

Sestina

‘Lo ferm voler qu'el cor m'intra
No'm pot jes becs excoissendre mi ongla
De lausengier, qui pert per mal dir s'arma;
E car non l'aus batr'ab ram ni ab verga,
Sivals a frau, lai on non aurai oncle,
Jauzirai joi, en vergier o dinz cambra.’

Longing that my heart doth enter
Cannot uprooted be by beak or nail
Of slanderer, who by lies ruins his soul.
Since I dare not beat him with twig or rod,
At least in secret, where I have no uncle,
I will have joy in orchard or in room.

And when I recall the room
Where to my grief I know no man can enter,
To me are all more than brother or uncle;
In every limb I quake, even to the nail,
Just as a child does when it sees the rod,
So fear I she regards too much her soul.

There in body, not in soul,
I'd be, had she concealed me in her room!
For more it hurts my soul than blows of rod
That where she is her servant cannot enter.
I shall be to her even as flesh and nail,
And warning will not heed from friend or uncle.

Not the sister of my uncle
Loved I so much or more, upon my soul!

For close as is the finger to the nail,
If she so pleased, would I be to her room,
And love, which now within my heart doth enter,
Can bend me as a strong man a weak rod.

Since first flourished the dry rod,
Or nephew from Sir Adam sprang, or uncle,
Such faithful love as in my heart doth enter
Ne'er was, I think, in body or in soul.
Where'er she be, outdoors or in her room,
I part mo more from her than length of nail.

I am held as with a nail
Fastened to her as bark is to the rod;
To me of joy she's palace, tower and room;
I do not love so much brother or uncle,
And double joy in Heaven 'twill give my soul
If ever man for true love there doth enter.

Now Arnaut sends his song of nail and uncle
By leave of her whose rod doth rule his soul,
To Desirat, in who room worth doth enter.

Trans. Barbara Smythe

Merciles Beaute

A Triple Roundel

Captivity

Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

And but your word wol helen hastily
My hertes wounde, whyl that hit is grene,
Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene.

Upon my trouthe I sey yow feithfully,
That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene;
for with my deeth the trouthe shal be sene.
Your yën two wol slee me sodenly,
I may the beautè of hem not sustene.
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

Chaucer

Rondel

Now welcome, somer, with thy sunne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake,
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,
Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:
Now welcome, somer, with thy sunne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake.

Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
Sith ech of them recovered hath hys make,
Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake:
Now welcome, somer, with thy sunne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres over shake,
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!

Chaucer

Charles d' Orleans: Rondel to his Mistress

Strengthen, my Love, this castle of my heart,
  And with some store of pleasure give me aid,
For Jealousy, with all them of his part,
  Strong siege about the weary tower has laid.
  Nay, if to break his bands thou art afraid,
Too weak to make his cruel force depart,
Strengthen at least this castle of my heart,
  And with some store of pleasure give me aid.
Nay, let not Jealousy, for all his art
  Be master, and the tower in ruin laid,
  That still, ah Love! thy gracious rule obeyed.
  Advance, and give me succour of thy part;
Strengthen, my Love, this castle of my heart.

Andrew Lang

Rondel: From the French Christine de Pisa (1362?-1431 AD)

'Je ne sçay comment je dure;
Car mon delent cuer font d'yre,
Et plaindre n'oze, ne dire
Ma doulereuse aventure,

Ma dolatente vie obscure,
Riens, fors la mort, ne desire;
Je ne sçay comment je dure.’

I know not how my life I bear!
  For sad regrets my hours employ,
Yet may I not betray a tear,
  No tell what woes my heart destroy;
My weary soul a prey to care,
I know not how my life I bear!

And must I still these pangs conceal!
  And feign the joys that others feel;
Still vainly tune my lute to sing,
  And smile while sighs my bosom wring;
Seem all delight amidst despair!--
I know not how my life I bear!

Trans. Louis S. Costello

Charles d’ Orleans: Rondeau of Spring

We'll to the woods and gather may
Fresh from the footprints of the rain;
  We'll to the woods, at every vein
To drink the spirit of the day.
The winds of the spring are out at play,
  The needs of spring in heart and brain.
We'll to the woods and gather may
  Fresh from the footprints of the rain.
The world's too near her end, you say?--
  Hark to the blackbird's mad refrain.
  It waits for her, the vast Inane?--
Then, girls, to help her on the way
We'll to the woods and gather may.

Trans. by W.E. Henley

Rondeau--The Well

That deep well of my Melancholy
That ever on Hope's water draws,
A thirst for comfort calls with force
Although I often find it dry.

At time I see it clear and free,
At times a troubled, muddy source,
The deep well of my Melancholy
That ever on Hope's water draws.

My ink I dip there, studiously,
To write of it;--but then to cross
Me, Fortune comes to rend my verse
And casts add down, in enmity,
The deep well of my Melancholy.

Barbara Howes

Ballade

Hyde, Absalon, thy gilte tresses clere;
Ester, lay thou thy meeknesse al a-doun;
Hyde, Jonathas, al thy friendly mannere;
Penalopee, and Marcia Catoun,--
Mak of your wufhood no comparisoun;
Hyde ye your beauties, Isoude and Eleyne;
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

Thy faire body, let hit not appeare,
Lavyne; and thou, Lucresse of Rome toun,
And Polixene, that boughten love so dere,
And Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,
Hyde ye your trouthe of love and your renoun;
And thou, Tisbe, that hast of love swich peyne;
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

Hero, Dido, Laudomia, alle y-fere,
And Phyllis, hanging for thy Demophoun,
And Canace, espyed by thy chere,
Ysiphile, betraysed with Jasoun,
Maketh of your trouthe neyther boost ne soun;
Nor Ypermistre or Adriane, ye tweyne;
My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne.

Chaucer

Rhyme Royal: uses seven line iambic pentameter stanzas with ababbcc rhyme scheme often used by Chaucer. See "Resolution and Independence" following:

Resolution and Independence

I

There was a roaring in the wind all night:
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;

Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

II

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;--on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

III

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

IV

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness--and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name

V

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me--
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

VI

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can He expect that others should

Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

VII

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountainside:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

VIII

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I say a Man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

IX

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

X

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep--in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

XI

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that Moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,

That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

XII

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
`This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.'

XIII

A gentle answer did the old Man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:
And him with further words I thus bespake,
`What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you.'
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

XIV

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest--
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such a grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

XV

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

XVI

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now *his* voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;

Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

XVII

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
--Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
`How is it that you live, and what is it you do?'

XVIII

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
`Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.'

XIX

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech--all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

XX

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and, when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
`God," said I, `be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'

William Wordsworth

SPENCERIAN STANZA: follows a pattern of 9 verses, 1st 8 are iambic pentameter
9th iambic hexameter, rhyming ababbcbcc
See Spencer’s "Faerie Queen."

STROPHE: = loosely defined = song

VILANELLE: French Verse Form, pastoral and idyllic in origin
19 lines in 5 tercets, with a final 4 line stanza
and only 2 rhymes, rhyming aba aba aba aba abaa

CANTO= short division of a free verse poem. See Ezra Pound's
"Cantos" or "Hugh Sellewyn Mauberly."

Note: For a more modern and comprehensive treatment of poetic literary tools and devices, see David Holmes. *Understanding the Art of Poetry*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press, 2546, which goes into an understanding of literary techniques and devices in a much more detailed manner than the present text and includes more explanations and more examples, explaining how to use such guidelines for creative writing.

Students interested in having a closer look at devices such as rhyme, meter, stanza form, connotation, diction, sense imagery, figurative imagery, simile, metaphor, personification, paradox, overstatement, understatement, metonymy, allegory, allusion, irony, symbol, musical devices, alliteration, consonance, assonance, as well as form, pattern, plan, design, coherence and unity, should consult *Understanding the Art of Poetry* as a companion piece to the present *Poetic Traditions and Tools*.

Part Two

Whereas the first half of this book looked backwards into the arising of poetic origins and traditions in the distant past, before English ever became a sophisticated language, let alone developed a body of literature on its own, the second half looks forward into the more recent past and examines how English poetry has developed the use of its literary tools and devices to go its own way and develop a cultural character of its own.

Good Poetry and Not-So-Good Poetry

Selections from English and American Poets,
posing questions demanding critical judgement.

Afternoon on a Hill

I will be the gladdest thing
Under the sun!
I will touch a hundred flowers
And not pick one.

I will look at cliffs and clouds
With quiet eyes,
Watch the wind bow down the grass
And the grass rise.

And when lights begin to show
Up from the town
I will mark which must be mind,
And then start down!

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Is the language of this poem too simple?

Pick the two strongest sense images.

Pick the two weakest images.

Pick a trite phrase. A trite adjective?

What is the poem's strongest point?

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.
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Two Rural Sisters

Alice is tall and upright as a pine,
White as blanched almonds, or the falling snow,
Sweet as the damask roses when they blow,
And doubtless fruitful as the swelling vine.
Ripe to be cut, and ready to be pressed,
Her full-cheeked beauties very well appear,
And a year's fruit she loses every year,
Wanting a man to improve her to the best.

Full fain she would be husbanded, and yet,
Alas! she cannot a fit labourer get
To cultivate her to her own content:
Fain would she be (God wot) about her task,
And yet (forsooth) she is too proud to ask,
And (which is worse) too modest to consent.

Margaret of humbler stature by the head
Is (as it oft falls out with yellow hair)
Than her fair sister, yet so much more fair,
As her pure white is better mixed with red.
This, hotter than the other ten to one,
Longs to be put into her mother's trade,
And loud proclaims she lives too long a maid,
Wishing for one t'untie her virgin zone.

She finds virginity a kind of ware,
That's very very troublesome to bear,
And being gone, she thinks will ne'er be missed:
And yet withal, the girl has so much grace,
To call for help I know she wants the face,
Though asked, I know not how she would resist.

Charles Cotton

Make a list of trite and clichéd images from this poem.

There is one in almost every line in stanza one.

Did the poem keep your attention to the end? Why or why not?

Pick out the best line in the poem. The worst?

Freckled Morning

The freckled morning
moving into day now,
I stand at the window half dressed,
watching the snow melt as quickly as it falls.

A hundred blank windows
in the building going up across the street
look back at me.
My expression is as empty as theirs,
as the long slow business
of learning how to live alone begins again.

The shadowed afternoon
moving into night now,
I close the door behind me
and hurry down the stairs.

Saturday night is better than Friday.
If you don't make it out
you can always take home
the great American consolation prize,
thirty cents worth of love,
the Sunday Paper.

Rod McKuein

What's the best image in the poem?

What's the worst?

Give an example of trite language?

Does the analogy work when he compares his own expression to "A hundred blank windows"?

Or is it loose and hard to pin down?

The Deserted Village

Sweet Auburn! Loveliest village of the plain,
Where health and plenty cheered the laboring swain,
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,

And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:
Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loitered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene...

Oliver Goldsmith

Is there anything about these lines that bothers you?
Is there something that you like?
Do the positive attributes outweigh any possible negative attributes?

In the Orchard

Leave go my hands, let me catch breath and see;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me;
  Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree;
  And God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cook, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
  I turn to thee as some green afternoon
Turns toward sunset, and is loth to die;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Lie closer, lean your face upon my side,
Feel where the dew fell that has hardly dried,
  Hear how the blood beats that went night to swoon;
The pleasure lives there when the sense has died,
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

O my fair lord, I charge you leave me this:
Is it not sweeter than a foolish kiss?
  Nay take it then, my flower, my first in June,
My rose, so like a tender mouth it is:
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Love, till dawn sunder night from day with fire
Dividing my delight and my desire,
  The crescent life and love the plenilune,
Love me though dusk begin and dark retire;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Algernon Charles Swinburne

Critique the meter
the rhyme
figures of speech

diction
sound and sense

Ruth

She stood breast high amid the corn,
Clasped by the golden light of morn,
Like the sweetheart of the sun,
Who many a glowing kiss had won.

On her cheek an autumn flush,
Deeply ripenend; - such a blush
In the midst of brown was born,
Like red poppies grown with corn.

Round her eyes her tresses fell,
Which were blackest none could tell,
But long lashes veiled a light,
That had else been all too bright.

And her hat, with shady brim,
Made her tressy forehead dim;-
Thus she stood amid the stooks,
Praising God with sweetest looks:-

Sure, I said, heaven did not mean,
Where I reap thou shouldst but glean,
Lay thy sheaf adown and come,
Share my harvest and my home.

Thomas Hood

In the poem above,
Circle all the over-used adjectives.
Underline some mediocre metaphors.
Identify a couple of trite similes.

Love

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, 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.

George Herbert

Can you find a

Symbol in line 1?
Metonymy in line 2?
Personification in line 3?
Synesthaesia in line 5?
Understatement in line 6?

Is the poet using too many literary devices?

Lucifer in Starlight

On a starred night Prince Lucifer uprose.
Tired of his dark dominions swung the fiend
Above the rolling ball in cloud part screened,
Where sinners hugged their spectre of repose.
Poor prey to his hot fire of pride were those.
And now upon his western wing he leaned,
Now his huge bulk o'er Afric's sands careened,
Now the black planet shadowed Arctic snows.
Soaring through wider zones that pricked his scars
With memory of the old revolt from Awe,
He reached a middle height, and at the stars,
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked, and sank.
Around the ancient track marched, rank on rank,
The army of unalterable law.

Dirge in Woods

A wind sways the pines,
And below
Not a breath of wild air;
Still as the mosses that glow
On the flooring and over the lines
Of the roots here and there.
The pine-tree drops its dead;
They are quiet, as under the sea.
Overhead, overhead
Rushes life in a race,
As the clouds the clouds chase;

And we go,
And we drop like the fruits of the tree,
Even we,
Even so.

George Meredith

Which of the above poems has more force and vigour? Why?

To a Lady
With Flowers from the Roman Wall

Take these flowers which, purple waving,
On the ruin'd rampart grew,
Where, the sons of freedom braving,
Rome's imperial standards flew.

Warriors from the breach of danger
Pluck no longer laurels there;
They but yield the passing stranger
Wild-flower wreaths for Beauty's hair.

Sir Walter Scott

Why does this poem seem trite and overdone in the present age?
Which techniques have been done and done to death?

A Poison Tree

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright;
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole
When the night had veil'd the pole:
In the morning glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

The Sick Rose

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm,
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,

Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

William Blake

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The Tiger

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

William Blake

The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And `Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore;

And I saw it was filléd with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be;
And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

William Blake

Stanzas to the Po

River, that rollest by the ancient walls,
Where dwells the Lady of my love, when she
Walks by thy brink, and there perchance recalls
A faint and fleeting memory of me;

What if thy deep and ample stream should be
A mirror of my heart, where she may read
The thousand thoughts I now betray to thee,
Wild as thy wave, and headlong as thy speed!

What do I say--a mirror of my heart?
Are not thy waters sweeping, dark, and strong?
Such as my feelings were and are, thou art;
And such as thou art were my passions long.

Time may have somewhat tamed them--not forever;
Thou overflow'st thy banks, and not for aye
Thy bosom overboils, congenial river!
Thy floods subside, and mine have sunk away--

But left long wrecks behind: and now again,
Borne in our old unchanged career, we move:
Thou tendest wildly onwards to the main.
And I--to loving *one* I should not love.

The current I behold will sweep beneath
Her native walls, and murmur at her feet;
Her eyes will look on thee, when she shall breathe
The twilight air, unharmed by summer's heat.

She will look on thee--I have looked on thee,
Full of that thought; and, from that moment, ne'er
Thy waters could I dream of, name, or see,
Without the inseparable sigh for her!

Her bright eyes will be imaged in thy stream--
Yes! they will meet the wave I gaze on now:
Mine cannot witness, even in a dream,
That happy wave repass me in its flow!

The wave that bears my tears returns no more:
  Will she return by whom that wave shall sweep?
Both tread thy banks, both wander on thy shore,
  I by thy source, she by the dark-blue deep.

But that which keepeth us apart is not
  Distance, nor depth of wave, nor space of earth,
But the distraction of a various lot,
  As various as the climates of our birth.

A stranger loves the Lady of the land,
  Born far beyond the mountains, but his blood
Is all meridian, as if never fanned
  By the black wind that chills the polar flood.

My blood is all meridian; were it not,
  I had not left my clime, nor should I be,
In spite of tortures, ne'er to be forgot,
  A slave again of love--at least of thee.

'Tis vain to struggle--let me perish young--
  Live as I lived, and love as I have loved;
To dust if I return, from dust I sprung,
  And then, at least, my heart can ne'er be moved.

George Gordon, Lord Byron

Do you see an example of metonymy in the final stanza?
Scan the meter of the poem and comment on its effectiveness.
Find a trite metaphor and an hyperbole in the second stanza.
Explain the extended metaphor. Is it apt?

Love's Philosophy

I

The fountains mingle with the river
  And the rivers with the Ocean,
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
  With a sweet emotion'
Nothing in the world is single;
  All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle.
  Why not I with thine?--

II

See the mountains kiss high Heaven
  And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
  If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
  And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
  If thou kiss not me?

Shelly

Give an example of trite language. Rinky-dink rhyme? Sentimentality.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

I

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
  Rode the six hundred.
‘Forward the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!’ he said.
  Rode the six hundred.

II

‘Forward, the Light Brigade!’
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
  Some one had blunder’d.
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
  Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
  Volley’d and thunder’d;
Storm’d at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
  Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flash'd all their sabres bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
  All the world wonder'd.
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the sabre-stroke
  Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not,
  Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them
  Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro' the jaws of Death,
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them,
  Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made.
  All the world wonder'd.
Honor the charge they made!
Honor the Light Brigade,
  Noble six hundred!

Tennyson

In the poems above and below, give examples of prosaic language? Contrived rhymes?

The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

The tide rises, the tide falls,
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;
Along the sea-sands damp and brown

The traveler hastens toward the town,
  And the tide rises, the tide falls.

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

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

Longfellow

My Lost Youth

Often I think of the beautiful town
That is seated by the sea,
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.
And a verse of a Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the shadowy lines of its trees,
And catch, in sudden gleams,
The sheen of the far-surrounding seas,
And islands that were the Hesperides
Of all my boyish dreams.
And the burden of that old song,
It murmurs and whispers still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long, thoughts."

I remember the bulwarks by the shore,
And the fort upon the hill;
The sunrise gun, with its hollow roar,
The drum-beat repeated o'er and o'er,
And the bugle wild and shrill.
And the music of that old song
Throbs in my memory still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
and the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the sea-fight far away,

How it thundered o'er the tide!
And the dead captains, as they lay
In their graves, o'erlooking the tranquil bay
Where they in battle died.
And the sound of that mournful song
Goes through me with a thrill:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I can see the breezy dome of graves,
  The shadows of Deering's Woods;
And the friendships old and the early loves
Come back with a Sabbath sound, as of doves
  In quiet neighborhoods.
    And the verse of that sweet old song,
    It flutters and murmurs still:
    "A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the school-boy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
And bring a pallor into the cheek,
And a mist before the eye.
And the words of that fatal song
Come over me like a chill:
“A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

Strange to me now are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."

And Deering's woods are fresh and fair,

And with joy that is almost pain
My heart goes back to wander there,
And among the dreams of the days that were,
I find my lost youth again.
And the strange and beautiful song,
The groves are repeating it still:
"A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thought."

Longfellow

Seaweed

When descends on the Atlantic
The gigantic
Storm-wind of the equinox,
Landward in his wrath he scourges
The toiling surges,
Laden with seaweed from the rocks:

From Bermuda's reefs; from edges
Of sunken ledges,
In some far-off, bright Azore;
From Bahama, and the dashing,
Silver-flashing
Surges of San Salvador;

From the tumbling surf, that buries
The Orkneyan skerries,
Answering the hoarse Hebrides;
And from wrecks of ships, and drifting
Spars, uplifting
On the desolate, rainy seas;--

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless main;
Till in sheltered coves, and reaches
Of sandy beaches,
All have found repose again.

So when storms of wild emotion
Strike the ocean
Of the poet's soul, erelong
From the far-off isles enchanted,
Heaven has planted
With the golden fruit of Truth;
From the flashing surf, whose vision
Gleams Elysian
In the tropic clime of Youth;

From the strong Will, and the Endeavor
That forever
Wrestle with the tides of Fate;
From the wreck of Hopes far-scattered,
Tempest-shattered,
Floating waste and desolate;--

Ever drifting, drifting, drifting
On the shifting
Currents of the restless heart;
Till at length in looks recorded,
They, like hoarded
Household words, no more depart.

Longfellow

From Sonnets from the Portuguese, 43.

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 every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to loose
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.

Eliz. Barret Browning

What is the best figurative comparison in the above poem? What is the worst? Is it an Italian or a Shakespearean sonnet? Find an example of a run-on line.

The Woodspurge

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill:
I had walked on at the wind's will,--
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,--
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,--
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

Bridal Birth

As when desire, long darling, dawns, and first
  The mother looks upon the newborn child,
  Even so my Lady stood at gaze and smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it nursed.
Born with her life, creature of poignant thirst
  And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love lay
  Quickening in darkness, till a voice that day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were burst.

Now, shielded in his wings, our faces yearn
  Together, as his full grown feet now range
  The grove, and his warm hands our couch prepare:
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
  Be born his children, when Death's nuptial change
    Leaves us for light the halo of his hair.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

How would you evaluate the quality of the above two poems?

Genius in Beauty

Beauty like hers is genius. Not the call
  Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,--
  Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time,--
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
  More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeaths
  Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,
  But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
  Even through all change the indomitable song;
So in likewise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
  Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,--
  The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
  Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
  Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
  Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:--
  So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
  When twofold silence was the song of love.

Dante Gabriel Rossetti

Uphill

Does the road wind uphill all the way?
  Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
  From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting place?
  A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
  You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
  Those who have gone before
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
  They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
  Of labor you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
  Yea, beds for all who come.

A Birthday

My heart is like a singing bird
  Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple tree
  Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
  That paddles in a halcyon sea;

My heart is gladder than all these
  Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
  Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
  And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
  In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
  Is come, my love is come to me.

Christina Rossetti

The First Day

I wish I could remember the first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me;
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or winter for aught I can say.
So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and to foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May

If only I could recollect it! Such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow.
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much!
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand! - Did one but know!

Christina Rossetti

Critique the diction, connotation.
sound and sense.
rhyme and meter.
Does the poem scan easily?
Where do the meters stumble?
What kind of sonnet is it?
Does the music enhance the mood?
Does the idea get lost in the words?

Abou Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,

An angel writing in a book of gold:--
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the presence in the room he said,
`What writest thou?' -- the vision raised its head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answered, `The names of those who love the Lord.'
`And is mine one?' said Abou. `Nay, not so,'
Replied the angel. Abou spake more low,
But cheerly still; and said, `I pray thee then,
Write me as one that loves his fellow-men.'

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

Leigh Hunt

How do you like the rhymes in this poem?

Say not the struggle nought availeth

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
  The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
  And as things have been things remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
  It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
  And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
  Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
  Came silent, flooding in, the main,

And not by eastern windows only,
  When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
  But westward, look, the land is bright!

Arthur Hugh Clough

What is the context of the poem? Who is the speaker?
What is the problem? Who is the protagonist?
What happened? How long does it take you to get "into the picture?"

The Darkling Thrush

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

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

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

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

In Tenbris

I

"*Percussus sum sicut foenum, et aruit cor meum.*"
--Ps. ci.

Wintertime nighs;
But my bereavement-pain
It cannot bring again:
Twice no one dies.

Flower-petals flee;
But, since it once hath been,
No more that severing scene
Can harrow me.

Birds faint in dread:
I shall not lose old strength
In the lone frost's black length:
Strength long since fled!

Leaves freeze to dun;
But friends can not turn cold
This season as of old
For him with none.

Tempests may scath;
But love can not make smart
Again this year his heart
Who no heart hath.

Black is night's cope;
But death will not appal
One who, past doubtings all,
Waits in unhope.

Thomas Hardy

Which of these two above poems by Thomas Hardy keeps your attention better?

Which one do you like better?

What are the main faults of the one you like best?

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Down by the Sally Gardens

Down by the salley gardens my love and I did meet;
She passed the salley gardens with little snow-white feet.
She bid me take love easy, as the leaves grow on the tree;
But I, being young and foolish, with her would not agree.

In a field by the river my love and I did stand,
And on my leaning shoulder she laid her snow-white hand.
She bid me take life easy, as the grass grows on the weirs;

But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears.

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.

Yeats

Why would a master craftsman like Yeats use conventional forms and images?
What is he trying to achieve in the first poem? Does the technique fit the theme?
In the second poem, show examples of how he makes effective use of sound to enhance effect.
Explain how the meter enhances the feeling he wants to convey. What are “glowing bars?”
Find a place where the meter stumbles.

Loveliest of Trees

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

A. E. Housman

Does everyday vernacular detract from the quality of the poem? Why or Why not?

Do you find the rhymes of stanza two "catchy" or contrived?

Do you find any of the words redundant or is the poem compact and comprehensive?

Words

A sentence uttered makes a world appear
Where all things happen as it says they do;
We doubt the speaker, not the tongue we hear:
Words have no word for words that are not true.

Syntactically, though, it must be clear;
One cannot change the subject halfway through,
Nor alter tenses to appease the ear:
Arcadian tales are hard-luck stories too.

But should we want to gossip all the time
Were fact not fiction for us at its best,
Or find a charm in syllables that rhyme,

Were not our fate by verbal chance expressed,
As rustics in a ring-dance pantomime
The Knight at some lone crossroads of his quest?

W.H. Auden

Do the prosaic words of the above poem get in the way of the message?

Musee des Beaux Arts

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters: how well they understood

Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

W. H. Auden

Their Lonley Betters

As I listened from a beach-chair in the shade
To all the noises that my garden made,
It seemed to me only proper that words
Should be withheld from vegetables and birds.

A robin with no Christian name ran through
The Robin-Anthem which was all it knew,
And rustling flowers for some third party waited
To say which pairs, if any, should get mated.

Not one of them was capable of lying,
There was not one which knew that it was dying
Or could have with a rhythm or a thyme
Assumed responsibility for time.

Let them leave language to their lonely betters
Who count some days and long for certain letters;
We, too, make noises when we laugh or weep,
Words are for those with promises to keep.

W. H. Auden

Which of these two poems by Auden do you like better? Why?
Read the one that follows and argue which of these three is the best.

The Shield of Achilles

She looked over his shoulder
For vines and olive trees,
Marble well-governed cities,
And ships upon untamed seas,
But there on the shining metal
His hands had put instead
And artificial wilderness
And a sky like lead.

A plain without a feature, bare and brown,
  No blade of grass, no sign of neighborhood,
Nothing to eat and nowhere to sit down,
  Yet, congregated on its blankness, stood
  An unintelligible multitude.
A million eyes, a million boots in line,
Without expression, waiting for a sign.

Out of the air a voice without a face
  Proved by statistics that some cause was just
In tones as dry and level as the place:
  No one was cheered and nothing was discussed;
  Column by column in a cloud of dust
They marched away enduring a belief
Whose logic brought them, somewhere else, to grief.

She looked over his shoulder
For ritual pieties,
White flower-garlanded heifers,
Libation and sacrifice,
But there on the shining metal
Where the altar should have been,
She saw by his flickering forge-light
Quite another scene.

Barbed wire enclosed an arbitrary spot
  Where bored officials lounged (one cracked a joke)
And sentries sweated, for the day was hot:
  A crowd of ordinary decent folk
  Watched from without and neither moved nor spoke
As three pale figures were led forth and bound
To three posts driven upright in the ground.

The mass and majesty of this world, all
  That carries weight and always weighs the same,
Lay in the hands of others; they were small
  And could not hope for help and no help came:
  What their foes like to do was done, their shame

Was all the worst could wish; they lost their pride
And died as men before their bodies died.

She looked over his shoulder
  For athletes at their games
Men and women in a dance
  Moving their sweet limbs
Quick, quick, to music,
  But there on the shining shield
His hands had set no dancing-floor
  But a weed-choked field.

A ragged urchin, aimless and alone,
  Loitered about the vacancy; a bird
Flew up to safety from his well-aimed stone:
  That girls are raped, that two boys knife a third,
  Were axioms to him, who'd never heard
Of any world where promises were kept
Or one could weep because another wept.

The thin-lipped armourer,
  Hephaestos, hobbled away;
Thetis of the shining breasts
  Cried out in dismay
At what the god had wrought
  To please her son, the strong
Iron-hearted man-slaying Achilles
  Who would not live long.

W. H. Auden

Arms and the Boy

Let the boy try along this bayonet-blade
How cold steel is, and keen with hunger of blood;
Blue with all malice, like a madman's flash;
And thinly drawn with famishing for flesh.

Lend him to stroke these blind, blunt Bullet-heads
Which long to nuzzle in the hearts of lads,
Or give him cartridges of fine zinc teeth,
Sharp with the sharpness of grief and death.

For his teeth seem for laughing round an apple.
There lurk no claws behind his fingers supple;
And God will grow no talons at his heels,
Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls.

Greater Love

Red lips are not so red
  As the stained stones kissed by the English dead.
Kindness of wooed and wooer
Seems shame to their love pure.
O Love, your eyes lose lure
  When I behold eyes blinded in my stead!

Your slender attitude
  Trembles not exquisite like limbs knife-skewed,
Rolling and rolling there
Where God seems not to care;
Till the fierce Love they bear
  Cramps them in death's extreme decrepitude.

Your voice sings not so soft,--
  Though even as wind murmuring through raftered loft,--
Your dear voice is not dear,
Gentle, and evening clear,
As their whom none now hear,
  Now earth has stopped their piteous mouths that coughed.

Heart, you were never hot,
  Nor large, nor full like hearts made great with shot;
And though your hand be pale,
Paler are all which trail
Your cross through flame and hail:
  Weep, you may weep, for you may touch them not.

Wilfred Owen

Which poem has the stronger, more compact, effective images? Give examples and explain.

The landscape near an Aerodrome
More beautiful and soft than any moth
With burring furred antennae feeling its huge path
Through dusk, the air liner with shut-off engines
Glides over suburbs and the sleeves set trailing tall
To point the wind. Gently, broadly, she falls,
Scarcely disturbing charted currents of air.

Lulled by descent, the travelers across sea
And across feminine land indulging its easy limbs
In miles of softness, now let their eyes trained by watching
Penetrate through dusk the outskirts of this town
Here where industry shows a fraying edge.
Here they may see what is being done.

Beyond the winking masthead light

And the landing ground, they observe the outposts
Of work: chimneys like lank black fingers
Or figures, frightening and mad: and squat buildings
With their strange air behind trees, like women's faces
Shattered by grief. Here where few houses
Moan with faint light behind their blinds,
They remark the unhomely sense of complaint, like a dog
Shut out, and shivering at the foreign moon.

In the last sweep of love, they pass over fields
Behind the aerodrome, where boys play all day
Hacking dead grass: whose cries, like wild birds,
Settle upon the nearest roofs
But soon are hid under the loud city.
Then, as they land, they hear the tolling bell
Reaching across the landscape of hysteria,
To where, larger than all those batteries
And charcoaled towers against that dying sky,
Religion stands, the Church blocking the sun.

Stephen Spender

Critique this poem by pin-pointing its good points and its bad points.

Brahma

If the red slayer think he slays,
  Or if the slain think he is slain,
They know not well the subtle ways
  I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;
  Shadow and sunlight are the same;
The vanished gods to me appear;
  And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;
  When me they fly, I am the wings;
I am the doubter and the doubt,
  And I the hymn the Brahmin signs.

The strong gods pine for my abode,
  And pine in vain the sacred Seven,
But thou, meek over of the good!
  Find me, and turn thy back on heaven

Days

Daughters of Time, the hypocritic Days,
Muffled and dumb like barefoot dervishes,
And marching single in an endless file,

Bring diadems and fagots in their hands.
To each they offer gifts after his will,
Bread, kingdoms, stars, and sky that holds them all.
I, in my pleached garden, watched the pomp,
Forgot my morning wishes, hastily
Took a few herbs and apples, and the Day
Turned and departed silent. I, too late,
Under her solemn fillet saw the scorn.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

It has been said of Emerson's poetry that the "idea" gets lost in the language.
How do you like his rhymes in "Brahma".
How does he handle rhyme in "Days"?
Does he reach the present-day audience?

The Maldive Shark

About the Shark, phlegmatical one,
Pale sot of the Maldive sea,
The sleek little pilot-fish, azure and slim,
How alert in attendance be.
From his saw-pit of mouth, from his charnel of maw
They have nothing of harm to dread;
But liquidly glide on his ghastly flank
Or before his Gorgonian head:
Or lurk in the port of serrated teeth
In white triple tiers of glittering gates,
And there find a haven when peril's abroad,
An asylum in jaws of the Fates!
They are friends; and friendly they guide him to prey,
yet never partake of the treat--
Eyes and brains to the dotard lethargic and dull,
Pale ravener of horrible meat.

Monody

To have known him, to have loved him
  After loneness long;
And then to be estranged in life,
  And neither in the wrong;
And now for death to set his seal--
  Ease me, a little ease, my song!

By wintry hills his hermit-mound
  The sheeted snow-drifts drape,
And houseless there the snow-bird fits

Beneath the fir-trees' crape:
Glazed now with ice the cloistral vine
That hid the shyest grape.

Herman Melville

Which of Melville's above poems uses more effective imagery? Where and why?

Should Melville have stuck to writing prose or do you think he was a successful poet?

Select some clear, effective sense images.

Find a couple of vague, indeterminate figurative images.

Alone

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were--I have not seen
As other saw--I could not bring
My passions from a common spring--
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow--I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone--
And all I loved--*I* loved alone.
Then--in my childhood-in the dawn
Of a most stormy life--was drawn
From ev'ry depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still--
From the torrent, or the fountain--
From the red cliff of the mountain--
From the sun that round me rolled
In its autumn tint of gold--
From the lightning in the sky
As it passed me flying by--
From the thunder, and the storm--
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view.

Edgar Allan Poe

Does the intensity of the emotion make up for the contrived rhymes?
Is the poem successful in spite of the over-used conventions?

Dreamland

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an eidolon, named Night,

On a black throne reigns upright,
I have reached these lands but newly
From an ultimate dim Thule--
From a wild weird clime that lieth, sublime,
Out of space--out of time.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
For the tears that drip all over;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore;
Seas that restlessly aspire;
Surging, unto skies of fire;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,--
Their still waters, still and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily.

By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters, lone and dead,--
Their sad waters, sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily,--
By the mountains--near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever,--
By the gray woods,--by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp,--
By the dismal tarns and pools
Where dwell the ghouls,--
By each spot the most unholy--
In each nook most melancholy,--
There the traveler meets, aghast,
Sheeted memories of the past--
Shrouded forms that start and sigh
As they pass the wanderer by--
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the earth--and heaven.

For the heart whose woes are legion
'Tis a peaceful, soothing region--
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'Tis--oh, 'tis an Eldorado!
But the traveler, traveling through it,
May not--dare not openly view it;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed;
So wills its king, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid;
And thus the sad soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an eidolon, named Night,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.

Edgar Allan Poe

What is the meter of the poem?
Does it stumble in places? Where?
Does the meter enhance the sense of the poem?

The Lake To---

In spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide world a spot
The which I could not love the less--
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that towered around.

But when the night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody,
Then--ah, then--I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.

Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight--
A feeling not the jeweled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define--
Nor love--although the love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining,
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.

Edgar Allan Poe

Does Poe adhere to his philosophy of composition in this poem?
Do you find the rhymes contrived or do the fit the mood of the poetry/
Scan the poem to see how the meter works. Does it work better in some stanzas than in others?
Find examples of archaism. To whom is the poet speaking? Why does he need solace?
Locate some examples of romantic imagery?

J. 986

A narrow Fellow in the Grass
Occasionally rides--
You may have met Him--did you not

His notice sudden is--

The Grass divides as with a Comb--
A spotted shaft is seen--
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on--

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn--
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot--
I more than once at Noon
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone--

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me--
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality--

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone--

J. 1052

I never saw a Moor--
I never saw the Sea--
Yet know I how the Heather looks
And what a Billow be.

I never spoke with God
Nor visited in Heaven--
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the Checks were given--

Emily Dickenson

J. 285

The Robin's my Criterion for Time--
Because I grow--where Robins do--
But, where I Cuckoo born--
I'd swear by him--
The ode familiar--rules the Noon--
The Buttercup's, my Whim for Bloom--
Because, we're Orchard sprung--
But, were I Britain born,

I'd Daisies spurn--
None but the Nut--October fit--
Because, through dropping it,
The Seasons flit--I'm taught--
Without the Snow's Tableau
Winter, were lie--to me--
Because I see--New Englandly--
The Queen, discerns like me--
Provincially--

J. 1082

Revolution is the Pod
Systems rattle from
When the Winds of Will are stirred
Excellent is Bloom

But except its Russet Base
Every Summer be
The Entomber of itself,
So of Liberty--

Left inactive on the Stalk
All its Purple fled
Revolution shakes it for
Test if it be dead.

Emily Dickenson

Find a rhyme that doesn't work.
Find a place where the meter drags.
Which of these poems above is the best? Why?

Women

Women have no wilderness in them,
They are provident instead,
Content in the tight hot cell of their hearts
To eat dusty bread.

They do not see cattle cropping red winter grass,
They do not hear
Snow water going down under culverts
Shallow and clear.

They wait, when they should turn to journeys,
They stiffen, when they should bend.
They use against themselves that benevolence
To which no man is friend.

They cannot think of so many crops to a field
Or of clean wood cleft by an axe.
Their love is an eager meaninglessness
Too tense, or too lax.

They hear in every whisper that speaks to them
A shout and a cry.
As like as not, when they take life over their door-sills
They should let it go by.

Louise Bogan

What is the poet's attitude towards her material?
What is the rhyme and meter of the poem?
Does it have a regular pattern?
Do you like the rhymes?
What effect do they have on the totality of the poem?
Locate some good sense imagery. Figurative imagery?

The Genius

Waked by the pale pink
Intimation to the eastward,
Cock, the prey of every beast,
Takes breath upon the hen-house rafter,
And shrieks in brazen obscene burst
On burst of uncontrollable derisive laughter:
Cock has seen the sun! He first! He first!

Archibald MacLeish

Reasons for Music:For Wallace Stevens

Why do we labor at the poem
Age after Age--even an age like
This one, when the living rock
No longer lives and the cut stone perishes?--

Hölderlin's question. Why be poet
Now when the meanings do not mean?--
When the stone shape is shaped stone?--
Dürftiger Zeit?--time without inwardness?

Why lie upon our beds at night
Holding a mouthful of words, exhausted
Most by the absence of the adversary?

Why be a poet? Why be man!

Far out in the uttermost Andes
Mortised enormous stones are piled.
What is man? Who founds a poem
In the rubble of wild world--wilderness.

The acropolis of eternity that crumbles
Time and again is mine--my task
The heart's necessity compels me:
Man I am: poet must be.

The labor of order has not rest:
To impose on the confused, fortuitous
Flowing away of the world, Form--
Still, cool, clean, obdurate,

Lasting forever, or at least
Lasting: a precarious monument
Promising immortality, for the wing
Moves and in the moving balances.

Why do we labor at the poem?
Out of the turbulence of the sea,
Flower by brittle flower, rises
The coral reef that calms the water.

Generations of the dying
Fix the sea's dissolving salts
In stone, still trees, their branches immovable,
Meaning the movement of the sea.

Archibald MacLeish

Should MacLeish have written an essay instead of a poem?
Compare this to Steven's "Peter Quince at the Klavier" and tell which poem is more musical.

Poem in Prose

This poem is for my wife.
I have made it plainly and honestly:
The mark is on it
Like the burl on the knife.

I have not made it for praise.
She has no more need for praise
Than summer has
Or the bright days.

In all that becomes a woman
Her words and her ways are beautiful:
Love's lovely duty,
The well-swept room.

Wherever she is there is sun
And time and a sweet air:
peace is there,
Work done.
There are always curtains and flowers
And candles and baked bread
And a cloth spread
And a clean house.

Her voice when she sings is a voice
At dawn by a freshening sea
Where the wave leaps in the
Wind and rejoices.

Wherever she is it is now.
It is here where the apples are:
Here in the stars,

In the quick hour.

The greatest and richest good,
My own life to live in,
This she has given me--
If giver could.

Archibald MacLeish

Compare this to "Ars Poetica" by MacLeish and explain which one is the better poem. Look particularly at the images.Is this one of the poet's better works? Should he have shared it with the general public?

I Knew a Woman

I knew a woman, lovely in her bones,
When small birds sighed, she would sigh back at them;
Ah, when she moved, she moved more ways than one:
The shapes a bright container can contain!
Or her choice virtues only gods should speak,
Or English poets who grew up on Greek
(I'd have them sing in chorus, cheek to cheek).

How well her wishes went! She stroked my chin,
She taught me Turn, and Counter-turn, and Stand;
She taught me Touch, that undulant white skin;
I nibbled meekly from her proffered hand;
She was the sickle; I, poor I, the rake,
Coming behind her for her pretty sake
(But what prodigious mowing we did make).

Love like a gander, and adores a goose:
Her full lips pursed, the errant note to seize;
She played it quick, she played it light and loose;
My eyes, they dazzler at her flowing knees;
Her several parts could keep a pure repose,
Or one hip quiver with a mobile nose
(She moved in circles, and those circles moved).

Let seed be grass, and grass turn into hay:
I'm martyr to a motion not my own;
What's freedom for? To know eternity.
I swear she cast a shadow white as stone.
But who would count eternity in days?
These old bones live to learn her wanton ways:
(I measure time by how a body sways).

Theodore Roethke

Critique the above poem. Pick out the 5 best images and the 5 worst images.

Epilogue

Those blessed structures, plot and rhyme--
why are they no help to me now
I want to make
something imagined, not recalled?
I hear the noise of my own voice:
The painter's vision is not a lens,
it trembles to caress the light.
But sometimes everything I write
with the threadbare art of my eye
seems a snapshot,
lurid, rapid, garish, grouped,
heightened from life,
yet paralyzed by fact.
All's misalliance.
Yet why not say what happened?
Pray for the grace of accuracy
Vermeer gave to the sun's illumination
stealing like the tide across a map
to his girl solid with yearning.
We are poor passing facts,
warned by that to give
each figure in the photograph
his living name.

Robert Lowell

Is this poetic prose or prosaic poetry?

Her Eyes

To a woman that I knew
Were eyes of an extravagant hue:
Viz., china blue.

Those I wear upon my head
Are sometimes green and sometimes red,
I said.

My mother's eyes are wet and blear,
My little sister's are not clear,
Poor silly dear.

It must be given to but few,
A pair of eyes so utter blue
And new;

Where does she keep them from this glare
Of the monstrous sun and the wind's flare
Without any wear;

And were they never in the night
Poisoned by artificial light
Much too bright;

And had the splendid beast no heart
That boiled with tears and baked with smart
The ocular part?

I'll have no business with those eyes,
They are not kind, they are not wise,
They are two great lies.

A woman shooting such blue flame
I apprehend will get some blame
On her good name.

John Crowe Ransom

Pick out 5 effective sense images.

Pick out 5 figurative images.

Why does the poem end with a strong sense image?

Blow, West Wind

I know, I know--though the evidence
Is lost, and the last who might speak are dead.
Blow, west wind, blow, and the evidence, O,

Is lost, and wind shakes the cedar, and O,
I know how the kestrel hung over Wyoming,
Breast reddened in sunset, and O, the cedar

Shakes, and I know how cold
Was the sweat on my father's mouth, dead.
Blow, west wind, blow, shake the cedar, I know

How once I, a boy, crouching at creekside,
Watched, in the sunlight, a handful of water
Drip, drip, from my hand. The drops--they were bright!

But you believe nothing, with the evidence lost.

Robert Penn Warren

Scan this poem and figure out the meter.

Is it irregular? Is it effective?

Does it depend too much on simple internal rhymes?

Why the irregular stanza form? Is this a stunted sonnet?

Does the point come through effectively in the last line?

A Death Song

Lay me down beneaf de willer sin de grass,
Whah de branch'll go a-singin' as it pass.
  An' w'en I's a-layin' low,
  I kin hyeah it as it go
Singin', "Sleep, my honey, tek yo' res' at las'."

Lay me nigh to whah hit meks a little pool,
An' de watah stan's so quiet lak an' cool,
  Whah de little birds in spring,
  Ust to come an' drink an' sing,
An' de chillen waded on dey way to school.

Let me settle w'en my shouldahs draps dey load
Nigh enough to hyeah de noises in de road:
  Fu' I t'ink de las' long res'
  gwine to soothe my sperrit bes'
Ef I's layin' 'mong de t'ings I's allus knowed.

Life's Tragedy

It may be misery not to sing at all
  And to go silent through the brimming day.
It may be sorrow never to be loved,
  But deeper griefs than these beset the way.

To have come near to sing the perfect song
  And only by half-tone lost the key,
There is the potent sorrow, there the grief,
  The pale, sad staring of life's tragedy.

To have just missed the perfect love,
  Not the hot passion of untempered youth,
But that which lays aside its vanity
  And gives thee, for thy trusting worship, truth--

This, this it is to be accursed indeed;
  For if we mortals love, or if we sing,
We count our joys not by the things we have,
  But by what kept us from the perfect thing.

Paul Laurence Dunbar

Who is the speaker in the first poem?
Do you understand his English?
Which of the two above poems do you prefer? Why?
What's wrong with the language of the 2nd poem?
Which poem best adheres to literary conventions?

Is this good?
What's good about straying from convention?

Sadie and Maude

Maud went to college
Sadie stayed at home
Sadie scraped life
With a fine-toothed comb.

She didn't leave a tangle in.
Her comb found every strand.
Sadie was one of the livingest chits
In all the land.

Sadie bore two babies
Under her maiden name.
Maud and Ma and Papa
Nearly died of shame.

When Sadie said her last so-long
Her girls struck out from home.
(Sadie had left as heritage
Her fine-tooth comb.)

Maud, who went to college,
Is a thin brown mouse.
She is living all alone
In this old house.

Gwendolyn Brooks

Explain how the figurative images is lines 3, 4, 5 and 6 convey multitudes of information.
Does the nursery thyme style enhance or detract from the final meaning of the poem?

Recuerdo

We were very tired, we were very merry--
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable--
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
We lay on a hilltop underneath the moon;
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry--
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
We hailed, "Good morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered head,
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;
And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Contrived rhymes? Does the meter work? Does the poem succeed in its intended effect?

Trees

I am looking at trees
they may be one of the things I will miss
most from the earth
though many of the ones that I have seen
already I cannot remember
and though I seldom embrace the ones I see
and have never been able to speak
with one
I listen to them tenderly
their names have never touched them
they have stood round my sleep
and when it was forbidden to climb them
they have carried me in their branches

W. S. Merwin

Is this a good poem? How do you like the language? the imagery? the meters?

The Sanctuary

Over a ground of slate and light gravel
Clear water, so shallow that one can see

The numerous springs moving their mouths of sand;
And the dark trout are clearly to be seen,
Swimming this water which is color of air
So that the fish appear suspended nowhere and
In nothing. With a delicate bend and reflex
Of their tails the trout slowly glide
From the shadowy side into the light, so clear,
And back again into the shadows; slow
And so definite, like thought emerging
Into a clear place in the mind, then going back,
Exchanging shape for shade. Now and again
One fish slides into the center of the pool
And hangs between the surface and the slate
For several minutes without moving, like
A silence in a dream; and when I stand
At such a time, observing this, my life
Seems to have been suddenly moved a great
Distance away on every side, as though
The quietest thought of all stood in the pale
Watery light alone, and was no more
My own than the speckled trout I stare upon
All but unseeing. Even at such times
The mind goes on transposing and revising
The elements of its long allegory
In which the anagoge is always death;
And while this vision blurs with empty tears,
I visit, in the cold pool of the skull,
A sanctuary where the slender trout
Feed on my drowned eyes....Until this trout
Pokes through the fabric of the surface to
Snap up a fly. As is a man's own eyes
Raised welts upon the mirror whence they stared,
I find this world again in focus, and
This fish, a shadow dammed in artifice,
Swims to the furthest shadows out of sight
Though not, in time's ruining stream, out of mind.

Howard Nemerov

The Vacuum

The house is so quiet now
The vacuum cleaner sulks in the corner closet,
Its bag limp as a stopped lung, its mouth
Grinning into the floor, maybe at my
Slovenly life, my dog-dead youth.

I've lived this way long enough,
But when my old woman died her soul
Went into that vacuum cleaner, and I can't bear
To see the bag swell like a belly, eating the dust
And the woolen mice, and begin to howl

Because there is old filth everywhere
She used to crawl, in the corner and under the stair.
I know now how life is cheap as dirt,
And still the hungry, angry heart
Hangs on and howls, biting at air.

Howard Nemerov

Which one do you like better? Why?

Motto

I play it cool
And dig all jive
That's the reason
I stay alive.

My motto,
As I live and learn,
is:
Dig And Be Dug
In Return.

Green Memory

A wonderful time--the War:
when money rolled in
and blood rolled out.

But blood
was far away
from here--

Money was near.

Harlem

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore--
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over--
like syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Langston Hughes

Which of the above three poems is the best? The worst? Why?

An Agony. As Now.

I am inside someone
who hates me. I look
out from his eyes. Smell
what fouled tunes come in
to his breath. Love his
wretched women.

Slits in the metal, for sun. Where
my eyes sit turning, at the cool air
the glance of light, or hard flesh
rubbed against me, a woman, a man,
without shadow, or voice, or meaning.

This is the enclosure (flesh,
where innocence is a weapon.) An
abstraction. Touch. (Not mine.
Or yours, if you are the soul I had
and abandoned when I was blind and had
my enemies carry me as a dead man

(if he is beautiful, or pitied.)

It can be pain. (As now, as all his
flesh hurts me.) It can be that. Or
pain. As when she ran from me into
that forest.
Or pain, the mind
silver spiraled whirled against the
sun, higher than even old men thought
God would be. or pain. And the other. The
yes. (Inside his books, his fingers. They
are withered yellow flowers and were never
beautiful.) The yes. You will, lost soul, say
`beauty.' Beauty, practiced, as the tree. The
slow river. A white sun in its wet sentences.

Or, the cold men in their gale. Ecstasy. Flesh
or soul. The yes. (Their robes blown. Their bowls
empty. They chant at my heels, not at yours.) Flesh
or soul, as corrupt. Where the answer moves too quickly.
Where the God is a self, after all.)

Imamu Amiri Baraka (Le Roi Jones)

What do you like most about this poem?
What do you like least?

A Glass of Beer

The lanky hank of a she in the inn over there
Nearly killed me for asking the loan of a glass of beer;
May the devil grip the whey-faced slut by the hair,
And beat bad manners out of her skin for a year.

That parboiled ape, with the toughest jaw you will see
On virtue's path, and a voice that would rasp the dead,
Came roaring and raging the minute she looked at me,
And threw me out of the house on the back of my head?

If I asked her master he'd give me a cask a day:
But she, with the beer at hand, not a gill would arrange!
May she marry a ghost and bear him a kitten, and may
The High King of Glory permit her to get the mange.

James Stephens

Internal rhyme?
Hyperbole?

Alliteration?
Understatement?
Two good metaphors?
Meter?
Why are tetrameter quatrains appropriate?
Irony?
Is this poem good or not so good?
What number would you give it on a scale of 10?

The Shell

And then I pressed the shell
Close to my ear
And listened well,
And straightway like a bell
Came low and clear
The slow, sad murmur of the distant seas,
Whipped by an icy breeze
Upon a shore
Wind-swept and desolate.
It was a sunless strand that never bore
The footprint of a man,
Nor felt the weight
Since time began
Of any human quality or stir
Save what the dreary winds and waves incur.
And in the hush of waters was the sound
Of pebbles rolling round,
Forever rolling with a hollow sound.
And bubbling sea-weeds as the waters go,
Swish to and fro
Their long, cold tentacles of slimy gray.
There was no day,
Nor ever came a night
Setting the stars alight
To wonder at the moon:
Was twilight only and the frightened croon,
Smitten to whimpers, of the dreary wind
And waves that journeyed blind--
And then I loosed my ear...O, it was sweet
To hear a cart go jolting down the street.

James Stephens

Evaluate the quality of this poem.

The Unknown Citizen

(To JS/07/M/378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.
Except for the War till the day he retired
He worked in a factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And has everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into Public Opinion are content
That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.
He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

W. H. Auden

Explain how the poem illustrates understatement? allusion? irony?
What is a "scab," a "Eugenist?"

Departmental

An ant on the tablecloth
Ran into a dormant moth
Of many times his size.
He showed not the least surprise.
His business wasn't with such.
He gave it scarcely a touch,
And was off on his duty run.
Yet if he encountered one
Of the hive's enquiry squad
Whose work is to find out God
And the nature of time and space,

He would put him onto the case.
Ants are a curious race;
One crossing with hurried tread
The body of one of their dead
Isn't given a moment's arrest--
Seems not even impressed.
But he no doubt reports to any
With whom he crosses antennae,
And they no doubt report
To the higher up at court
Then word goes forth in Formic:
"Death's come to Jerry Macormic,
Our selfless Forager Jerry.
Will the special Janizary
Whose office it is to bury
The dead of the commissary
Go bring him home to his people.
Lay him in state on a sepal.
Wrap him for shroud in a petal.
Embalm him with ichor of nettle.
This is the word of your Queen."
And presently on the scene
Appears a solemn mortician;
And taking formal position
With feelers calmly atwiddle,
Seizes the dead by the middle,
And heaving him high in air,
Carries him out of there.
No one stands round to stare.
It is nobody else's affair.

It couldn't be called ungentle.
But how thoroughly departmental.

Robert Frost

Explain the use of irony.

Poems for Further Analysis

Selections for studying and learning

Sailing to Byzantium

I

That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees
--Those dying generations--at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II

An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III

O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make

Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

William Butler Yeats

The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center 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 *Spiritus Mundi*
Troubles my sigh: somewhere in 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?

William Butler Yeats

J. 49

I never lost as much but twice,
And that was in the sod.
Twice have I stood a beggar
Before the door of God!

Angels--twice descending
Reimbursed my store--
Burglar! Banker--Father!
I am poor once more!

J. 67

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne'er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host
Who took the Flag today
Can tell the definition
So clear of Victory

As he defeated--dying--
On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!

J. 162

My River runs to thee--
Blue Sea! wilt welcome me?
My River waits reply--
Oh Sea--look graciously--
I'll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks--
Say--Sea--Take *Me!*

*

J. 241

I like a look of Agony,
Because I know it's true--
Men do not sham Convulsion,

Nor simulate, a Throe--

The Eyes glaze once--and that is
Death--
Impossible to feign
The Beads upon the Forehead
By homely Anguish strung.

J. 252

I can wade Grief--
Whole Pools of it--
I'm used to that--
But the least push of Joy
Breaks up my feet--
And I tip--drunken--
Let no Pebble--smile--
'Twas the New Liquor--
That was all!

Power is only Pain--
Stranded, thro' Discipline,
Till Weights--will hang--
Give Balm--to Giants--
And they'll wilt, like Men--
Give Himmaleh--
They'll Carry--Him!

J. 258

There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons--
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes--

Heavenly Hurt, it gives us--
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are--

None may teach it--Any--
'Tis the Seal Despair--
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air--

When it comes, the Landscape listens--
Shadows--hold their breath--
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death--

J. 288

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you--Nobody--Too?
Then there's a pair of us?
Don't tell! they'd advertise--you know!

How dreary--to be-- Somebody!
How public--like a Frog--
To tell one's name--the livelong June--
To an admiring Bog!

J. 303

The Soul selects her own Society--
Then--shuts the Door--
To her divine Majority--
Present no more--

Unmoved--she notes the Chariots--
pausing
At her low Gate--
Unmoved--an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat--

I've known her--from an ample
nation--
Choose One--
Then--close the Valves of her
attention--
Like Stone--

J. 328

A Bird came down the Walk--
He did not know I saw--
He bit an Angleworm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass--
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass--

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all around--
They looked like frightened Beads, I
thought--
He stirred his Velvet Head

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam--
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
Leap, splashless as they swim.

J.441

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me--
The simple News that Nature told--
With tender Majesty

Her Message is committed
To Hands I cannot see--
For love of Her--Sweet--countrymen--
Judge tenderly--of Me

J.449

I died for Beauty--but was scarce
Adjusted in the Tomb
When One who died for Truth, was lain
In an adjoining Room--

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?
"For Beauty", I replied--
"And I--for Truth--Themself Are
One--
We Brethren, are", He said--

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night--
We talked between the Rooms--
Until the Moss had reached our lips--
And covered up--our names--

J. 341

After great pain, a formal feeling
comes--
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like
Tombs--
The stiff Heart questions was it He, that

bore,
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

The Feet, mechanical, go round--
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought--
A Wooden way
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone--

This is the Hour of Lead--
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the
Snow--
First--Chill--then Stupor--then the
letting go--

J. 465

I heard a Fly buzz-when I died--
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air--
Between the Heaves of Storm--

The Eyes around--had wrung them
dry--
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset--when the King
Be witnessed--in the Room--

I willed my Keepsakes--Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable--and then it was
There interposed a Fly--

With Blue--uncertain stumbling Buzz--
Between the light--and me--
And then the Windows failed--and
then
I could not see to see--

J. 547

I've seen a Dying Eye
Run round and round a Room--
In search of Something--as it seemed--
Then Cloudier become--
And then--obscure with Fog--
And then--be soldered down
Without disclosing what it be
'Twere blessed to have seen--

J. 556

The Brain, within its Groove
Runs evenly--and true--
But let a Splinter swerve--
'Twere easier for You--

To put a Current back--
When Floods have slit the Hills--
And scooped a Turnpike for
Themselves--
And trodden out the Mills--

J. 579

I had been hungry, all the Years--
My Noon had come--to dine--
I trembling drew the Table near--
And touched the Curious Wine--

'Twas this on Tables I had seen--
When turning, hungry, Home
I looked in Windows, for the Wealth
I could not hope--for Mine--

I did not know the ample Bread--
'Twas so unlike the Crumb
The Birds and I, had often shared
In Nature's--Dining Room--

The Plenty hurt me--'twas so new--
Myself felt ill--and odd--
As Berry--of a Mountain Bush--
Transplanted--to the Road--

Nor was I hungry--so I found
That Hunger--was a way
Of Persons outside Windows--
The Entering--takes away--

J. 650

Pain--has an element of Blank--
It cannot recollect
When it begun--or if there were
A time when it was not--

It has not Future--but itself--
Its Infinite contain
Its Past --enlightened to perceive
New Periods--of Pain.

No Swan so Fine

"No water so still as the
  dead fountains of Versailles." No swan,
with swart blind look askance
and gondoliering legs, so fine
  as the chintz china one with fawn-
brown eyes and toothed gold
collar on to show whose bird it was.

Lodged in the Louis Fifteenth
  candelabrum-tree of cockscomb-
tinted buttons, dahlias,
sea-urchins, and everlastings,
  it perches on the branching foam
of polished sculptured
flowers--at ease and tall. The king is dead.

Marianne Moore

The Fish

wade
through black jade.
Of the crow-blue mussel-shells, one keeps
adjusting the ash-heaps;
opening and shutting itself like

an
injured fan.
The barnacles which encrust the side
of the wave, cannot hide
there for the submerged shafts of the

sun,
split like spun
glass, move themselves with spotlight swiftness
into the crevices--
  in and out, illuminating

the
turquoise sea
of bodies. The water drives a wedge

of iron through the iron edge
of the cliff; whereupon the stars,

pink
rice-grains, ink-
bespattered jelly-fish, crabs like green
lilies, and submarine
toadstools, slide each on the other.

All
external
marks of abuse are present on this
defiant edifice--
all the physical features of

ac-
cident--lack
of cornice, dynamite grooves, burns, and
hatchet strokes, these things stand
out on it; the chasm-side is

dead.
Repeated
evidence has proved that it can live
on what can not revive
its youth. The sea grows old in it.

Marianne Moore

Mr. Flood’s Party

Old Eben Flood, climbing alone one night
Over the hill between the town below
And the forsaken upland hermitage
That held as much as he should even know
On earth again of home, paused warily.
The road was his with not a native near;
And Eben, having leisure, said aloud,
For no man else in Tilbury Town to hear:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have the harvest moon
Again, and we may not have many more;
The bird is on the wing, the poet says,
And you and I have said it here before.
Drink to the bird." He raised up to the light
The jug that he had gone so far to fill,
And answered huskily: "Well, Mr. Flood,
Since you propose it, I believe I will."

Alone, as if enduring to the end
A valiant armor of scarred hopes outworn,
He stood there in the middle of the road
Like Roland's ghost winding a silent horn.
Below him, in the town among the trees,
Where friends of other days had honored him,
A phantom salutation of the dead
Rang thinly till old Eben's eyes were dim.

Then, as a mother lays her sleeping child
Down tenderly, fearing it may awake,
He set the jug down slowly at his feet

With trembling care, knowing that most things break;
And only when assured that on firm earth
It stood, as the uncertain lives of men
Assuredly did not, he paced away,
And with his hand extended paused again:

"Well, Mr. Flood, we have not met like this
In a long time; and many a change has come
To both of us, I fear, since last it was
We had a drop together. Welcome home!"
Convivially returning with himself,
Again he raised the jug up to the light;
And with an acquiescent quaver said:
"Well, Mr. Flood, if you insist, I might.

"Only a very little, Mr. Flood--
For auld lang syne. No more, sir; that will do."

So, for the time, apparently it did,
And Eben evidently thought so too;
For soon amid the silver loneliness
Of night he lifted up his voice and sang,
Secure with only two moons listening,
Until the whole harmonious landscape rang--

"For auld lang syne." The weary throat gave out,
The last word wavered, and the song was done.
He raised again the jug regretfully
And shook his head, and was again alone.
There was not much that was ahead of him,
And there was nothing in the town below--
Where strangers would have shut the many doors
That many friends had opened long ago.

Edwin Arlington Robinson

Anecdote of the Jar

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.
The jar was gray and bare.
It did not give of bird or bush,
Like nothing else in Tennessee.

The Snow Man

One muse have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;
And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the wound of the wind,

In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

Wallace Stevens

Bantams in Pine-Woods

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Damned universal cock, as if the sun
Was blackamoor to bear your blazing tail.

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten-foot poet among inchlings. Fat!
Begone! An inchling bristles in these pines,

Bristles, and points their Appalachian tangs.
And fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos.

Wallace Stevens

The Dwarf

Now it is September and the web is woven.
The web is woven and you have to wear it.

The winter is made and you have to bear it,
The winter web, the winter woven, wind and wind,

For all the thoughts of summer that go with it
In the mind, pupa of straw, moppet of rags.

It is the mind that is woven, the mind that was jerked
And tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun.

It is all that you are, the final dwarf of you,
That is woven and woven and waiting to be worn,

Neither as mask nor as garment but as a being,

Torn from insipid summer, for the mirror of cold,

Sitting beside your lamp, there citron to nibble
And coffee dribble....Frost is in the stubble.

Wallace Stevens

A High-Toned Old Christian Woman

Poetry is the supreme fiction, madame.
Take the moral law and make a nave of it
And from the nave build haunted heaven. Thus,
The conscience is converted into palms,
Like windy citherns hankering for hymns.
We agree in principle. That's clear. But take
The opposing law and make a peristyle,
And from the peristyle project a masque
Beyond the planets. Thus, our bawdiness,
Unpurged by epitaph, indulged at last,
Is equally converted into palms,
Squiggling like saxophones. And palm for palm,
Madame, we are where we began. Allow,
Therefore, that in the planetary scene
Your disaffected flagellants, well-stuffed,
Smacking their muzzy bellies in parade,
Proud of such novelties of the sublime,
Such tink and tank and tunk-a-tunk-tunk,
May, merely may, madame, whip from themselves
A jovial hullabaloo among the spheres.
This will make windows wince. But fictive things
Wink as they will. Wink most when windows wince.

Wallace Stevens

Look up Steven's poem, *Peter Quince at the Klavier.*

April Inventory

The green catalpa tree has turned
All white; the cherry blooms once more.
In one whole year I haven't learned
A blessed thing they pay you for.
The blossoms snow down in my hair;
The trees and I will soon be bare.

The trees have more than I to spare.
The sleek, expensive girls I teach,
Younger and pinker every year,
Bloom gradually out of reach.
The pear tree lets its petals drop

Like dandruff on a tabletop.

The girls have grown so young by now
I have to nudge myself to stare.
This year they smile and mind me how
My teeth are falling with my hair.
In thirty years I may not get
Younger, shrewder, or out of debt.

The tenth time, just a year ago,
I made myself a little list
Of all the things I'd ought to know;
Then told my parents, analyst,
And everyone who's trusted me
I'd be substantial, presently.

I haven't read one book about
A book or memorized one plot.
Or found a mind I didn't doubt.
I learned one date. And then forgot.
And one by one the solid scholars
Get the degrees, the jobs, the dollars.

And smile above their starchy collars.
I taught my classes Whitehead's notions;
One lovely girl, a song of Mahler's.
Lacking a source-book or promotions,
I showed one child the colors of
A luna moth and how to love.

I taught myself to name my name,
To bark back, loosen love and crying;
To ease my woman so she came,
To ease an old man who was dying.
I have not learned how often I
Can win, can love, but choose to die.

I have not learned there is a lie
Love shall be blonder, slimmer, younger;
That my equivocating eye
Loves only by my body's hunger;
That I have poems, true to feel,
Or that the lovely world is real.

While scholars speak authority
And wear their ulcers on their sleeves,
My eyes in spectacles shall see
These trees procure and spend their leaves.
There is value underneath
The gold and silver in my teeth.

Though trees turn bare and girls turn wives,
We shall afford our costly seasons;
There is a gentleness survives
That will outspeak and has its reasons.
There is a loveliness exists,
Preserves us. Not for specialists.

W. D. Snodgrass

Lawrence Ferlinghetti's Away Above A Harborful

Away above a harborful
of caulkless houses
among the charley noble chimneypots
of a rooftop rigged with clotheslines
a woman pastes up sails
upon the wind
hanging out her morning sheets
with wooden pins
O lovely mamma!
her nearly naked teats
throw taut shadows
when she stretches up
to hang at last the last of her
so white washed sins
but it is wetly amorous
and winds itself about her
clinging to her skin
So caught with arms upraised
she tosses back her head
in voiceless laughter
and in choiceless gesture then
shakes out gold hair
while in the reachless seascape spaces
between the blown white shrouds
stand out the bright steamers
to kingdom come.

Mirror

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful--
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman.
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Sylvia Plath

Morning Song

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.
The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry
Took its place among the elements

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.
In a drafty museum, your nakedness
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother
Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow
Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath
Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral
In my victorian nightgown.
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

Sylvia Plath

Daddy

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time----
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one grey toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of *you,*
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You----

Not God but a swastika

So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two----
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always *knew* it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

` Sylvia Plath

See *Lady Lazarus by* Sylvia Plath

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,

Out of the mockingbird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child
leaving his bed wandered alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the showered halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as
if they were alive,
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and
fallings I heard,
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as
if with tears,
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the
mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
From the myriad thence-aroused words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was
growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feathered guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouched on her nest, silent, with
bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturb-
ing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.
Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
Maybe killed, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared, again.
And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
I say, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guests from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glistened,
All night long on the prong of a moss-scalloped stake,
Down almost amid the slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.
He called on his mate,
He poured forth the meanings which I of all men know.
Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasured every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the
shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and
sights after their sorts,
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listened long and long.
Listened to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one
close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.
Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging--O I think it is heavy with love, with love.
O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.
O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the
breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.
Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.
Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate
back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.
O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some
of you.
O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols.
Solitary here, the night's carols!
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under the moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.
But soft! sing low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-noised sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not come imme-
diately to me.

Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustained note I announce myself to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.
Do not be decoyed elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful.
O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.
O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,

Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

The aria sinking,
All else continuing, the stars shining,
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultuously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drowned secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul).
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me, never to die.

O you signer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow sagging moon,
The messenger there aroused, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clue! (it lurks in the night here somewhere),
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!
A word then (for I will conquer it),
The word final, superior to all,
subtle, sent up--what is it?--I listen;
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea

waves?
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?
Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whispered me through the night, and very plainly before
daybreak,
Lisped to me the low and delicious word death,
And again death, death, death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my aroused
child's heart,
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me soft
all over,
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray
beach,
With the thousand responsive songs at random,
My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet
garments, bending aside),
The sea whispered me.

Walt Whitman

Patterns

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills,
I walk down the patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jeweled fan,
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train
Makes a pink and silver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.

And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot she her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.
I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles
on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths,
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon--
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the Duke.
"Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday se'nnight."

As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."
And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,
Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown;
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month, here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?

Amy Lowell

Locate as many patterns as you can.
Discuss these patterns as symbols.
What is the irony?

I found this jawbone at the sea's edge:
There, crabs, dogfish, broken by the breakers or tossed
To flap for half an hour and turn to a crust
Continue the beginning. The deeps are cold:
In that darkness camaraderie does not hold:
Nothing touches but, clutching, devours. And the jaws,
Before they are satisfied or their stretched purpose
Slacken, go down jaws; go gnawn bare. Jaws
Eat and are finished and the jawbone comes to the beach:
This is the sea's achievement; with shells,
Vertebrae, claws, carapaces, skulls.

Time in the sea eats its tail, thrives, casts these
indigestibles, the spars of purposes
That failed far from the surface. None grow rich
In the sea. This curved jawbone did not laugh
But gripped, gripped and is now a cenotaph.

Ted Hughes

See also “Church Going” by -- Philip Larkin.

My Star

All that I know of a certain star
Is, it can throw (Like the agled-spar)
Now a dart of red, Now a dart of blue;
Till my friends have said they would fain see, too,
My star that dartles the red and the blue!
Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled:
They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
What matter to me if their star is a world?
Mine has opened its soul to me; there-fore I love it.

Robert Browning

Naming of Parts

To-day we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We had daily cleaning. And to-morrow morning,
We shall have what to do after firing. But to-day,
To-day we have naming of parts. Japonica
Glistens like coral in all of the neighboring gardens,
And to-day we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,

Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see
Any of them using their finger.

And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:
They call it easing the Spring.

The call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,
Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,
For to-day we have naming of parts.

]

Henry Reed

Judging Distances

Not only how far away, but the way that you say it
Is very important. Perhaps you may never get
The knack of judging a distance, but at least you know
How to report on a landscape: the central sector,
The right of arc and that, which we had last Tuesday,
And at least you know

That maps are of time, not place, so far as the army
Happens to be concerned-the reason being,
Is one which need not delay us. Again, you know
There are three kinds of tree, three only, the fir and the poplar,
And those which have bushy tops to; and lastly
That things only seem to be things.

A barn is not called a barn, to put it more plainly,
Or a field in the distance, where sheep may be safely grazing.
You must never be over-sure. You must say, when reporting:
At five o'clock in the central sector is a dozen
Of what appear to be animals; whatever you do,
Don't call the bleeders *sheep.*

I am sure that's quite clear; and suppose, for the sake of example,
The one at the end, asleep, endeavors to tell us
What he sees over there to the west, and how far away,
After first having come to attention. There to the west,
On the fields of summer the sun and the shadows bestow
  Vestments of purple and gold.

The still white dwellings are like a mirage in the heat,
And under the swaying elms a man and a woman
Lie gently together. Which is, perhaps, only to say
That there is a row of houses to the left or arc,
And that under some poplars a pair of what appear to be humans
  Appear to be loving.

Well that, for an answer, is what we might rightly call
Moderately satisfactory only, the reason being,
Is that two things have been omitted, and those are important.
The human beings, now: in what direction are they,
And how far away, would you say? And do not forget
  There may be dead ground in between.

There may be dead ground in between; and I may not have got
The knack of judging a distance; I will only venture
A guess that perhaps between me and the apparent lovers,
(Who, incidentally, appear by now to have finished,)
At seven o'clock from the houses, is roughly a distance
  Of about one year and a half.

Henry Reed

In my craft or sullen art

In my craft or sullen art
Exercised in the still night
When only the moon rages
And the lovers lie abed
With all their griefs in their arms,
I labour by singing light
Not for ambition or bread
Or the strut and trade of charms
On the ivory stages
But for the common wages
Of their most secret heart.

Not for the proud man apart
From the raging moon I write
On these spindrift pages
Nor for the towering dead

With their nightingales and psalms
But for the lovers, their arms
Round the griefs of the ages,
Who pay no praise or wages
Nor heed my craft or art.

Dylan Thomas

Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way
Do not go gently into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

Fern Hill

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle starry, time let me hail and climb
Golden in the hey days of his eyes, And honoured among wagons
I was prince of the apple towns and once below a time
I lordly had the trees and leaves trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only, time let me play and be

Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was hunstman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
And the sabbath rang slowly in the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
And playing, lovely and watery and fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars as I rode to sleep
The owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
Flying with the ricks, and the horses flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
Shining, it was Adam and maiden. The sky gathered again
And the sun grew round that very day.
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
Out of the whinnying green stable on to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
In the sun born over and over, I ran my heedless ways,
My wishes raced through the house high hay
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden follow him out of grace,

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising, nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Dylan Thomas

.

Poem in October

It was my thirtieth year to heaven
Woke to my hearing from harbour and
neighbour wood
And the mussel pooled and the heron
Priested shore
The morning beckon
With water praying and call of seagull and
rook

And the knock of sailing boats on the
net webbed wall
Myself to set foot
That second
In the still sleeping town and set
forth.

My birthday began with the water-
Birds and the birds of the winged trees
flying my name
Above the farms and the white horses
And I rose
In rainy autumn
And walked abroad in a shower of all my
days.
High tide and the heron dived when I
took the road
Over the border
And the gates
Of the town closed as the town
awoke.

A springful of larks in a rolling
Cloud and the roadside bushes brimming
with whistling
Blackbirds and the sun of October
Summery
On the hill's shoulder,
Here were fond climates and sweet singers
suddenly
Come in the morning where I wandered
and listened
To the rain wringing
Wind blow cold
In the wood faraway under me.

Pale rain over the dwindling harbour
And over the sea wet church the size of
a snail
With its horns through mist and the
castle
Brown as owls
But all the gardens
Of spring and summer were blooming in
the tall tales
Beyond the border and under the lark
full cloud.
There could I marvel
My birthday
Away but the weather turned around.

It turned away from the blithe country
And down the other air and the blue
altered sky
Streamed again a wonder of summer
With apples
Pears and red currants
And I saw in the turning so clearly a
child's
Forgotten mornings when he walked with
his mother
Through the parables
Of sun light
And the legends of the green chapels

And the twice told fields of infancy
That his tears burned my cheeks and his
heart moved in mine.
These were the woods the river and
sea
Where a boy
In the listening
Summertime of the dead whispered the
truth of his joy
To the trees and the stones and the fish
In the tide.
And the mystery
Sang alive
Still in the water and singing birds.

And there could I marvel my birthday
Away but the weather turned around.
And the true
Joy of the long dead child sang burning
In the sun.
It was my thirtieth
Year to heaven stood there then in the
summer noon
Though the town below lay leaved with
October blood.
O may my heart's truth
Still be sung
On this high hill in a year's turning.

Dylan Thomas

pity this busy monster, manunkind,

not. Progress is a comfortable disease:
your victim(death and life safely beyond)

plays with the bigness of his littleness
- electrons deify one razorblade
into a mountainrange;lenses extend

unwish through curving wherewhen till unwish
returns on its unself.
A world of made
is not a world of born - pity poor flesh

and trees,poor stars and stones,but never this
fine specimen of hypermagical

ultraomnipotence. We doctors know

a hopeless case if - listen:there's a hell
of a good universe next door;let's go

e.e. cummings

Look up also “Byzantium” -- Yeats
“The Faery Queen” -- Spencer
“The Naked and the Nude” -- Graves

You Andrew Marvell

And here face down beneath the sun
And here upon earth's noonward height
To feel the always coming on
The always rising of the night:

To feel creep up the curving east
The earthly chill of dusk and slow
Upon those under lands the vast
And ever-climbing shadow grow

And strange at Ecbatan the trees
Take leave by leaf the evening strange
The flooding dark about their knees
The mountains over Persia change

And now at Kermanshah the gate
Dark empty and the withered grass
And through the twilight now the late
Few travelers in the westward pass

And Baghdad darken and the bridge
Across the silent river gone
And through Arabia the edge

Of evening widen and steal on

And deepen on Palmyra's street
The wheel rut in the ruined stone
And Lebanon fade out and Crete
High through the clouds and overblown

And over Sicily the air
Still flashing with the landward gulls
And loom and slowly disappear
The sails above the shadowy hulls

And Spain go under and the shore
Of Africa the gilded sand
And evening vanish and no more
The low pale light across that land

Nor now the long light on the sea:
And here face downward in the sun
To feel how swift how secretly
The shadow of the night comes on . . .

Archibald MacLeish

Medallion

Luini in porcelain!
The grand piano
Utters a profane
Protest with her clear soprano.

The sleek head emerges
From the gold-yellow frock
As Anadyomene in the opening
Pages of Reinach.

Honey-red. closing the face-oval,
A basket-work of braids which seem as if they were
Spun in King Minos' hall
From metal, or intractable amber;

The face-oval beneath the glaze,
Bright in its suave bounding-line, as,
Beneath half-watt rays,
The eyes turn topaz.

Ezra Pound

Villanelle: The Psychological Hour

I
I had over-prepared the event,
that much was ominous.
With middle-ageing care
I had laid out just the right books.
I had almost turned down the pages.

Beauty is so rare a thing.
So few drink of my fountain.

So much barren regret,
So many hours wasted!
And now I watch, from the window,
the rain, the wandering busses.

"Their little cosmos is shaken"--
the air is alive with that fact.
In their parts of the city
they are played on by diverse forces.
How do I know?
Oh, I know well enough.
For them there is something afoot.
As for me;
I had over-prepared the event--

Beauty is so rare a thing,
So few drink of my fountain.

Two friends: a breath of the forest . . .
Friends? Are people less friends
because one has just, at last, found them?
Twice they promised to come.

"Between the night and morning?"

Beauty would drink of my mind.
Youth would awhile forget
my youth is gone from me.

Ezra Pound

Whispers of Immortality

Webster was much possessed by death
And saw the skull beneath the skin;
And breastless creatures under ground
Leaned backward with a lipless grin.

Daffodil bulbs instead of balls
Stared from the sockets of the eyes!
He knew that thought clings round dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and luxuries.

Donne, I suppose, was such another
Who found no substitute for sense,
To seize and clutch and penetrate;
Expert beyond experience,

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.

. . . .

Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye
Is underlined for emphasis;
Uncorseted, her friendly bust
Gives promise of pneumatic bliss.

The couched Brazilian jaguar
Compels the scampering marmoset
With subtle effluence of cat;
Grishkin has a maisonette;

The sleek Brazilian jaguar
Does not in its arboreal gloom
Distil so rank a feline smell
As Grishkin in a drawing-room.

And even the Abstract Entities
Circumambulate her charm;
But our lot crawls between dry ribs
To keep our metaphysics warm.

T. S. Eliot

Envoi (1919)

Go, dumb-born book,
Tell her that sang me once that song of Lawes:
Hadst thou but song

As thou hast subjects known,
Then were there cause in thee that should condone
Even my faulty that heavy upon me lie,
And build her glories their longevity.

Tell her that sheds
Such treasure in the air,
Recking naught else but that her graces give
Life to the moment,
I would bid them live
As roses might, in magic amber laid,
Red overwrought with orange and all made
One substance and one colour
Braving time.

Tell her that goes
With song upon her lips
But sings not out the song, nor knows
The maker of it, some other mouth,
May be as fair as hers,
Might, in new ages, gain her worshippers,
When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid,
Siftings on siftings in oblivion,
Till change hath broken down
All things save Beauty alone.

Ezra Pound

Why does Pound use archaic diction?

The Broken Tower

The bell rope that gathers God at dawn
Dispatches me as though I dropped down the knell
Of a spent day--to wander the cathedral lawn
From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell.

Have you not heard, have you not seen that corps
Of shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway
Antiphonal carillons launched before
The stars are caught and hived in the sun's ray?

The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower;
And swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave
Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score
Of broken intervals....And I, their sexton slave!

Oval encyclicals in canyons heaping
The impasse high with choir. Banked voices slain!
Pagodas, campaniles with reveilles outleaping--

O terraced echoes prostrate on the plain!...

And so it was I entered the broken world
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

My word I poured. But was it cognate, scored
Of that tribunal monarch of the air
Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word
In wounds pledged once to hope--cleft to despair?

The steep encroachments of my blood left me
No answer (could blood hold such a lofty tower
As flings the question true?)--or is it she
Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power?--

And through whose pulse I hear, counting the strokes
My veins recall and add, revived and sure
The angelus of wars my chest evokes:
What I hold healed, original now, and pure...

And builds, within, a tower that is not stone
(Not stone can jacket heaven)--but slip
Of pebbles--visible wings of silence sown
In azure circles, widening as they dip

The matrix of the heart, lift down the eye
That shrines the quiet lake and swells a tower....
The commodious, tall decorum of that sky
Unseals her earth, and lifts love in its shower.

Hart Crane

The River

[...and past the din and slogans of the year--]

Stick your patent name on a signboard
brother--all over--going west--young man
Tintex--Japalac--Certain-teed Overalls ads
and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped
in the guaranteed corner--see Bert Williams what?
Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
save me the wing for if it isn't
Erie it ain't for miles around a
Mazda--and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas

a Ediford--and whistling down the tracks

a headlight rushing with the sound--can you
imagine--while an EXpress makes time like
SCIENCE--COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST
RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE
WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR WIRES OR
EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears
and no more sermons windows flashing roar
Breathtaking--as you like it...eh?

So the 20th Century--so
whizzed the Limited--roared by and left
three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly
watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip-
ping gimleted and neatly out of sight.

Hart Crane

Repose of Rivers

The willows carried a slow sound,
A saraband the wind mowed on the mead.
I could never remember
That seething, steady leveling of the marshes
Till age had brought me to the sea.

Flags, weeds. And remembrance of steep alcoves
Where cypresses shared the noon's
Tyranny; they drew me into hades almost.
And mammoth turtles climbing sulphur dreams
Yielded, while sun-silt rippled them
Asunder....

How much I would have bartered! the black gorge
And all the singular nestings in the hills
Where beavers learn stitch and tooth.
The pond I entered once and quickly fled--
I remember now its singing willow rim.

And finally, in that memory all things nurse;
After the city that I finally passed
With scalding unguents spread and smoking darts
The monsoon cut across the delta
At gulf gates....There, beyond the dykes

I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer,
And willows could not hold more steady sound.

Hart Crane

The Bridge

From going to and fro in the earth,
and from walking up and down in it.
The Book of Job

Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest
The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty--

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes
As apparitional as sails that cross
Some page of figures to be filed away;
--Till elevators drop us from our day....

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,--
Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
Tilting there momently, shrill shirt ballooning,
A jest falls from the speechless caravan.

Down Wall, from girder into street noon leaks,
A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene;
All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn....
Thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still.

And obscure as that heaven of the Jews,
Thy guerdon....Accolade thou dost bestow
Of anonymity time cannot raise:
Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show.

O harp and altar, of the fury fused,
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,--

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift
Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,
Beading thy path--condense eternity:
And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

Under thy shadow by the piers I waited;
Only in darkness is thy shadow clear.
The city's fiery parcels all undone,
Already snow submerges an iron year....

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
Unto us lowliest sometimes sweep, descend
And of the curveship lend a myth to God.

Hart Crane

Appendix

Following is just an added, extra short selection of lines and verses which may be used by students and teachers to give and get a feeling for rhythm and scansion in English verse.

Read the popular rhymes and jingles below aloud, just to hear how the sounds and rhythms and meters rise and fall into place.

A student who seeks more-detailed information about scansion, may refer to *Understanding The Art of Poetry*, also by David Holmes, published in Bangkok, by Chulalongkorn University Press, in 2546. See in Chapter One on “Rhyme, Meter and Stanza Form.”

High diddle diddle

The cat played the fiddle

And the cow jumped over the moon

*

Jack be nimble

Jack be quick

Jack jump over

the candle stick

*

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater

Had a wife but couldn't keep her

He put her in a pumpkin shell

And there he kept her very well.

*

Rock-a-bye baby

On the tree top

When the wind blows

The cradle will rock

When the bough breaks

The cradle will fall

And down will come baby

Cradle and all.

*

Twinkle, twinkle

little star

How I wonder

where you are?

*

Rub-a-dub-dub

Three men in a tub

A butcher, a baker

A candlestick maker

*

Old mother Hubbard

Went to the cupboard

To get her poor doggie a bone

But when she got there

the cupboard was bare

and so her poor doggie had none.

*

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the king's horses and

All the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again.

*

Jack and Jill went up the hill

To fetch a pail of water

Jack came down and broke his crown

And Jill came tumbling after

*

Ring around the rosie

Pocket full of posies

Ashes Ashes

We all fall down

*

Mary, Mary, quite contrary

How does your garden grow?

With cockle shells and silver bells

And pretty maids all in a row.

*

This little piggy went to market

This little piggy stayed home

This little piggy ate roast beef

This little piggy had none.

*

To market, to market

To buy a fat pig

Home again, home again

Jiggidy jig.

*

How much wood

could a woodchuck chuck

if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

*

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep

And didn’t know where to find them

Leave them alone and they'll come home

Wagging their tails behind them.

*

"Now I lay me..."

Now I lay me
Down to sleep
I pray the Lord
My soul to keep

If I should die
before I wake
I pray the Lord
My soul to take

If I should live
for other days
I pray the Lord
To guide my ways.

*

Patty Cake Patty Cake
Baker's Man
Bake me a cake
As fast as you can

*

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream

*

One potato two potato

Three potato four

Five potato six potato

Seven potato. More.

Stanza

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,
  Let him combat for that of his neighbours;
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,
  And get knock'd on the head for his labours.

To do good to mankind is the chivalrous plan,
  And is always as nobly requited;
Then battle for freedom wherever you can,
  And, if not shot or hang'd, you'll get knighted.

Browning

Scan
Note how the second line of stanza one breaks the meter
Note the same in the final line.Did Browning do this on purpose?
Was he trying to be humorous?
Does anapestic meter suit the tone of a serious poem?

*

In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
  That mark our place; and in the sky
  The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
  Loved and were loved, and now we lie
    In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
  The torch; be yours to hold it high.
  If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
    In Flanders fields.

John McCrae

Does the fact the above stanza form changes bother you?
Why didn't he use a quintet in stanza two?

Why doesn't he use couplets to end stanzas two and three?
Do you like the form of the poem?

*

Days of Birth

Old Rhyme

Monday's child is fair of face,
Tuesday's child is full of grace,
Wednesday's child is full of woe,
Thursday's child has far to go,
Friday's child is loving and giving,
Saturday's child works for its living,
And a child that's born on the Sabbath day
Is fair and wise and good and gay.

Anonymous

*

Has anybody seen my mouse?

I opened his box for half a minute,
Just to make sure he was really in it,
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried....
I think he's somewhere about the house.
Has *anyone* seen my mouse?

A. A. Milne

*

Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,
It's your misfortune, and none of my own.
Whoopee ti yi yo, git along, little dogies,
For you know Wyoming will be your new home.

John A. and Alan Lomax

*

Western Wind

Western wind, when will thou blow,
  The small rain down can rain?
Christ, if my love were in my arms
  And I in my bed again!

Anonymous
16th Century

Is there a regular metrical pattern here?
Does it matter?

*

Green Grow the Rushes

Green grow the rushes O,
  Green grow the rushes O;
The sweetest hours that e'er I spend,
  Are spent among the lasses O!

There's nought but care on ev'ry han',
  In ev'ry hour that passes O;
What signifies the life o'man,
  An' 'twere na for the lasses O?

The warly race may riches chase,
  An' riches still may fly them O;
An' tho' at last they catch them fast,
  Their hearts can ne'er enjoy them O.

But gie me a canny hour at e'en,
  My arms about my dearie O;
An' warly cares, an' warly men,
  May a' gae tapsalteerie O!

For you sae douce, ye sneer at this,
  Ye're nought but senseless asses O:
The wisest man the warl' saw,
  He dearly lov'd the lasses O.

Auld nature swears, the lovely dears
  Her noblest work she classes O;

Her prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses O.

Robbie Burns

What's the basic meter?
Where are the metrical variations?

*

Fragment

On the back of the MS. of Canto I of Don Juan

I would to heaven that I were so much clay,
As I am blood, bone, marrow, passion feeling--
Because at least the past were passed away,
And for the future--(but I write this reeling,
Having got drunk exceedingly to-day,
So that I seem to stand upon the ceiling)
I say--the future is a serious matter--
and so--for God's sake--hock and soda-water!

Byron

Does the meter in Byron's poem remain iambic pentameter throughout?
Does the rhythm stumble? Did Byron have a reason to change the meter?
Does it work?

*

My father, he was a mountaineer,
His fist was a knotty hammer;
He was quick on his feet as a running deer,
And he spoke with a Yankee stammer

Stephen Vincent Benet

*

Limerick

There was a young lady of Lynn
Who was so excessively thin
That when she essayed
To drink lemonade
She slipped through the straw and fell in.

*

The brown-dappled fawn
Bereft of the doe
Shivers in blue shadow
Of the glaring snow.

William Rose Benet

Does the meter in line 3 work?

*

In Prison

Wearily, drearily
Half the day long
Flap the great banners
High over the stone
Strangely and eerily
Sounds the wind's song.

William Morris

*

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note
As his corpse to the rampart we hurried
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried

Chas. Wolf

*

Paul Revere's Ride

Listen, my children, and you hall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.

Longfellow

Note how the above example uses metrical variation. Is it effective?

*

A Klondike City mining man lay dying on the ice
There was lack of a woman's nursing for he didn't have the price
But a comrade knelt beside him as the sun sank to repose
To hear what he might have to say and watch him while he froze.

Anonymous

Scan the above and see how it works out.

*

Luck

What bring you, sailor, home from the sea--
Coffers of gold and of ivory!

When first I went to sea as a lad
A new jack-knife was all I had:

And I've sailed for fifty years and three
To the coasts of gold and of ivory:

And now at the end of a lucky life,
Well, still I've got my old jack-knife.

Wilfrid Gibson

*

Yankee Doodle

Father and I went down to camp
Along with Cap'n Goodwin
And there we saw the men and boys
As thick as hasty puddin'!

Yankee Doodle, keep it up,
Yankee Doodle dandy,
Mind the music and the step
And with the girls be handy!

Anonymous

This book helps to explain

The poetic origins in language

How poetry arises

Where it comes from

Forms and traditions from the past

The development of poetic tools and devices

Providing examples

First starting generally

Then becoming more and more specific

Starting from early origins

Leading into the more recent past

With a view to allowing the reader

To develop a critical ability for himself

To discern the difference between

What is merely good poetry

And what is truly excellent poetry.