

LIVES IN POETRY

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Contents

1	HOMER	9
1.1	The little that is known about Homer's life	9
1.2	The Iliad, late 8th or early 7th century BC	12
1.3	The Odyssey	14
2	ANCIENT GREEK POETRY AND DRAMA	23
2.1	The ethical message of Greek drama	23
2.2	Sophocles, 497 BC - 406 BC	23
2.3	Euripides, c.480 BC - c.406 BC	25
2.4	Aristophanes, c.446 BC - c.386 BC	26
2.5	Sapho, c.630 BC - c.570 BC	28
3	POETS OF ANCIENT ROME	31
3.1	Lucretius, c.90 BC - c.55 BC	31
3.2	Ovid, 43 BC - c.17 AD	33
3.3	Virgil, 70 BC - 19 AD	36
3.4	Juvenal, late 1st century AD - early 2nd century AD	40
4	THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHINESE POETRY	45
4.1	The T'ang dynasty, a golden age for China	45
4.2	Tu Fu, 712-770	46
4.3	Li Po, 701-762	48
4.4	Li Ching Chao, 1081-c.1141	50
5	JAPANESE HAIKU	55
5.1	Basho	55
5.2	Kobayashi Issa, 1763-1828	58
5.3	Some modern haiku in English	60
6	POETS OF INDIA	61
6.1	Some of India's famous poets	61
6.2	Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941	61
6.3	Kamala Surayya, 1934-2009	66

7	POETS OF ISLAM	71
7.1	Ferdowsi, c.940-1020	71
7.2	Omar Khayyam, 1048-1131	73
7.3	Rumi, 1207-1273	78
7.4	Saadi Shirazi, 1210-1292	80
7.5	Hafiz, 1315-1390	82
7.6	Jami, 1414-1492	84
8	POETS OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND RUSSIA	87
8.1	Saint Francis, 1182-1226	87
8.2	Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321	90
8.3	Petrarch, 1304-1374	95
8.4	Jean de la Fontaine, 1621-1695	98
8.5	Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832	100
8.6	Friederich von Schiller, 1759-1805	103
8.7	Alexander Pushkin, 1799-1837	106
8.8	Rainer Maria Rilke, 1875-1926	109
8.9	Bertolt Brecht, 1898-1956	111
9	ENGLISH POETS	115
9.1	Geoffrey Chaucer, c.1340's-1400	115
9.2	William Shakespeare, 1564-1616	120
9.3	John Milton, 1608-1674	123
9.4	William Blake, 1757-1827	126
9.5	Robert Burns, 1759-1796	132
9.6	Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834	136
9.7	William Wordsworth, 1770-1850	140
9.8	Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822	144
9.9	John Keats, 1795-1821	157
9.10	Lord Byron, 1788-1824	160
9.11	William Butler Yeats, 1865-1939	162
9.12	Wilfred Owen, 1893-1918	165
9.13	Dylan Thomas, 1914-1953	171
10	SOME AMERICAN POETS	177
10.1	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807-1882	177
10.2	Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849	180
10.3	Walt Whitman, 1819-1892	184
10.4	Robert Frost, 1874-1963	190
10.5	T.S. Eliot, 1888-1965	194
10.6	Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892-1950	199
10.7	The San Francisco poets, 1950's and 1960's	210

11 POETS OF LATIN AMERICA	219
11.1 Aztec poetry, pre-Columbian	219
11.2 Gabriela Mistral, 1889-1957	222
11.3 Pablo Neruda, 1904-1973	224
11.4 Octavio Paz, 1914-1998	227
11.5 Nicanor Parra, 1914-2018	229

INTRODUCTION

Human history as cultural history

We need to reform our teaching of history so that the emphasis will be placed on the gradual growth of human culture and knowledge, a growth to which all nations and ethnic groups have contributed.

This book is part of a series on cultural history. Here is a list of the other books in the series that have, until now, been completed:

- Lives in Painting
- Lives in Engineering
- Lives in Astronomy
- Lives in Chemistry
- Lives in Medicine
- Lives in Ecology
- Lives in Physics
- Lives in Economics
- Lives in the Peace Movement

The pdf files of these books may be freely downloaded and circulated from the following web addresses:

<http://eacpe.org/about-john-scales-avery/>

<https://wsimag.com/authors/716-john-scales-avery>

The roots of poetry in oral traditions

Because writing, paper and literacy have not always been widely available, information has traditionally been passed on from one generation to the next by means of recitation and song. Rhythm, rhyme and alliteration are aids to memory, and increase the impact and appeal of a recitation or song. Histories, law and religions have all been propagated through oral traditions, and in many cultures, these traditions still live today.

Biblical scholars agree that the Judeo-Christian Bible has its roots in oral recitation of stories and songs and poetry. Likewise, Buddhism, Hinduism and Jainism in their early stages made use of oral recitation. In Islam,

memorizing many verses of the Quran, and reciting them is considered to be a great virtue.

The native populations of Australia and North America had no writing, and they relied on oral recitations to propagate their cultural traditions of history, law and ethics between generations.

Historians also agree that the Homeric epics were recited orally for many years before being written down. In ancient Greece, drama was used to convey ethics to the public, and attendance at dramatic performances was a civic duty.

In Europe, during the Middle Ages, a troubadour was a composer and performer of lyric poetry. The earliest troubadour whose work still survives was William IX, Duke of Aquitaine (1071-1127).

In all these very old oral traditions we can see the roots of poetry.

An anthology including some of the world's great poets

In this book, I have tried to present an historical anthology of the poems of some of the world's great poets, from very early times until the present, and from many countries and cultures. I have made use of two chapters that I have previously written about William Blake and Percy Bysshe Shelley, and therefore their lives are described in more detail than the lives of other poets.

I very much hope that you will enjoy reading this historical and multi-cultural anthology.

Chapter 1

HOMER

1.1 The little that is known about Homer's life

The Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations

Histories of the development of western civilization usually begin with the Greeks, but it is important to remember that the Greek culture was based on the much earlier civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. The cultural achievements of these very early civilizations were transmitted to the Greeks in part through direct contact, and in part through the Minoan and Mycenaean civilizations.

The Minoan civilization on Crete is the civilization which is familiar to us through the legends of Theseus, the Minotaur and the Labyrinth, and the legend of Daedalus and Icarus. Apart from the Greek legends, whose truth was doubted, nothing was known about the Minoan civilization until 1900. In that year, the English archaeologist, Sir Arthur Evans, began to dig in a large mound at Knossos on Crete. What he uncovered was a palace of great beauty which, to his astonishment, seemed once to have boasted such conveniences as hot and cold running water and doors with metal locks and keys. Sir Arthur Evans considered this to represent the palace of the legendary King Minos.

The Minoan civilization seems to have been based not on agriculture, but on manufacture and on control of the Mediterranean sea trade. It flourished between 2,600 B.C. and 1,400 B.C.. In that year, the palace at Knossos was destroyed, and there is evidence of scattered looting. Other evidence shows that in about 1,400 B.C., a nearby island called Theria exploded in a volcanic eruption of tremendous violence; and probably this explosion, combined with an invasion of Mycenaeans, caused the end of the Minoan civilization. The palace at Knossos was inhabited later than 1,400 B.C., but the later people spoke Greek.

The Minoan civilization, as shown in the graceful works of art found at Knossos, seems to have been light-hearted and happy. The palace at Knossos was not fortified and was apparently protected by sea power. Women's dresses on ancient Crete looked a bit like the dresses which were popular in Europe during the 1900's, except that they left the breasts bare. Some of the wall paintings at Knossos show dances and bull-fights. In the bull-fights,



Figure 1.1: A vase depicting a scene from the Trojan wars. Upper frieze: the marriage of Helen and Paris; sirens under the handles facing toward the front of the vessel. Lower frieze with animals: goats and panthers.

the bull was not killed. The bull-fighter was an acrobat, often a girl, who seized the lowered horns of the charging bull and was tossed in a summersault over its back.

The Mycenaean civilization developed at Troy, Mycenae (the home of the legendary Agamemnon), and other sites around the Aegean Sea. It is the civilization familiar to us through the stories of Ulysses, Priam, Ajax, Agamemnon, Paris and Helen. Like the Minoan civilization, the Mycenaean culture was thought to be purely legendary until quite recent times. We now know that the Homeric epics have a flat basis in fact, and this surprising revelation is mainly due to the work of a brilliant businessman-turned-archaeologist named Heinrich Schliemann.

As a young (and poor) boy, Schliemann was inspired by reading Homer's Iliad, and he decided that when he grew up he would find the site of ancient Troy, which most people considered to be a figment of Homer's imagination. To do this, he first had to become very rich, a task which he accomplished during the first 45 years of his life.

At last he had accumulated a huge fortune, and he could follow the dream of his boyhood. Arriving in Greece, Schliemann put an advertisement into a newspaper describing himself and saying that he needed a wife. This was answered by a beautiful and intelligent Greek girl, whom he promptly married.

Aided by armies of excavators, his beautiful wife, his brilliant intellect and a copy of Homer, Schliemann actually succeeded in unearthing ancient Troy at a site in Asia Minor! At this site, he uncovered not one, but nine ancient cities, each built on the ruins of the last. He also found beneath the walls of Troy a treasure containing 8,750 pieces of gold jewelry, which he considered to be King Priam's treasure. He went on to uncover many other remains of the Mycenaean civilization at sites around the Aegean.

Schliemann's discoveries show the Mycenaeans to have been both technically and artistically accomplished. They spoke an Indo-European language (a form of Greek), and they were thus linguistically related to the tribes which conquered Persia, India and Europe.

The Mycenaean civilization lasted until about 1,075 B.C.. Between that date and 850 B.C., the Greek-speaking peoples of the Aegean entered a dark age. Probably the civilized Mycenaeans were conquered by fresh waves of semi-primitive Greek-speaking tribes from the north.

It is known that the Greeks arrived in the Aegean region in three waves. The first to come were the Ionians. Next came the Achaeans, and finally the Dorians. Warfare between the Achaeans and the Ionians weakened both groups, and finally they both were conquered by the Dorians. This conquest by the semi-primitive Dorians was probably the event which brought the Mycenaean civilization to an end. At any rate, during the dark ages between 1,075 B.C. and 850 B.C., the art of writing was lost to the Greeks, and the level of artistic and cultural achievement deteriorated.

The Ionian Renaissance

Beginning in about 850 B.C., there was a rebirth of Greek culture. This cultural renaissance began in Ionia on the west coast of present-day Turkey, where the Greeks were in close contact with the Babylonian civilization. Probably the Homeric epics were written in Miletus, a city on the coast of Asia Minor, in about 700 B.C.. The first three philosophers of the Greek world, Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes, were also natives of Miletus.

Wikipedia states that **“Homer is the legendary author of the Iliad and the Odyssey, two epic poems that are the central works of ancient Greek literature. The Iliad is set during the Trojan War, the ten-year siege of the city of Troy by a coalition of Greek kingdoms. It focuses on a quarrel between King Agamemnon and the warrior Achilles lasting a few weeks during the last year of the war. The Odyssey focuses on the ten-year journey home of Odysseus, king of Ithaca, after the fall of Troy. Many accounts of Homer's life circulated in classical antiquity, the most widespread being that he was a blind bard from Ionia, a region of central coastal Anatolia in present-day Turkey. Modern scholars consider these accounts legendary.**

“The Homeric Question - concerning by whom, when, where and under what circumstances the Iliad and Odyssey were composed - continues to be debated. Broadly speaking, modern scholarly opinion falls into two groups. One holds that most of the Iliad and (according to some) the Odyssey are the works of a single poet of genius. The other considers the Homeric poems to be the result of a process of working and reworking by many contributors, and that ‘Homer’ is best seen as a label for an entire tradition.[4] It is generally accepted that the poems were composed at some point around the late eighth or early seventh century BC.”

1.2 The Iliad, late 8th or early 7th century BC

The Iliad: Invocation and Introduction

Goddess, sing me the anger, of Achilles, Peleus' son, that fatal anger that brought countless sorrows on the Greeks, and sent many valiant souls of warriors down to Hades, leaving their bodies as spoil for dogs and carrion birds: for thus was the will of Zeus brought to fulfilment. Sing of it from the moment when Agamemnon, Atreus' son, that king of men, parted in wrath from noble Achilles.

Which of the gods set these two to quarrel? Apollo, the son of Leto and Zeus, angered by the king, brought an evil plague on the army, so that the men were dying, for the son of Atreus had dishonoured Chryses the priest. He it was who came to the swift Achaean ships, to free his daughter, bringing a wealth of ransom, carrying a golden staff adorned with the ribbons of far-striking Apollo, and called out to the Achaeans, above all to the two leaders of armies, those sons of Atreus: 'Atreides, and all you bronze-greaved Achaeans, may the gods who live on Olympus grant you to sack Priam's city, and sail back home in safety; but take this ransom, and free my darling child; show reverence for Zeus's son, far-striking Apollo.'

Then the rest of the Achaeans shouted in agreement, that the priest should be respected, and the fine ransom taken; but this troubled the heart of Agamemnon, son of Atreus, and he dismissed the priest harshly, and dealt with him sternly: 'Old man, don't let me catch you loitering by the hollow ships today, and don't be back later, lest your staff and the god's ribbons fail to protect you. Her, I shall not free; old age will claim her first, far from her own country, in Argos, my home, where she can tend the loom, and share my bed. Away now; don't provoke me if you'd leave safely.'

So he spoke, and the old man, seized by fear, obeyed. Silently, he walked the shore of the echoing sea; and when he was quite alone, the old man prayed deeply to Lord Apollo, the son of bright-haired Leto: 'Hear me, Silver Bow, protector of Chryse and holy Cilla, high lord of Tenedos: if ever I built a shrine that pleased you, if ever I burned the fat thighs of a bull or goat for you, grant my wish: Smintheus, with your arrows make the Greeks pay for my tears.'

So he prayed, and Phoebus Apollo heard him. Down he came, in fury, from the heights of Olympus, with his bow and inlaid quiver at his back. The arrows rattled at his shoulder as the god descended like the night, in anger. He set down by the ships, and fired a shaft, with a fearful twang of his silver bow. First he attacked the mules, and the swift hounds, then loosed his vicious darts at the men; so the dense pyres for the dead burned endlessly.

For nine days the god's arrows fell on the army, and on the tenth Achilles, his heart stirred by the goddess, white-armed Hera, called them to the Place of Assembly, she pitying the

Danaans, whose deaths she witnessed. And when they had assembled, and the gathering was complete, swift-footed Achilles rose and spoke: 'Son of Atreus, if war and plague alike are fated to defeat us Greeks, I think we shall be driven to head for home: if, that is, we can indeed escape death. But why not consult some priest, some prophet, some interpreter of dreams, since dreams too come from Zeus, one who can tell why Phoebus Apollo shows such anger to us, because of some broken vow perhaps, or some missed sacrifice; in hopes the god might accept succulent lambs or unmarked goats, and choose to avert our ruin.'

He sat down again when he had spoken, and Calchas, son of Thestor, rose to his feet, he, peerless among augurs, who knew all things past, all things to come, and all things present, who, through the gift of prophecy granted him by Phoebus Apollo, had guided the Greek fleet to Ilium. He, with virtuous intent, spoke to the gathering, saying: 'Achilles, god-beloved, you ask that I explain far-striking Apollo's anger. Well, I will, but take thought, and swear to me you'll be ready to defend me with strength and word; for I believe I'll anger the man who rules the Argives in his might, whom all the Achaeans obey. For a king in his anger crushes a lesser man. Even if he swallows anger for a while, he will nurse resentment till he chooses to repay. Consider then, if you can keep me safe.'

Swift-footed Achilles spoke in reply: 'Courage, and say out what truth you know, for by god-beloved Apollo to whom you pray, whose utterances you grant to the Danaans, none shall lay hand on you beside the hollow ships, no Danaan while I live and see the earth, not even if it's Agamemnon you mean, who counts himself the best of the Achaeans.'

Then the peerless seer took heart, and spoke to them, saying: 'Not for a broken vow, or a missed sacrifice, does he blame us, but because of that priest whom Agamemnon offended, refusing the ransom, refusing to free his daughter. That is why the god, the far-striker, makes us suffer, and will do so, and will not rid the Danaans of loathsome plague, until we return the bright-eyed girl to her father, without his recompense or ransom, and send a sacred offering to Chryse; then we might persuade him to relent.'



Figure 1.2: **Homer.**

1.3 The Odyssey

The return of Ulysses

translated by Samuel Butler

Tell me, o muse, of that ingenious hero who travelled far and wide after he had sacked the famous town of Troy. Many cities did he visit, and many were the nations with whose manners and customs he was acquainted; moreover he suffered much by sea while trying to save his own life and bring his men safely home; but do what he might he could not save his men, for they perished through their own sheer folly in eating the cattle of the Sun-god Hyperion; so the god prevented them from ever reaching home. Tell me, too, about all these things, O daughter of Jove, from whatsoever source you may know them. So now all who escaped death in battle or by shipwreck had got safely home except Ulysses, and he, though he was longing to return to his wife and country, was detained by the goddess Calypso, who had got him into a large cave and wanted to marry him. But as years went by, there came a time when the gods settled that he should go back to Ithaca; even then, however, when he was among his own people, his troubles were not yet over; nevertheless all the gods had now begun to pity him except Neptune, who still persecuted him without ceasing and would not let him get home. Now Neptune had gone off to the Ethiopians, who are at the world's

end, and lie in two halves, the one looking West and the other East. He had gone there to accept a hecatomb of sheep and oxen, and was enjoying himself at his festival; but the other gods met in the house of Olympian Jove, and the sire of gods and men spoke first. At that moment he was thinking of Aegisthus, who had been killed by Agamemnon's son Orestes; so he said to the other gods:

“See now, how men lay blame upon us gods for what is after all nothing but their own folly. Look at Aegisthus; he must needs make love to Agamemnon's wife unrighteously and then kill Agamemnon, though he knew it would be the death of him; for I sent Mercury to warn him not to do either of these things, inasmuch as Orestes would be sure to take his revenge when he grew up and wanted to return home. Mercury told him this in all good will but he would not listen, and now he has paid for everything in full.”

Then Minerva said, “Father, son of Saturn, King of kings, it served Aegisthus right, and so it would any one else who does as he did; but Aegisthus is neither here nor there; it is for Ulysses that my heart bleeds, when I think of his sufferings in that lonely sea-girt island, far away, poor man, from all his friends. It is an island covered with forest, in the very middle of the sea, and a goddess lives there, daughter of the magician Atlas, who looks after the bottom of the ocean, and carries the great columns that keep heaven and earth asunder. This daughter of Atlas has got hold of poor unhappy Ulysses, and keeps trying by every kind of blandishment to make him forget his home, so that he is tired of life, and thinks of nothing but how he may once more see the smoke of his own chimneys. You, sir, take no heed of this, and yet when Ulysses was before Troy did he not propitiate you with many a burnt sacrifice? Why then should you keep on being so angry with him?”

And Jove said, “My child, what are you talking about? How can I forget Ulysses than whom there is no more capable man on earth, nor more liberal in his offerings to the immortal gods that live in heaven? Bear in mind, however, that Neptune is still furious with Ulysses for having blinded an eye of Polyphemus king of the Cyclopes. Polyphemus is son to Neptune by the nymph Thoosa, daughter to the sea-king Phorcys; therefore though he will not kill Ulysses outright, he torments him by preventing him from getting home. Still, let us lay our heads together and see how we can help him to return; Neptune will then be pacified, for if we are all of a mind he can hardly stand out against us.”

And Minerva said, “Father, son of Saturn, King of kings, if, then, the gods now mean that Ulysses should get home, we should first send Mercury to the Ogygian island to tell Calypso that we have made up our

minds and that he is to return. In the meantime I will go to Ithaca, to put heart into Ulysses' son Telemachus; I will embolden him to call the Achaeans in assembly, and speak out to the suitors of his mother Penelope, who persist in eating up any number of his sheep and oxen; I will also conduct him to Sparta and to Pylos, to see if he can hear anything about the return of his dear father- for this will make people speak well of him."

So saying she bound on her glittering golden sandals, imperishable, with which she can fly like the wind over land or sea; she grasped the redoubtable bronze-shod spear, so stout and sturdy and strong, wherewith she quells the ranks of heroes who have displeased her, and down she darted from the topmost summits of Olympus, whereon forthwith she was in Ithaca, at the gateway of Ulysses' house, disguised as a visitor, Mentis, chief of the Taphians, and she held a bronze spear in her hand. There she found the lordly suitors seated on hides of the oxen which they had killed and eaten, and playing draughts in front of the house. Men-servants and pages were bustling about to wait upon them, some mixing wine with water in the mixing-bowls, some cleaning down the tables with wet sponges and laying them out again, and some cutting up great quantities of meat. Telemachus saw her long before any one else did. He was sitting moodily among the suitors thinking about his brave father, and how he would send them flying out of the house, if he were to come to his own again and be honoured as in days gone by. Thus brooding as he sat among them, he caught sight of Minerva and went straight to the gate, for he was vexed that a stranger should be kept waiting for admittance. He took her right hand in his own, and bade her give him her spear. "Welcome," said he, "to our house, and when you have partaken of food you shall tell us what you have come for."

He led the way as he spoke, and Minerva followed him. When they were within he took her spear and set it in the spear-stand against a strong bearing-post along with the many other spears of his unhappy father, and he conducted her to a richly decorated seat under which he threw a cloth of damask. There was a footstool also for her feet, and he set another seat near her for himself, away from the suitors, that she might not be annoyed while eating by their noise and insolence, and that he might ask her more freely about his father.

A maid servant then brought them water in a beautiful golden ewer and poured it into a silver basin for them to wash their hands, and she drew a clean table beside them. An upper servant brought them bread, and offered them many good things of what there was in the house, the carver fetched them plates of all manner of meats and set cups of gold by their side, and a man-servant brought them wine and

poured it out for them.

Then the suitors came in and took their places on the benches and seats. Forthwith men servants poured water over their hands, maids went round with the bread-baskets, pages filled the mixing-bowls with wine and water, and they laid their hands upon the good things that were before them. As soon as they had had enough to eat and drink they wanted music and dancing, which are the crowning embellishments of a banquet, so a servant brought a lyre to Phemius, whom they compelled perforce to sing to them. As soon as he touched his lyre and began to sing Telemachus spoke low to Minerva, with his head close to hers that no man might hear.

“I hope, sir,” said he, “that you will not be offended with what I am going to say. Singing comes cheap to those who do not pay for it, and all this is done at the cost of one whose bones lie rotting in some wilderness or grinding to powder in the surf. If these men were to see my father come back to Ithaca they would pray for longer legs rather than a longer purse, for money would not serve them; but he, alas, has fallen on an ill fate, and even when people do sometimes say that he is coming, we no longer heed them; we shall never see him again. And now, sir, tell me and tell me true, who you are and where you come from. Tell me of your town and parents, what manner of ship you came in, how your crew brought you to Ithaca, and of what nation they declared themselves to be- for you cannot have come by land. Tell me also truly, for I want to know, are you a stranger to this house, or have you been here in my father’s time? In the old days we had many visitors for my father went about much himself.”

And Minerva answered, “I will tell you truly and particularly all about it. I am Mentos, son of Anchialus, and I am King of the Taphians. I have come here with my ship and crew, on a voyage to men of a foreign tongue being bound for Temesa with a cargo of iron, and I shall bring back copper. As for my ship, it lies over yonder off the open country away from the town, in the harbour Rheithron under the wooded mountain Neritum. Our fathers were friends before us, as old Laertes will tell you, if you will go and ask him. They say, however, that he never comes to town now, and lives by himself in the country, faring hardly, with an old woman to look after him and get his dinner for him, when he comes in tired from pottering about his vineyard. They told me your father was at home again, and that was why I came, but it seems the gods are still keeping him back, for he is not dead yet not on the mainland. It is more likely he is on some sea-girt island in mid ocean, or a prisoner among savages who are detaining him against his will I am no prophet, and know very little about omens, but I speak as it is borne in upon me from heaven, and

assure you that he will not be away much longer; for he is a man of such resource that even though he were in chains of iron he would find some means of getting home again. But tell me, and tell me true, can Ulysses really have such a fine looking fellow for a son? You are indeed wonderfully like him about the head and eyes, for we were close friends before he set sail for Troy where the flower of all the Argives went also. Since that time we have never either of us seen the other.”

”My mother,” answered Telemachus, tells me I am son to Ulysses, but it is a wise child that knows his own father. Would that I were son to one who had grown old upon his own estates, for, since you ask me, there is no more ill-starred man under heaven than he who they tell me is my father.”

And Minerva said, “There is no fear of your race dying out yet, while Penelope has such a fine son as you are. But tell me, and tell me true, what is the meaning of all this feasting, and who are these people? What is it all about? Have you some banquet, or is there a wedding in the family- for no one seems to be bringing any provisions of his own? And the guests- how atrociously they are behaving; what riot they make over the whole house; it is enough to disgust any respectable person who comes near them.”

”Sir,” said Telemachus, ”as regards your question, so long as my father was here it was well with us and with the house, but the gods in their displeasure have willed it otherwise, and have hidden him away more closely than mortal man was ever yet hidden. I could have borne it better even though he were dead, if he had fallen with his men before Troy, or had died with friends around him when the days of his fighting were done; for then the Achaeans would have built a mound over his ashes, and I should myself have been heir to his renown; but now the storm-winds have spirited him away we know not wither; he is gone without leaving so much as a trace behind him, and I inherit nothing but dismay. Nor does the matter end simply with grief for the loss of my father; heaven has laid sorrows upon me of yet another kind; for the chiefs from all our islands, Dulichium, Same, and the woodland island of Zacynthus, as also all the principal men of Ithaca itself, are eating up my house under the pretext of paying their court to my mother, who will neither point blank say that she will not marry, nor yet bring matters to an end; so they are making havoc of my estate, and before long will do so also with myself.”

“Is that so?” exclaimed Minerva, “then you do indeed want Ulysses home again. Give him his helmet, shield, and a couple lances, and if he is the man he was when I first knew him in our house, drinking and making merry, he would soon lay his hands about these rascally

suitors, were he to stand once more upon his own threshold. He was then coming from Ephyra, where he had been to beg poison for his arrows from Ilus, son of Mermerus. Ilus feared the ever-living gods and would not give him any, but my father let him have some, for he was very fond of him. If Ulysses is the man he then was these suitors will have a short shrift and a sorry wedding.

"But there! It rests with heaven to determine whether he is to return, and take his revenge in his own house or no; I would, however, urge you to set about trying to get rid of these suitors at once. Take my advice, call the Achaean heroes in assembly to-morrow -lay your case before them, and call heaven to bear you witness. Bid the suitors take themselves off, each to his own place, and if your mother's mind is set on marrying again, let her go back to her father, who will find her a husband and provide her with all the marriage gifts that so dear a daughter may expect. As for yourself, let me prevail upon you to take the best ship you can get, with a crew of twenty men, and go in quest of your father who has so long been missing. Some one may tell you something, or (and people often hear things in this way) some heaven-sent message may direct you. First go to Pylos and ask Nestor; thence go on to Sparta and visit Menelaus, for he got home last of all the Achaeans; if you hear that your father is alive and on his way home, you can put up with the waste these suitors will make for yet another twelve months. If on the other hand you hear of his death, come home at once, celebrate his funeral rites with all due pomp, build a barrow to his memory, and make your mother marry again. Then, having done all this, think it well over in your mind how, by fair means or foul, you may kill these suitors in your own house. You are too old to plead infancy any longer; have you not heard how people are singing Orestes' praises for having killed his father's murderer Aegisthus? You are a fine, smart looking fellow; show your mettle, then, and make yourself a name in story. Now, however, I must go back to my ship and to my crew, who will be impatient if I keep them waiting longer; think the matter over for yourself, and remember what I have said to you."

"Sir," answered Telemachus, "it has been very kind of you to talk to me in this way, as though I were your own son, and I will do all you tell me; I know you want to be getting on with your voyage, but stay a little longer till you have taken a bath and refreshed yourself. I will then give you a present, and you shall go on your way rejoicing; I will give you one of great beauty and value- a keepsake such as only dear friends give to one another."

Minerva answered, "Do not try to keep me, for I would be on my way at once. As for any present you may be disposed to make me, keep it

till I come again, and I will take it home with me. You shall give me a very good one, and I will give you one of no less value in return."

With these words she flew away like a bird into the air, but she had given Telemachus courage, and had made him think more than ever about his father. He felt the change, wondered at it, and knew that the stranger had been a god, so he went straight to where the suitors were sitting.

Phemius was still singing, and his hearers sat rapt in silence as he told the sad tale of the return from Troy, and the ills Minerva had laid upon the Achaeans. Penelope, daughter of Icarius, heard his song from her room upstairs, and came down by the great staircase, not alone, but attended by two of her handmaids. When she reached the suitors she stood by one of the bearing posts that supported the roof of the cloisters with a staid maiden on either side of her. She held a veil, moreover, before her face, and was weeping bitterly.

"Phemius," she cried, "you know many another feat of gods and heroes, such as poets love to celebrate. Sing the suitors some one of these, and let them drink their wine in silence, but cease this sad tale, for it breaks my sorrowful heart, and reminds me of my lost husband whom I mourn ever without ceasing, and whose name was great over all Hellas and middle Argos."

"Mother," answered Telemachus, "let the bard sing what he has a mind to; bards do not make the ills they sing of; it is Jove, not they, who makes them, and who sends weal or woe upon mankind according to his own good pleasure. This fellow means no harm by singing the ill-fated return of the Danaans, for people always applaud the latest songs most warmly. Make up your mind to it and bear it; Ulysses is not the only man who never came back from Troy, but many another went down as well as he. Go, then, within the house and busy yourself with your daily duties, your loom, your distaff, and the ordering of your servants; for speech is man's matter, and mine above all others- for it is I who am master here."

She went wondering back into the house, and laid her son's saying in her heart. Then, going upstairs with her handmaids into her room, she mourned her dear husband till Minerva shed sweet sleep over her eyes. But the suitors were clamorous throughout the covered cloisters, and prayed each one that he might be her bed fellow.

Then Telemachus spoke, "Shameless," he cried, "and insolent suitors, let us feast at our pleasure now, and let there be no brawling, for it is a rare thing to hear a man with such a divine voice as Phemius has; but in the morning meet me in full assembly that I may give you formal notice to depart, and feast at one another's houses, turn and turn

about, at your own cost. If on the other hand you choose to persist in spunging upon one man, heaven help me, but Jove shall reckon with you in full, and when you fall in my father's house there shall be no man to avenge you."

The suitors bit their lips as they heard him, and marvelled at the boldness of his speech. Then, Antinous, son of Eupеithes, said, "The gods seem to have given you lessons in bluster and tall talking; may Jove never grant you to be chief in Ithaca as your father was before you."

Telemachus answered, "Antinous, do not chide with me, but, god willing, I will be chief too if I can. Is this the worst fate you can think of for me? It is no bad thing to be a chief, for it brings both riches and honour. Still, now that Ulysses is dead there are many great men in Ithaca both old and young, and some other may take the lead among them; nevertheless I will be chief in my own house, and will rule those whom Ulysses has won for me."

Then Eurymachus, son of Polybus, answered, "It rests with heaven to decide who shall be chief among us, but you shall be master in your own house and over your own possessions; no one while there is a man in Ithaca shall do you violence nor rob you. And now, my good fellow, I want to know about this stranger. What country does he come from? Of what family is he, and where is his estate? Has he brought you news about the return of your father, or was he on business of his own? He seemed a well-to-do man, but he hurried off so suddenly that he was gone in a moment before we could get to know him."

"My father is dead and gone," answered Telemachus, "and even if some rumour reaches me I put no more faith in it now. My mother does indeed sometimes send for a soothsayer and question him, but I give his prophecyings no heed. As for the stranger, he was Mentеs, son of Anchialus, chief of the Taphians, an old friend of my father's." But in his heart he knew that it had been the goddess.

The suitors then returned to their singing and dancing until the evening; but when night fell upon their pleasuring they went home to bed each in his own abode. Telemachus's room was high up in a tower that looked on to the outer court; hither, then, he hied, brooding and full of thought. A good old woman, Euryclea, daughter of Ops, the son of Pisenor, went before him with a couple of blazing torches.

Laertes had bought her with his own money when she was quite young; he gave the worth of twenty oxen for her, and shewed as much respect to her in his household as he did to his own wedded wife, but he did not take her to his bed for he feared his wife's resentment. She it was who now lighted Telemachus to his room, and she loved him better than any of the other women in the house did, for she had nursed him

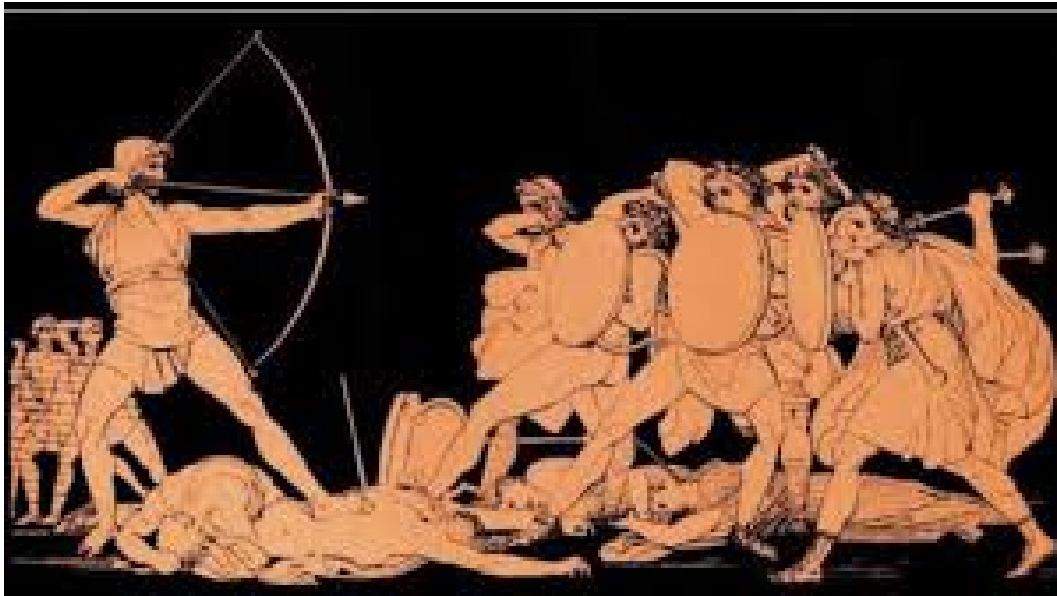


Figure 1.3: Ulysses returns to Ithica. He comes disguised as an old beggar, and is recognized only by his old nurse and his son, Telemachus. Ulysses then suddenly reveals his identity by easily stringing his very large bow, with which he directs arrows against the suitors who have been plotting to take over his kingdom.

when he was a baby. He opened the door of his bed room and sat down upon the bed; as he took off his shirt he gave it to the good old woman, who folded it tidily up, and hung it for him over a peg by his bed side, after which she went out, pulled the door to by a silver catch, and drew the bolt home by means of the strap. But Telemachus as he lay covered with a woollen fleece kept thinking all night through of his intended voyage of the counsel that Minerva had given him.

Chapter 2

ANCIENT GREEK POETRY AND DRAMA

2.1 The ethical message of Greek drama

In ancient Greece, drama was an essential part of ethical culture. Performances of the plays of great dramatists, such as Sophocles, Aeschylus and Euripides, allowed the public to debate questions of morality. A recurring theme was the punishment of *hubris* (excessive pride) by *nemesis* (the revenge of the gods). Hubris is arrogance in word, deed and thought. For example, hubris is having or maintaining stubbornly an attitude which goes against or ignores, say, the prophecies, counsel or pronouncements of the Delphic Oracle. The central meaning of hubris is doing deeds and thinking thoughts more than a mere mortal human should do and think, thereby showing impiety towards the gods.

Starting in approximately 500 B.C., drama flourished in the Greek city-states, especially in Athens, which was an important cultural center. The presentation of dramas was part of a festival dedicated to the god Dionysus. Masks were used by the actors, and by members of the chorus. The chorus commented on the action, and often pointed to the moral that could be drawn from it.

2.2 Sophocles, 497 BC - 406 BC

Power of Love

*O LOVE, thou art victor in fight: thou mak'st all things afraid;
Thou couchest thee softly at night on the cheeks of a maid;
Thou passest the bounds of the sea, and the folds of the fields;
To thee the immortal, to thee the ephemeral yields;
Thou maddenest them that possess thee; thou turnest astray
The souls of the just, to oppress them, out of the way;
Thou hast kindled amongst us pride, and the quarrel of kin;*

*Thou art lord, by the eyes of a bride, and the love-light therein;
Thou sittest assessor with Right; her kingdom is thine,
Who sports with invincible might, Aphrodite divine.*

Chorus from *Antigone*

[Strophe 1]

*Numberless are the world's wonders, but none
More wonderful than man; the stormgray sea
Yields to his prows, the huge crests bear him high;
Earth, holy and inexhaustible, is graven
With shining furrows where his plows have gone
Year after year, the timeless labor of stallions.*

[Antistrophe 1]

*The lightboned birds and beasts that cling to cover,
The lithe fish lighting their reaches of dim water,
All are taken, tamed in the net of his mind;
The lion on the hill, the wild horse windy-maned,
Resign to him; and his blunt yoke has broken
The sultry shoulders of the mountain bull.*

[Strophe 2]

*Words also, and thought as rapid as air,
He fashions to his good use; statecraft is his,
And his the skill that deflect the arrows of snow,
The spears of winter rain: from every wind
He has made himself secure - from all but one:
In the late wind of death he cannot stand.*

[Antistrophe 2]

*O clear intelligence, force beyond all measure!
O fate of man, working both good and evil!
When the laws are kept, how proudly his city stands!
When the laws are broken, what of his city then?
Never may the anarchic man find rest at my hearth,
Never be it said that my thoughts are his thoughts.*

2.3 Euripides, c.480 BC - c.406 BC

Speech of the nurse from Media

Would that the Argo had never winged its way to the land of Colchis through the dark-blue Symplegades! Would that the pine trees had never been felled in the glens of Mount Pelion and furnished oars for the hands of the heroes who at Pelias' command set forth in quest of the Golden Fleece! For then my lady Medea would not have sailed to the towers of Iolcus, her heart smitten with love for Jason, or persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father and hence now be inhabiting this land of Corinth, jseparated from her loved ones and country. At first, to be sure, she had, even in Corinth, a good life with her husband and children, an exile loved by the citizens to whose land she had come, and lending to Jason himself all her support. This it is that most rescues life from trouble, when a woman is not at variance with her husband.

But now all is enmity, and love's bonds are diseased. For Jason, abandoning his own children and my mistress, is bedding down in a royal match, having married the daughter of Creon, ruler of this land. Poor Medea, finding herself thus cast aside, calls loudly on his oaths, invokes the mighty assurance of his sworn right hand, and calls the gods to witness the unjust return she is getting from Jason. She lies fasting, giving her body up to pain, wasting away in tears all the time ever since she learned that she was wronged by her husband, neither lifting her face nor taking her eyes from the ground. She is as deaf to the advice of her friends as a stone or a wave of the sea: she is silent unless perchance to turn her snow-white neck and weep to herself for her dear father and her country and her ancestral house. All these she abandoned when she came here with a man who has now cast her aside. The poor woman has learned at misfortune's hand what a good thing it is not to be cut off from one's native land.

She loathes the children and takes no joy in looking at them. And I am afraid that she will hatch some sinister plan. For she has a terrible temper and will not put up with bad treatment (I know her, and I fear she may thrust a whetted sword through her vitals, slipping quietly into the house where the bed is spread, or kill the royal family and the bride-groom and then win some greater calamity. For she is dangerous. I tell you, no man who clashes with her will find it easy to crow in victory.

The Trojan Women, by Euripides

An example of a Greek tragedy with ethical implications, *The Trojan Women* follows the fate of the women of Troy after all their husbands and sons had been slaughtered by the

conquering Greeks. The play makes it clear to the audience that the conquering Greeks were guilty of *hubris*.

2.4 Aristophanes, c.446 BC - c.386 BC

Lysistrata, by Aristophanes

Although *The Trojan Women* protested against the atrocities and horrors of war, the play did not attack the institution of war itself. However, in *Lysistrata*, a comedy by Aristophanes first performed in Athens in 411 B.C., war as an institution is attacked. In the play, the women of all parts of Greece are persuaded to withhold sex from their husbands and lovers until the painfully long Peloponnesian Wars are ended. After much comic struggle, the men, of course, give in and agree to peace, since their overpowering desire for sex is greater than their addiction to fighting.

The opening scene from *Lysistrata*

LYSISTRATA stands alone with the Propylaea at her back.

LYSISTRATA If they were trysting for a Bacchanal, A feast of Pan or Colias or Genetyllis,
The tambourines would block the rowdy streets, But now there's not a woman to be seen
Except - ah, yes - this neighbour of mine yonder.

Enter *CALONICE*.

Good day *Calonice*.

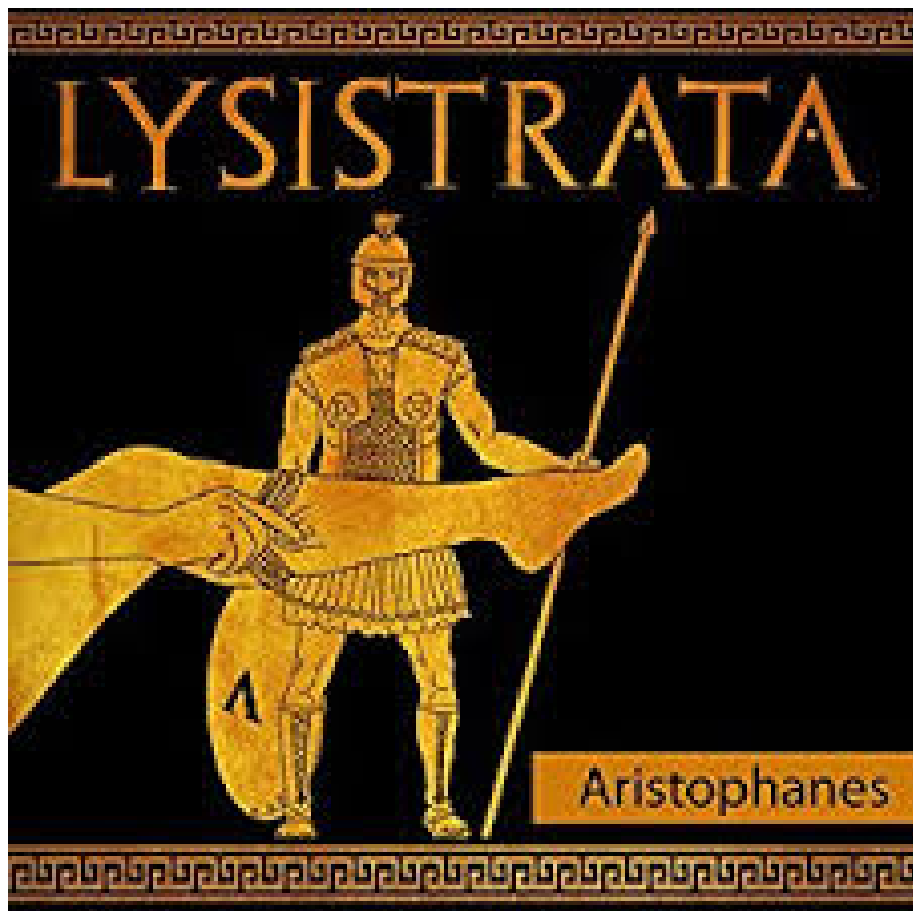
CALONICE Good day *Lysistrata*. But what has vexed you so? Tell me, child. What are these black looks for? It doesn't suit you To knit your eyebrows up glumly like that.

LYSISTRATA *Calonice*, it's more than I can bear, I am hot all over with blushes for our sex. Men say we're slippery rogues -

CALONICE And aren't they right?

LYSISTRATA Yet summoned on the most tremendous business For deliberation, still they snuggle in bed.

CALONICE My dear, they'll come. It's hard for women, you know, To get away. There's so much to do; Husbands to be patted and put in good tempers: Servants to be poked out: children washed Or soothed with lullays or fed with mouthfuls of pap.



LYSISTRATA But I tell you, here's a far more weighty object.

CALONICE What is it all about, dear *Lysistrata*, That you've called the women hither in a troop? What kind of an object is it?

LYSISTRATA A tremendous thing!

CALONICE And long?

LYSISTRATA Indeed, it may be very lengthy.

CALONICE Then why aren't they here?

LYSISTRATA No man's connected with it; If that was the case, they'd soon come fluttering along. No, no. It concerns an object I've felt over And turned this way and that for sleepless nights.

CALONICE It must be fine to stand such long attention.

LYSISTRATA So fine it comes to this - Greece saved by Woman!

2.5 Sappho, c.630 BC - c.570 BC

Glittering-minded deathless Aphrodite

*Glittering-Minded deathless Aphrodite,
I beg you, Zeus's daughter, weaver of snares,
Don't shatter my heart with fierce
Pain, goddess,
But come now, if ever before
You heard my voice, far off, and listened,
And left your father's golden house,
And came,
Yoking your chariot. Lovely the swift Sparrows that brought you over black earth
A whirring of wings through mid-air
Down the sky.*

*They came. And you, sacred one,
Smiling with deathless face, asking
What now, while I suffer: why now*

*I cry out to you, again:
What now I desire above all in my
Mad heart. 'Whom now, shall I persuade
To admit you again to her love,
Sappho, who wrongs you now?*

*If she runs now she'll follow later,
If she refuses gifts she'll give them.
If she loves not, now, she'll soon
Love against her will.'*
*Come to me now, then, free me
From aching care, and win me
All my heart longs to win. You,
Be my friend.*

Come With Me To Crete

*Come to me here from Crete,
To this holy temple, where
Your lovely apple grove stands,
And your altars that flicker
With incense.*

*And below the apple branches, cold
Clear water sounds, everything shadowed
By roses, and sleep that falls from
Bright shaking leaves.*

*And a pasture for horses blossoms
With the flowers of spring, and breezes
Are flowing here like honey:
Come to me here,*

*Here, Cyprian, delicately taking
Nectar in golden cups
Mixed with a festive joy,
And pour.*



Figure 2.1: **Sapho.**

Chapter 3

POETS OF ANCIENT ROME

3.1 Lucretius, c.90 BC - c.55 BC

In the 5th century B.C. there was a great deal of discussion among the Greek philosophers about whether there is anything permanent in the universe. Heraclitus (540 B.C. - 475 B.C.) maintained that *everything* is in a state of flux. Parmenides (540 B.C. - c. 470 B.C.) maintained that on the contrary *nothing* changes - that all change is illusory. Leucippus (490 B.C. - c. 420 B.C.) and his student Democritus (470 B.C. - c. 380 B.C.), by a lucky chance, hit on what a modern scientist would regard as very nearly the correct answer.

According to Democritus, if we cut an apple in half, and then cut the half into parts, and keep on in this way for long enough, we will eventually come down to pieces which cannot be further subdivided. Democritus called these ultimate building blocks of matter “atoms”, which means “indivisible”. He visualized the spaces between the atoms as being empty, and he thought that when a knife cuts an apple, the sharp edge of the blade fits into the empty spaces between the atoms and forces them apart.

That the ideas of Democritus did not disappear entirely was due to the influence of Epicurus (341 B.C. - 270 B.C.), who made mechanism and atomism the cornerstones of his philosophy. The Roman poet Lucretius (95 B.C. - 55 B.C.) expounded the philosophy of Epicurus in a long poem called *De Natura Rerum* (On the Nature of Things). During the middle ages, this poem disappeared completely, but in 1417, a single surviving manuscript was discovered. The poem was then published, using Gutenberg’s newly-invented printing press, and it became extremely popular. Thus, the idea of atoms was not entirely lost, and after being revived by John Dalton, it became one of the cornerstones of modern science.

On the Nature of Things, Prologue

*Mother of Rome, delight of Gods and men,
Dear Venus that beneath the gliding stars
Makest to teem the many-voyaged main*

And fruitful lands- for all of living things
 Through thee alone are evermore conceived,
 Through thee are risen to visit the great sun-
 Before thee, Goddess, and thy coming on,
 Flee stormy wind and massy cloud away,
 For thee the daedal Earth bears scented flowers,
 For thee waters of the unvexed deep
 Smile, and the hollows of the serene sky
 Glow with diffused radiance for thee!
 For soon as comes the springtime face of day,
 And procreant gales blow from the West unbarred,
 First fowls of air, smit to the heart by thee,
 Foretoken thy approach, O thou Divine,
 And leap the wild herds round the happy fields
 Or swim the bounding torrents. Thus amain,
 Seized with the spell, all creatures follow thee
 Whithersoever thou walkest forth to lead,
 And thence through seas and mountains and swift streams,
 Through leafy homes of birds and greening plains,
 Kindling the lure of love in every breast,
 Thou bringest the eternal generations forth,
 Kind after kind. And since 'tis thou alone
 Guidest the Cosmos, and without thee naught
 Is risen to reach the shining shores of light,
 Nor aught of joyful or of lovely born,
 Thee do I crave co-partner in that verse
 Which I presume on Nature to compose
 For Memmius mine, whom thou hast willed to be
 Peerless in every grace at every hour-
 Wherefore indeed, Divine one, give my words
 Immortal charm. Lull to a timely rest
 O'er sea and land the savage works of war,
 For thou alone hast power with public peace
 To aid mortality; since he who rules
 The savage works of battle, puissant Mars,
 How often to thy bosom flings his strength
 O'er-mastered by the eternal wound of love-
 And there, with eyes and full throat backward thrown,
 Gazing, my Goddess, open-mouthed at thee,
 Pastures on love his greedy sight, his breath
 Hanging upon thy lips. Him thus reclined
 Fill with thy holy body, round, above!
 Pour from those lips soft syllables to win

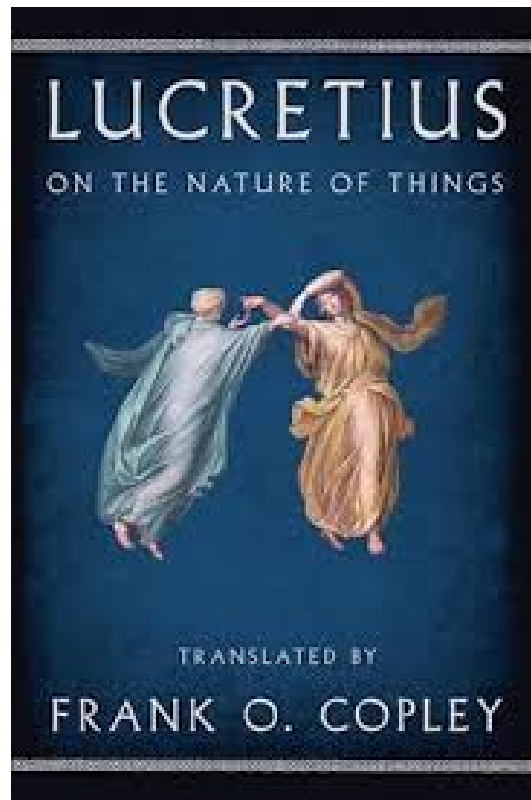


Figure 3.1: Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*.

*Peace for the Romans, glorious Lady, peace!
 For in a season troublous to the state
 Neither may I attend this task of mine
 With thought untroubled, nor mid such events
 The illustrious scion of the Memmian house
 Neglect the civic cause.*

3.2 Ovid, 43 BC - c.17 AD

Love and War

translated from the Latin by Jon Corelis

*Lovers all are soldiers, and Cupid has his campaigns:
 I tell you, Atticus, lovers all are soldiers.
 Youth is fit for war, and also fit for Venus.
 Imagine an aged soldier, an elderly lover!
 A general looks for spirit in his brave soldiery;*

*a pretty girl wants spirit in her companions.
 Both stay up all night long, and each sleeps on the ground;
 one guards his mistress's doorway, one his general's.
 The soldier's lot requires far journeys; send his girl,
 the zealous lover will follow her anywhere.
 He'll cross the glowering mountains, the rivers swollen with storm;
 he'll tread a pathway through the heaped-up snows;
 and never whine of raging Eurus when he sets sail
 or wait for stars propitious for his voyage.
 Who but lovers and soldiers endure the chill of night,
 and blizzards interspersed with driving rain?
 The soldier reconnoiters among the dangerous foe;
 the lover spies to learn his rival's plans.
 Soldiers besiege strong cities; lovers, a harsh girl's home;
 one storms town gates, the other storms house doors.
 It's clever strategy to raid a sleeping foe
 and slay an unarmed host by force of arms.
 (That's how the troops of Thracian Rhesus met their doom,
 and you, O captive steeds, forsook your master.)
 Well, lovers take advantage of husbands when they sleep,
 launching surprise attacks while the enemy snores.
 To slip through bands of guards and watchful sentinels
 is always the soldier's mission - and the lover's.
 Mars wavers; Venus flutters: the conquered rise again,
 and those you'd think could never fall, lie low.
 So those who like to say that love is indolent
 should stop: Love is the soul of enterprise.
 Sad Achilles burns for Briseis, his lost darling:
 Trojans, smash the Greeks' power while you may!
 From Andromache's embrace Hector went to war;
 his own wife set the helmet on his head;
 and High King Agamemnon, looking on Priam's child,
 was stunned (they say) by the Maenad's flowing hair.
 And Mars himself was trapped in The Artificer's bonds:
 no tale was more notorious in heaven.
 I too was once an idler, born for careless ease;
 my shady couch had made my spirit soft.
 But care for a lovely girl aroused me from my sloth
 and bid me to enlist in her campaign.
 So now you see me forceful, in combat all night long.
 If you want a life of action, fall in love.*

On Fidelity

translated from the Latin by Jon Corelis

*I don't ask you to be faithful - you're beautiful, after all -
but just that I be spared the pain of knowing.
I make no stringent demands that you should really be chaste,
but only that you try to cover up.
If a girl can claim to be pure, it's the same as being pure:
it's only admitted vice that makes for scandal.
What madness, to confess by day what's wrapped in night,
and what you've done in secret, openly tell!
The hooker, about to bed some Roman off the street
still locks her door first, keeping out the crowd:
will you yourself then make your sins notorious,
accusing and prosecuting your own crime?
Be wise, and learn at least to imitate chaste girls,
and let me believe you're good, though you are not.
Do what you do, but simply deny you ever did:
there's nothing wrong with public modesty.
There is a proper place for looseness: fill it up
with all voluptuousness, and banish shame;
but when you're done there, then put off all playfulness
and leave your indiscretions in your bed.
There, don't be ashamed to lay your gown aside
and press your thigh against a pressing thigh;
there take and give deep kisses with your crimson lips;
let love contrive a thousand ways of passion;
there let delighted words and moans come ceaselessly,
and make the mattress quiver with playful motion.
But put on with your clothes a face that's all discretion,
and let Shame disavow your shocking deeds.
Trick everyone, trick me: leave me in ignorance;
let me enjoy the life of a happy fool.
Why must I see so often notes received - and sent?
Why must I see two imprints on your bed,
or your hair disarrayed much more than sleep could do?
Why must I notice love bites on your neck?
You all but flaunt your indiscretions in my face.
Think of me, if not of your reputation.
I lose my mind, I die, when you confess you've sinned;
I break out in cold sweat from hand to foot;
I love you then, and hate you - in vain, since I must love you;
I wish then I were dead - and you were too!*

*I won't investigate or check whatever you try
to hide: I will be thankful to be deceived.
But even if I catch you in the very act
and look on your disgrace with my own eyes,
deny that I have seen what I have clearly seen,
and my eyes will agree with what you claim.
You'll win an easy prize from a man who wants to lose,
only remember to say, 'I didn't do it.'
Since you can gain your victory with one short phrase,
win on account of your judge, if not your case.*

3.3 Virgil, 70 BC - 19 AD

Alexis

*The shepherd Corydon with love was fired
For fair Alexis, his own master's joy:
No room for hope had he, yet, none the less,
The thick-leaved shadowy-soaring beech-tree grove
Still would he haunt, and there alone, as thus,
To woods and hills pour forth his artless strains.
'Cruel Alexis, heed you naught my songs?
Have you no pity? you'll drive me to my death.
Now even the cattle court the cooling shade
And the green lizard hides him in the thorn:
Now for tired mowers, with the fierce heat spent,
Pounds Thestilis her mess of savoury herbs,
Wild thyme and garlic. I, with none beside,
Save hoarse cicadas shrilling through the brake,
Still track your footprints 'neath the broiling sun.
Better have borne the petulant proud disdain
Of Amaryllis, or Menalcas wooed,
Albeit he was so dark, and you so fair!
Trust not too much to colour, beauteous boy;
White privets fall, dark hyacinths are culled.
You scorn me, Alexis, who or what I am
Care not to ask- how rich in flocks, or how
In snow-white milk abounding: yet for me
Roam on Sicilian hills a thousand lambs;
Summer or winter, still my milk-pails brim.*

*I sing as erst Amphion of Circe sang,
 What time he went to call his cattle home
 On Attic Aracynthus. Nor am I
 So ill to look on: lately on the beach
 I saw myself, when winds had stilled the sea,
 And, if that mirror lie not, would not fear
 Daphnis to challenge, though yourself were judge.
 Ah! were you but content with me to dwell.
 Some lowly cot in the rough fields our home,
 Shoot down the stags, or with green osier-wand
 Round up the straggl'ing flock! There you with me
 In silvan strains will learn to rival Pan.
 Pan first with wax taught reed with reed to join;
 For sheep alike and shepherd Pan hath care.
 Nor with the reed's edge fear you to make rough
 Your dainty lip; such arts as these to learn
 What did Amyntas do?— what did he not?
 A pipe have I, of hemlock-stalks compact
 In lessening lengths, Damoetas' dying-gift:
 'Mine once,' quoth he, 'now yours, as heir to own.'
 Foolish Amyntas heard and envied me.
 Ay, and two fawns, I risked my neck to find
 In a steep glen, with coats white-dappled still,
 From a sheep's udders suckled twice a day—
 These still I keep for you; which Thestylis
 Implores me oft to let her lead away;
 And she shall have them, since my gifts you spurn.
 Come hither, beautiful boy; for you the Nymphs
 Bring baskets, see, with lilies brimmed; for you,
 Plucking pale violets and poppy-heads,
 Now the fair Naiad, of narcissus flower
 And fragrant fennel, doth one posy twine—
 With cassia then, and other scented herbs,
 Blends them, and sets the tender hyacinth off
 With yellow marigold. I too will pick
 Quinces all silvered-o'er with hoary down,
 Chestnuts, which Amaryllis wont to love,
 And waxen plums withal: this fruit no less
 Shall have its meed of honour; and I will pluck
 You too, ye laurels, and you, ye myrtles, near,
 For so your sweets ye mingle. Corydon,
 You are a boor, nor heeds a whit your gifts
 Alexis; no, nor would Iollas yield,*

*Should gifts decide the day. Alack! alack!
 What misery have I brought upon my head!-
 Loosed on the flowers Siroces to my bane,
 And the wild boar upon my crystal springs!
 Whom do you fly, infatuate? gods ere now,
 And Dardan Paris, have made the woods their home.
 Let Pallas keep the towers her hand hath built,
 Us before all things let the woods delight.
 The grim-eyed lioness pursues the wolf,
 The wolf the she-goat, the she-goat herself
 In wanton sport the flowering cytisus,
 And Corydon Alexis, each led on
 By their own longing. See, the ox comes home
 With plough up-tilted, and the shadows grow
 To twice their length with the departing sun,
 Yet me love burns, for who can limit love?
 Ah! Corydon, Corydon, what hath crazed your wit?
 Your vine half-pruned hangs on the leafy elm;
 Why haste you not to weave what need requires
 Of pliant rush or osier? Scorned by this,
 Elsewhere some new Alexis you will find.'
 For fair Alexis, his own master's joy:
 No room for hope had he, yet, none the less,
 The thick-leaved shadowy-soaring beech-tree grove
 Still would he haunt, and there alone, as thus,
 To woods and hills pour forth his artless strains.
 'Cruel Alexis, heed you naught my songs?
 Have you no pity? you'll drive me to my death.
 Now even the cattle court the cooling shade
 And the green lizard hides him in the thorn:
 Now for tired mowers, with the fierce heat spent,
 Pounds Thestylis her mess of savoury herbs,
 Wild thyme and garlic. I, with none beside,
 Save hoarse cicadas shrilling through the brake,
 Still track your footprints 'neath the broiling sun.
 Better have borne the petulant proud disdain
 Of Amaryllis, or Menalcas wooed,
 Albeit he was so dark, and you so fair!
 Trust not too much to colour, beauteous boy;
 White privets fall, dark hyacinths are culled.
 You scorn me, Alexis, who or what I am
 Care not to ask- how rich in flocks, or how
 In snow-white milk abounding: yet for me*

Roam on Sicilian hills a thousand lambs;
 Summer or winter, still my milk-pails brim.
 I sing as erst Amphion of Circe sang,
 What time he went to call his cattle home
 On Attic Aracynthus. Nor am I
 So ill to look on: lately on the beach
 I saw myself, when winds had stilled the sea,
 And, if that mirror lie not, would not fear
 Daphnis to challenge, though yourself were judge.
 Ah! were you but content with me to dwell.
 Some lowly cot in the rough fields our home,
 Shoot down the stags, or with green osier-wand
 Round up the straggling flock! There you with me
 In silvan strains will learn to rival Pan.
 Pan first with wax taught reed with reed to join;
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 Nor with the reed's edge fear you to make rough
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 Ay, and two fawns, I risked my neck to find
 In a steep glen, with coats white-dappled still,
 From a sheep's udders suckled twice a day-
 These still I keep for you; which Thestylis
 Implores me oft to let her lead away;
 And she shall have them, since my gifts you spurn.
 Come hither, beauteous boy; for you the Nymphs
 Bring baskets, see, with lilies brimmed; for you,
 Plucking pale violets and poppy-heads,
 Now the fair Naiad, of narcissus flower
 And fragrant fennel, doth one posy twine-
 With cassia then, and other scented herbs,
 Blends them, and sets the tender hyacinth off
 With yellow marigold. I too will pick
 Quinces all silvered-o'er with hoary down,
 Chestnuts, which Amaryllis wont to love,
 And waxen plums withal: this fruit no less
 Shall have its meed of honour; and I will pluck
 You too, ye laurels, and you, ye myrtles, near,
 For so your sweets ye mingle. Corydon,

*You are a boor, nor heeds a whit your gifts
 Alexis; no, nor would Iollas yield,
 Should gifts decide the day. Alack! alack!
 What misery have I brought upon my head!-
 Loosed on the flowers Siroces to my bane,
 And the wild boar upon my crystal springs!
 Whom do you fly, infatuate? gods ere now,
 And Dardan Paris, have made the woods their home.
 Let Pallas keep the towers her hand hath built,
 Us before all things let the woods delight.
 The grim-eyed lioness pursues the wolf,
 The wolf the she-goat, the she-goat herself
 In wanton sport the flowering cytissus,
 And Corydon Alexis, each led on
 By their own longing. See, the ox comes home
 With plough up-tilted, and the shadows grow
 To twice their length with the departing sun,
 Yet me love burns, for who can limit love?
 Ah! Corydon, Corydon, what hath crazed your wit?
 Your vine half-pruned hangs on the leafy elm;
 Why haste you not to weave what need requires
 Of pliant rush or osier? Scorned by this,
 Elsewhere some new Alexis you will find.'*

3.4 Juvenal, late 1st century AD - early 2nd century AD

SATIRE I: *Difficile est Saturnam non Scribere*

What? Am I to be a listener only all my days? Am I never to get my word in - I that have been so often bored by the Theseid of the ranting Cordus? Shall this one have spouted to me his comedies, and that one his love ditties, and I be unavenged? Shall I have no revenge on one who has taken up the whole day with an interminable Telephus, or with an Orestes, which, after filling the margin at the top of the roll and the back as well, hasn't even yet come to an end? No one knows his own house so well as I know the groves of Mars, and the cave of Vulcan near the cliffs of Aeolus. What the winds are brewing; whose souls Aeacus has on the rack; from what country another worthy is carrying off that stolen golden fleece; how big are the ash trees which Monychus tosses about; these are the themes with which Fronto's plane trees and marble halls are for ever ringing until the pillars quiver and quake under the continual recitations; such is the kind of stuff you may

look for from every poet, greatest or least. Well, I too have slipped my hand from under the cane; I too have counselled Sulla to retire from public life and sleep his fill; it is a foolish clemency when you jostle against poets at every corner, to spare paper that will be wasted anyhow. But if you can give me time, and will listen quietly to reason, I will tell you why I prefer to run in the same course over which the great nursling of Aurunea drove his steeds.

When a soft eunuch takes to matrimony, and Maevia, with spear in hand and breasts exposed, to pig-sticking; when a fellow under whose razor my stiff youthful beard used to grate[9] challenges, with his single wealth, the whole nobility; when a gutter-snipe of the Nile like Crispinus - a slave-born denizen of Canopus - hitches a Tyrian cloak on to his shoulder, whilst on his sweating finger he airs a summer ring of gold, unable to endure the weight of a heavier gem - it is hard not to write satire. For who can be so tolerant of this monstrous city, who so iron of soul, as to contain himself when the brand-new litter of lawyer Matho comes along, filled with his huge self; after him one who has informed against his noble patron and will soon sweep away the remnant of our nobility already gnawed to the bone - one whom Massa dreads, whom Carus propitiates by a bribe, and to whom Thymele was sent as envoy by the terrified Latinus; when you are thrust on one side by men who earn legacies by nightly performances, and are raised to heaven by that now royal road to high preferment - the favours of an aged and wealthy woman? Each of the lovers will have his share; Proculeius a twelfth part, Gillo eleven parts, each in proportion to the magnitude of his services. Let each take the price of his own blood, and turn as pale as a man who has trodden upon a snake bare-footed, or of one who awaits his turn to orate before the altar at Lugdunum.

Why tell how my heart burns hot with rage when I see the people hustled by a mob of retainers attending on one who has defrauded and debauched his ward, or on another who has been condemned by a futile verdict - for what matters infamy if the cash be kept? The exiled Marius[15] carouses from the eighth hour of the day and revels in the wrath of Heaven, while you, poor Province, win your cause and weep!

Must I not deem these things worthy of the Venusian's[16] lamp? Must I not have my fling at them? Should I do better to tell tales about Hercules, or Diomedes, or the bellowing in the Labyrinth, or about the flying carpenter[17] and the lad[18] who splashed into the sea; and that in an age when the compliant husband, if his wife may not lawfully inherit, takes money from her paramour, being well trained to keep his eyes upon the ceiling, or to snore with wakeful nose over his cups; an age when one who has squandered his family fortunes upon horse flesh thinks it right and proper to look for the command of a cohort? See him dashing at break-neck speed, like a very Automedon, along the Flaminian way, holding the reins himself, while he shows himself off to his great-coated mistress!

Would you not like to fill up a whole note-book at the street crossings when you see a forger borne along upon the necks of six porters, and exposed to view on this side and on that in his almost naked litter, and reminding you of the lounging Maecenas; one who by help

of a scrap of paper and a moistened seal has converted himself into a fine and wealthy gentleman?

Then up comes a lordly dame who, when her husband wants a drink, mixes toad's blood with his old Calenian, and improving upon Lucusta herself, teaches her artless neighbours to brave the talk of the town and carry forth to burial the blackened corpses of their husbands. If you want to be anybody nowadays, you must dare some crime that merits narrow Gyara or a gaol; honesty is praised and starves: It is to their crimes that men owe their pleasure-grounds and high commands, their fine tables and old silver goblets with goats standing out in relief. Who can get sleep for thinking of a money-loving daughter-in-law seduced, of brides that have lost their virtue, or of adulterers not out of their 'teens? Though nature say me nay, indignation will prompt my verse, of whatever kind it be - such verse as I can write, or Cluuienus!

From the day when the rain-clouds lifted up the waters, and Deucalion climbed that mountain in his ship to seek an oracle - that day when stones grew soft and warm with life, and Pyrrha showed maidens in nature's garb to men - all the doings of mankind, their vows, their fears, their angers and their pleasures, their joys and goings to and fro, shall form the motley subject of my page. For when was Vice more rampant? When did the maw of Avarice gape wider? When was gambling so reckless? Men come not now with purses to the hazard of the gaming table, but with a treasure-chest beside them. What battles will you there see waged with a steward for armour-bearer! Is it a simple form of madness to lose a hundred thousand sesterces, and not have a shirt to give to a shivering slave? Which of our grandfathers built such numbers of villas, or dined by himself off seven courses? Look now at the meagre dole set down upon the threshold for a toga-clad mob to scramble for! The patron first peers into your face, fearing that you may be claiming under someone else's name; once recognised, you will get your share. He then bids the crier call up the Trojan-blooded nobles - for they too besiege the door as well as we: "The Praetor first," says he, "and after him the Tribune." "But I was here first," says a freedman who stops the way; "why should I be afraid, or hesitate to keep my place? Though born on the Euphrates - a fact which the little windows in my ears would testify though I myself denied it - yet I am the owner of five shops which bring me in four hundred thousand sesterces. What better thing does the Broad Purple bestow if a Corvinus herds sheep for daily wage in the Laurentian country, while I possess more property than either a Pallas or a Licinus?"[28] So let the Tribunes await their turn; let money carry the day; let the sacred office give way to one who came but yesterday with whitened feet into our city. For no deity is held in such reverence amongst us as Wealth; though as yet, O baneful money, thou hast no temple of thine own; not yet have we reared altars to Money in like manner as we worship Peace and Honour, Victory and Virtue. or that Concord that twitters when we salute her nest.

If then the great officers of state reckon up at the end of the year how much the dole brings in, how much it adds to their income, what shall we dependants do who, out of the self-same dole, have to find ourselves in coats and shoes, in the bread and fire of our homes? A

mob of litters comes in quest of the hundred farthings; here is a husband going the round, followed by a sickly or pregnant wife; another, by a clever and well-known trick, claims for a wife that is not there, pointing, in her stead, to a closed and empty chair; "My Galla's in there," says he; "let us off quick, will you not?" "Galla, put out your head!" "Don't disturb her, she's asleep!"

The day itself is marked out by a fine round of business. First comes the dole; then the courts, and Apollo learned in the law, and those triumphal statues among which some Egyptian Arabarch or other has dared to set up his titles; against whose statue more than one kind of nuisance may be committed! Wearied and hopeless, the old clients leave the door, though the last hope that a man relinquishes is that of a dinner; the poor wretches must buy their cabbage and their fuel. Meanwhile their lordly patron will be devouring the choicest products of wood and sea, lying alone upon an empty couch; for at a single one of their fine large and antique tables they devour whole fortunes. Ere long no parasites, will be left! Who can bear to see luxury so mean? What a huge gullet to have a whole boar - an animal created for conviviality - served up to it! But you will soon pay for it, my friend, when you take off your clothes, and with distended stomach carry your peacock into the bath undigested! Hence a sudden death, and an intestate old age; the new and merry tale runs the round of every dinner-table, and the corpse is carried forth to burial amid the cheers of enraged friends!

To these ways of ours Posterity will have nothing to add; our grandchildren will do the same things, and desire the same things, that we do. All vice is at its acme; up with your sails and shake out every stitch of canvas! Here perhaps you will say, "Where find the talent to match the theme? Where find that freedom of our forefathers to write whatever the burning soul desired? 'What man is there that I dare not name? What matters it whether Mucius forgives my words or no?'" But just describe Tigellinus[36] and you will blaze amid those faggots in which men, with their throats tightly gripped, stand and burn and smoke, and you[37] trace a broad furrow through the middle of the arena.

What? Is a man who has administered aconite to half a dozen uncles to ride by and look down upon me from his swaying cushions? "Yes; and when he comes near you, put your finger to your lip; he who but says the word, 'That's the man!' will be counted an informer. You may set Aeneas and the brave Rutulian a-fighting with an easy mind; it will hurt no one's feelings to hear how Achilles was slain, or how Hylas was searched for when he tumbled after his pitcher. But when Lucilius roars and rages as if with sword in hand, the hearer, whose soul was cold with crime, grows red; he sweats with the secret consciousness of sin. Hence wrath and tears. So turn these things over in your mind before the trumpet sounds; the helmet once donned, it is too late to repent you of the battle." Then I will try what I may say of those worthies whose ashes lie under the Flaminian and Latin roads.

Chapter 4

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CHINESE POETRY

4.1 The T'ang dynasty, a golden age for China

The T'ang period (618 A.D. - 906 A.D.) was a brilliant one for China. Just as Europe was sinking further and further into a mire of superstition, ignorance and bloodshed, China entered a period of peace, creativity and culture. During this period, China included Turkestan, northern Indochina and Korea. The T'ang emperors re-established and strengthened the system of civil-service examinations which had been initiated during the Han dynasty.

Printing

It was during the T'ang period that the Chinese made an invention of immense importance to the cultural evolution of mankind. This was the invention of printing. Together with writing, printing is one of the key inventions which form the basis of human cultural evolution.

Printing was invented in China in the 8th or 9th century A.D., probably by Buddhist monks who were interested in producing many copies of the sacred texts which they had translated from Sanskrit. The act of reproducing prayers was also considered to be meritorious by the Buddhists.

The Chinese had for a long time followed the custom of brushing engraved official seals with ink and using them to stamp documents. The type of ink which they used was made from lamp-black, water and binder. In fact, it was what we now call "India ink". However, in spite of its name, India ink is a Chinese invention, which later spread to India, and from there to Europe.

Paper of the type which we now use was invented in China in the first century A.D.. Thus, the Buddhist monks of China had all the elements which they needed to make printing practical: They had good ink, cheap, smooth paper, and the tradition of stamping

documents with ink-covered engraved seals. The first block prints which they produced date from the 8th century A.D.. They were made by carving a block of wood the size of a printed page so that raised characters remained, brushing ink onto the block, and pressing this onto a sheet of paper.

The invention of block printing during the T'ang dynasty had an enormously stimulating effect on literature, and the T'ang period is regarded as the golden age of Chinese lyric poetry. A collection of T'ang poetry, compiled in the 18th century, contains 48,900 poems by more than 2,000 poets.

4.2 Tu Fu, 712-770

Alone, Looking for Blossoms Along the River

*The sorrow of riverside blossoms inexplicable,
And nowhere to complain – I've gone half crazy.
I look up our southern neighbor. But my friend in wine
Gone ten days drinking. I find only an empty bed.*

*A thick frenzy of blossoms shrouding the riverside,
I stroll, listing dangerously, in full fear of spring.
Poems, wine – even this profusely driven, I endure.
Arrangements for this old, white-haired man can wait.*

*A deep river, two or three houses in bamboo quiet,
And such goings on: red blossoms glaring with white!
Among spring's vociferous glories, I too have my place:
With a lovely wine, bidding life's affairs bon voyage.*

*Looking east to Shao, its smoke filled with blossoms,
I admire that stately Po-hua wineshop even more.
To empty golden wine cups, calling such beautiful
Dancing girls to embroidered mats – who could bear it?*

*East of the river, before Abbot Huang's grave,
Spring is a frail splendor among gentle breezes.
In this crush of peach blossoms opening ownerless,
Shall I treasure light reds, or treasure them dark?*

*At Madame Huang's house, blossoms fill the paths:
Thousands, tens of thousands haul the branches down.
And butterflies linger playfully – an unbroken
Dance floating to songs orioles sing at their ease.*



Figure 4.1: Tu Fu (also called Du Fu) was a major poet of the T'ang Dynasty, and his work had a great influence on both Chinese and Japanese literature. Nearly 1,500 of his poems have been preserved. Because of the range of topics in his poems, he has been introduced to western readers as “the Chinese Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Shakespeare, Milton, Burns, Wordsworth, Béranger, Hugo or Baudelaire”. The son of a civil servant, Tu Fu wished to follow his father’s career, but was unable to do so because of the unsettled times in which he lived.

*I don't so love blossoms I want to die. I'm afraid,
Once they are gone, of old age still more impetuous.
And they scatter gladly, by the branchful. Let's talk
Things over, little buds —open delicately, sparingly.*

Ballad of the Old Cypress

In front of the temple of Chu-ko Liang there is an old cypress. Its branches are like green bronze; its roots like rocks; around its great girth of forty spans its rimy bark withstands the washing of the rain. Its jet-colored top rises two thousand feet to greet the sky. Prince and statesman have long since paid their debt to time; but the tree continues to be cherished among men. When the clouds come, continuous vapors link it with the mists of the long Wu Gorge; and when the moon appears, the cypress tree shares the chill of the Snowy Mountains' whiteness.

I remember a year or so ago, where the road wound east round my Brocade River pavilion, the First Ruler and Chu-ko Liang shared the same shrine. There, too, were towering cypresses, on the ancient plain outside the city. The paint-work of the temple's dark interior gleamed dully through derelict doors and windows. But this cypress here, though it holds its ground well, clinging with wide-encompassing, snake-like hold, yet, because of its lonely height rising into the gloom of the sky, meets much of the wind's fierce blast. Nothing but the power of Divine Providence could have kept it standing for so long; its straightness must be the work of the Creator himself! If a great hall had collapsed and beams for it were needed, ten thousand oxen might turn their heads inquiringly to look at such a mountain of a load. But it is already marvel enough to astonish the world, without any need to undergo a craftsman's embellishing. It has never refused the axe: there is simply no one who could carry it away if it were felled. Its bitter heart has not escaped the ants; but there are always phoenixes roosting in its scented leaves. Men of ambition, and you who dwell unseen, do not cry out in despair! From of old the really great have never been found useful.

Day's End

*Oxen and sheep were brought back down
Long ago, and bramble gates closed. Over
Mountains and rivers, far from my old garden,
A windswept moon rises into clear night.*

*Springs trickle down dark cliffs, and autumn
Dew fills ridgeline grasses. My hair seems
Whiter in lamplight. The flame flickers
Good fortune over and over – and for what?*

4.3 Li Po, 701-762

Alone And Drinking Under The Moon

*Amongst the flowers I
am alone with my pot of wine
drinking by myself; then lifting
my cup I asked the moon
to drink with me, its reflection
and mine in the wine cup, just
the three of us; then I sigh*

*for the moon cannot drink,
 and my shadow goes emptily along
 with me never saying a word;
 with no other friends here, I can
 but use these two for company;
 in the time of happiness, I
 too must be happy with all
 around me; I sit and sing
 and it is as if the moon
 accompanies me; then if I
 dance, it is my shadow that
 dances along with me; while
 still not drunk, I am glad
 to make the moon and my shadow
 into friends, but then when
 I have drunk too much, we
 all part; yet these are
 friends I can always count on
 these who have no emotion
 whatsoever; I hope that one day
 we three will meet again,
 deep in the Milky Way.*

Taking Leave of a Friend

*Blue mountains lie beyond the north wall;
 Round the city's eastern side flows the white water.
 Here we part, friend, once forever.
 You go ten thousand miles, drifting away
 Like an unrooted water-grass.
 Oh, the floating clouds and the thoughts of a wanderer!
 Oh, the sunset and the longing of an old friend!
 We ride away from each other, waving our hands,
 While our horses neigh softly, softly*



Figure 4.2: Like his friend Tu Fu, Li Po was a great poet of the T'ang Dynasty, which is often called the Golden Age of Chinese Poetry. At the start of this golden age, China enjoyed peace and prosperity under an emperor who actively encouraged the arts. This peaceful period was ended by rebellion and disorder. However, over a thousand of Li Po's poems have survived. They celebrate the joys of nature, friendship, solitude, and the joys of drinking wine.

4.4 Li Ching Chao, 1081-c.1141

A Friend Sends Her Perfumed Carriage

*A friend sends her perfumed carriage
And high-bred horses to fetch me.
I decline the invitation of
My old poetry and wine companion.*

*I remember the happy days in the lost capital.
We took our ease in the woman's quarters.
The Feast of Lanterns was elaborately celebrated -
Folded pendants, emerald hairpins, brocaded girdles,
New sashes - we competed
To see who was most smartly dressed.
Now I am withering away,
Wind-blown hair, frost temples.
I prefer to stay beyond the curtains,
And listen to talk and laughter
I can no longer share.*

A Song of Departure

*Warm rain and soft breeze by turns
 Have just broken
 And driven away the chill.
 Moist as the pussy willows,
 Light as the plum blossoms,
 Already I feel the heart of Spring vibrating.
 But now who will share with me
 The joys of wine and poetry?
 Tears streak my rouge.
 My hairpins are too heavy.
 I put on my new quilted robe
 Sewn with gold thread
 And throw myself against a pile of pillows,
 Crushing my phoenix hairpins.
 Alone, all I can embrace is my endless sorrow.
 I know a good dream will never come.
 So I stay up till past midnight
 Trimming the lamp flower's smoking wick.*

Autumn Love

*Search. Search. Seek. Seek.
 Cold. Cold. Clear. Clear.
 Sorrow. Sorrow. Pain. Pain.
 Hot flashes. Sudden chills.
 Stabbing pains. Slow agonies.
 I can find no peace.
 I drink two cups, then three bowls,
 Of clear wine until I can't
 Stand up against a gust of wind.
 Wild geese fly over head.
 They wrench my heart.
 They were our friends in the old days.
 Gold chrysanthemums litter
 The ground, pile up, faded, dead.
 This season I could not bear
 To pick them. All alone,
 Motionless at my window,
 I watch the gathering shadows.*

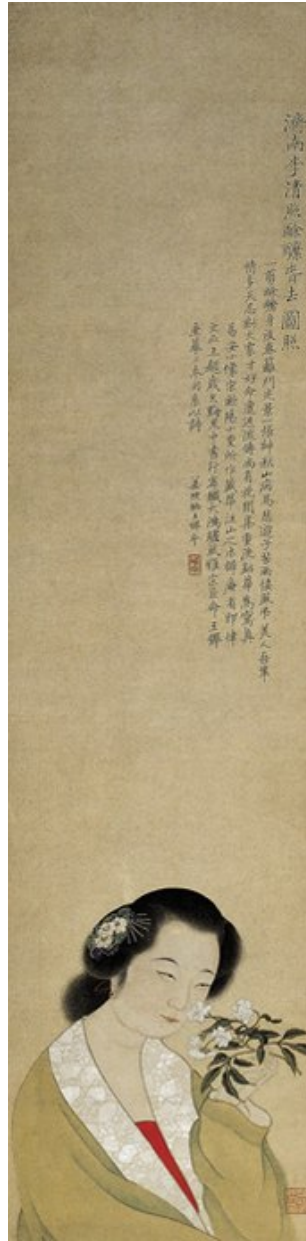


Figure 4.3: Li Ching Chao (1081-c.1141) was born into a family of scholar-officials in the Song Dynasty. Her husband was also a scholar-official, and during their happy marriage, they shared an interest in collecting art and calligraphy. Many of her famous poems are love poems addressed to her husband. She is considered to be one of the greatest Chinese poets.

*Fine rain sifts through the wu-t'ung trees,
And drips, drop by drop, through the dusk.
What can I ever do now?
How can I drive off this word -
Hopelessness?*

Chapter 5

JAPANESE HAIKU

5.1 Basho

A Bee

*A bee
staggers out
of the peony*

A Caterpillar

*A caterpillar,
this deep in fall—
still not a butterfly*

A Cicada Shell

*A cicada shell;
it sang itself
utterly away.*

A Cold Rain Starting

*A cold rain starting
And no hat —
So?*

A Cool Fall Night

*A cool fall night—
getting dinner, we peeled
eggplants, cucumbers.*

A Cuckoo Cries

*a cuckoo cries
and through a thicket of bamboo
the late moon shines*

A Monk Sips Morning Tea

*A monk sips morning tea,
it's quiet,
the chrysanthemum's flowering*



Figure 5.1: A statue of Basho in Tateishi, Japan. The son of a land-owning peasant with some of the privileges of a samurai, Basho found employment in the service of a man called Yoshitada. Together Basho and Yoshitada collaborated on many linked poems in the haiku form. Basho went on to become a famous pioneer of haiku poetry. In the original Japanese, a haiku has seventeen syllables, but this characteristic is often lost when the haiku is translated into English.

5.2 Kobayashi Issa, 1763-1828

With my Father

*With my father
I would watch dawn
over green fields.*

That Pretty Girl

*That pretty girl—
munching and rustling
the wrapped-up rice cake.*

Pissing in the Snow

*Pissing in the snow
outside my door—
it makes a very straight hole*

A Bath When You're Born

*A bath when you're born,
a bath when you die,
how stupid*

In This World

*In this world
we walk on the roof of hell,
gazing at flowers.*



Figure 5.2: Kobayashi Issa had a difficult life. His mother died when he was three, and he was initially raised by his grandmother, but she also died. He then lived with his father and stepmother, but the teenaged Issa and his stepmother did not get along. After his father's death, Issa struggled with his stepmother over his inheritance. After finally obtaining his inheritance, he was able to marry, but his children died in infancy. Despite this difficult life, Issa wrote over 20,000 haiku, and is considered to be one of the great masters of this form of poetry.

5.3 Some modern haiku in English

*The west wind whispered,
And touched the eyelids of spring:
Her eyes, Primroses.*
by R. M. Hansard

*Snow in my shoe
Abandoned
Sparrow's nest*
by Jack Kerouac, collected in *Book of Haikus*, 2003

*Whitecaps on the bay:
A broken signboard banging
In the April wind.*
by Richard Wright, collected in *Haiku: This Other World*, 1998

*lily:
out of the water
out of itself*

*bass
picking bugs
off the moon*
both by Nick Virgilio, *Selected Haiku*, 1988

*downpour:
my "I-Thou"
T-shirt*
by Raymond Roseliep, *Rabbit in the Moon*, Alembic Press, 1983

*an aging willow -
its image unsteady
in the flowing stream*
by Robert Spiess, *Red Moon Anthology*, Red Moon Press, 1996

Chapter 6

POETS OF INDIA

6.1 Some of India's famous poets

It would be impossible to list all of the wonderful poets who have made the poetry of India so famous. To mention only a few, we can remember Kalidas (4th-5th century AD), Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), Kabir Das (15th century), Mirabai (1498-1546), Mirza Ghalib (1797-1869), Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), Jayanta Mahapatra (born in 1928), Jeet Thayil (born in 1959) and Vikram Seth (born in 1952), We will discuss Rabindranath Tagore and Kamala Surayya below.

6.2 Rabindranath Tagore, 1861-1941

Among the most influential and recognized figures from modern Indian literature, Tagore wrote poetry primarily in Bengali. Tagore was much more than a poet, having composed highly revered novels, dramas, short stories and even paintings. However, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, largely for *Gitanjali*, a collection of his poetry that is today among his best-known work. Tagore's work explores a range of topics from spiritualism to social realities. Here are some poems by Tagore:

Where The Mind Is Without Fear

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high
Where knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
By narrow domestic walls
Where words come out from the depth of truth
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit
Where the mind is led forward by thee*

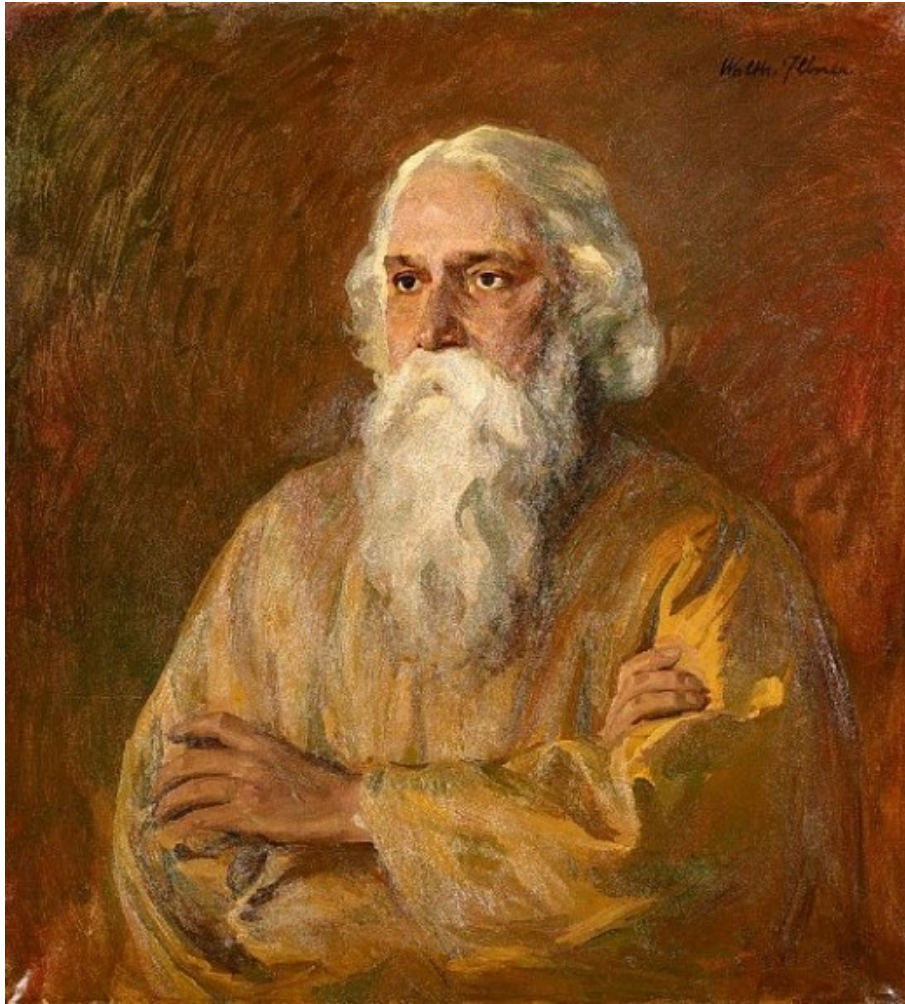


Figure 6.1: Rabindranath Tagore was a Brahman Hindu polymath artist, musician, essayist, novelist and poet who revolutionized Bengali art and literature. He began writing poems at the age of eight, and his first book of poems, which he published at the age of sixteen under the pseudonym Bhanusimha (“Sun Lion”), were hailed by critics as classic. In 1913 Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was the first Asian to receive this honor. One of Tagore’s compositions was chosen by India for its national anthem, and another by Bangladesh. The national anthem of Sri Lanka was also influenced by his work.

*Into ever-widening thought and action
 Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

Unending Love

*I seem to have loved you in numberless forms, numberless times...
 In life after life, in age after age, forever.
 My spellbound heart has made and remade the necklace of songs,
 That you take as a gift, wear round your neck in your many forms,
 In life after life, in age after age, forever.*

*Whenever I hear old chronicles of love, its age-old pain,
 Its ancient tale of being apart or together.
 As I stare on and on into the past, in the end you emerge,
 Clad in the light of a pole-star piercing the darkness of time:
 You become an image of what is remembered forever.*

*You and I have floated here on the stream that brings from the fount.
 At the heart of time, love of one for another.
 We have played along side millions of lovers, shared in the same
 Shy sweetness of meeting, the same distressful tears of farewell-
 Old love but in shapes that renew and renew forever.*

*Today it is heaped at your feet, it has found its end in you
 The love of all man's days both past and forever:
 Universal joy, universal sorrow, universal life.
 The memories of all loves merging with this one love of ours -
 And the songs of every poet past and forever.*

Freedom

*Freedom from fear is the freedom
 I claim for you my motherland!
 Freedom from the burden of the ages, bending your head,
 breaking your back, blinding your eyes to the beckoning
 call of the future;
 Freedom from the shackles of slumber wherewith
 you fasten yourself in night's stillness,
 mistrusting the star that speaks of truth's adventurous paths;
 freedom from the anarchy of destiny
 whole sails are weakly yielded to the blind uncertain winds,*

*and the helm to a hand ever rigid and cold as death.
Freedom from the insult of dwelling in a puppet's world,
where movements are started through brainless wires,
repeated through mindless habits,
where figures wait with patience and obedience for the master of show,
to be stirred into a mimicry of life.*

One Day In Spring

*One day in spring, a woman came
In my lonely woods,
In the lovely form of the Beloved.
Came, to give to my songs, melodies,
To give to my dreams, sweetness.
Suddenly a wild wave
Broke over my heart's shores
And drowned all language.
To my lips no name came,
She stood beneath the tree, turned,
Glanced at my face, made sad with pain,
And with quick steps, came and sat by me.
Taking my hands in hers, she said:
'You do not know me, nor I you-
I wonder how this could be?'
I said:
'We two shall build, a bridge for ever
Between two beings, each to the other unknown,
This eager wonder is at the heart of things.'*

*The cry that is in my heart is also the cry of her heart;
The thread with which she binds me binds her too.
Her have I sought everywhere,
Her have I worshipped within me,
Hidden in that worship she has sought me too.
Crossing the wide oceans, she came to steal my heart.
She forgot to return, having lost her own.
Her own charms play traitor to her,
She spreads her net, knowing not
Whether she will catch or be caught.*

Waiting

*The song I came to sing
remains unsung to this day.
I have spent my days in stringing
and in unstringing my instrument.*

*The time has not come true,
the words have not been rightly set;
only there is the agony
of wishing in my heart...*

*I have not seen his face,
nor have I listened to his voice;
only I have heard his gentle footsteps
from the road before my house...*

*But the lamp has not been lit
and I cannot ask him into my house;
I live in the hope of meeting with him;
but this meeting is not yet.*

The Golden Boat

*Clouds rumbling in the sky; teeming rain.
I sit on the river bank, sad and alone.
The sheaves lie gathered, harvest has ended,
The river is swollen and fierce in its flow.
As we cut the paddy it started to rain.*

*One small paddy-field, no one but me -
Flood-waters twisting and swirling everywhere.
Trees on the far bank; smear shadows like ink
On a village painted on deep morning grey.
On this side a paddy-field, no one but me.*

*Who is this, steering close to the shore
Singing? I feel that she is someone I know.
The sails are filled wide, she gazes ahead,
Waves break helplessly against the boat each side.
I watch and feel I have seen her face before.*

Oh to what foreign land do you sail?

*Come to the bank and moor your boat for a while.
Go where you want to, give where you care to,
But come to the bank a moment, show your smile -
Take away my golden paddy when you sail.*

*Take it, take as much as you can load.
Is there more? No, none, I have put it aboard.
My intense labour here by the river -
I have parted with it all, layer upon layer;
Now take me as well, be kind, take me aboard.*

*No room, no room, the boat is too small.
Loaded with my gold paddy, the boat is full.
Across the rain-sky clouds heave to and fro,
On the bare river-bank, I remain alone -
What had has gone: the golden boat took all.*

6.3 Kamala Surayya, 1934-2009

Born in 1934 in Kerala, Kamala Surayya, sometimes called Kamala Das, is among the most influential figures in Indian English-language poetry. Popularly known by her one-time pen name Madhavikutty, she wrote on a range of issues including love, betrayal, female sexuality and politics. Her poetry was considered groundbreaking at the time for breaking away from 19th-century traditions that still governed Indian English writing, and instead embracing a distinctly direct and explicit voice. Here are a few of her poems:

An Introduction

*I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses*

*All mine, mine alone.
 It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
 It is as human as I am human, don't
 You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
 Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
 Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it
 Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
 Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
 Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
 Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
 Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
 Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
 Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
 Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
 When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
 For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
 Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
 But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
 The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
 I shrank Pitifully.
 Then ... I wore a shirt and my
 Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
 My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
 Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
 Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
 Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
 On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
 Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
 Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
 Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
 Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
 Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
 Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call
 Him not by any name, he is every man
 Who wants. a woman, just as I am every
 Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
 Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless
 Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
 The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
 Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I
 In this world, he is tightly packed like the
 Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
 Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,*

*It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
 And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
 With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
 I am saint. I am the beloved and the
 Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no
 Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.*

My Grandmother's House

*There is a house now far away where once
 I received love.... That woman died,
 The house withdrew into silence, snakes moved
 Among books, I was then too young
 To read, and my blood turned cold like the moon
 How often I think of going
 There, to peer through blind eyes of windows or
 Just listen to the frozen air,
 Or in wild despair, pick an armful of
 Darkness to bring it here to lie
 Behind my bedroom door like a brooding
 Dog... you cannot believe, darling,
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and
 Was proud, and loved.... I who have lost
 My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
 Receive love, at least in small change?*

The Looking Glass

*Getting a man to love you is easy
 Only be honest about your wants as
 Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
 So that he sees himself the stronger one
 And believes it so, and you so much more
 Softer, younger, lovelier. Admit your
 Admiration. Notice the perfection
 Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
 The shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
 Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
 Urinates. All the fond details that make
 Him male and your only man. Gift him all,
 Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of*



Figure 6.2: Kamala Surayya is also known by her married name, Kamala Das. Her mother was a renowned Malaysian poet, and her great uncle was also a well-known writer. Kamala published a number of books of poetry dealing with woman's freedom and discussing sex with a previously unheard-of frankness. She also became a very popular journalist, and a pioneer of women's rights.

*Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. Oh yes, getting
A man to love is easy, but living
Without him afterwards may have to be
Faced. A living without life when you move
Around, meeting strangers, with your eyes that
Gave up their search, with ears that hear only
His last voice calling out your name and your
Body which once under his touch had gleamed
Like burnished brass, now drab and destitute*

Chapter 7

POETS OF ISLAM

7.1 Ferdowsi, c.940-1020

Alas for Youth

translated by R.A. Nicholson

*Much have I labored, much read o'er
Of Arabic and Persian Lore
Collecting tales unknown and known;
Now two and sixty years have flown.
Regret and deeper woe of sin.
'Tis all that youth have ended in,
And I with mournful thoughts rehearse
Bu Táhir Khusrawáni's verse:
"I mind me of my youth and sigh,
Alas for youth, for youth gone by!"*



Figure 7.1: An illustration to the long poem *Shahnameh* (“The Book of Kings”) by Ferdowsi. It is one of the longest poem ever created by a single author, and is regarded as the national epic of greater Persia. Through his authorship of this epic, Ferdowsi became one of the most influential poets in history.

7.2 Omar Khayyam, 1048-1131

The Rubáiyát

translated by Edward Fitzgerald. Only the first few verses are shown here

*Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight:
And Lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.*

*Dreaming when Dawn's Left Hand was in the Sky
I heard a voice within the Tavern cry,
"Awake, my Little ones, and fill the Cup
Before Life's Liquor in its Cup be dry."*

*And, as the Cock crew, those who stood before
The Tavern shouted – "Open then the Door!
You know how little while we have to stay,
And, once departed, may return no more."*

*Now the New Year reviving old Desires,
The thoughtful Soul to Solitude retires,
Where the White Hand of Moses on the Bough
Puts out, and Jesus from the Ground suspires.*

*Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,
And Jamshyd's Sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one Knows;
But still the Vine her ancient ruby yields,
And still a Garden by the Water blows.*

*And David's Lips are lock't; but in divine
High piping Pehlevi, with "Wine! Wine! Wine!
Red Wine!" – the Nightingale cries to the Rose
That yellow Cheek of hers to incarnadine.*

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
The Winter Garment of Repentance fling:
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly – and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.*

*Whether at Naishapur or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,*

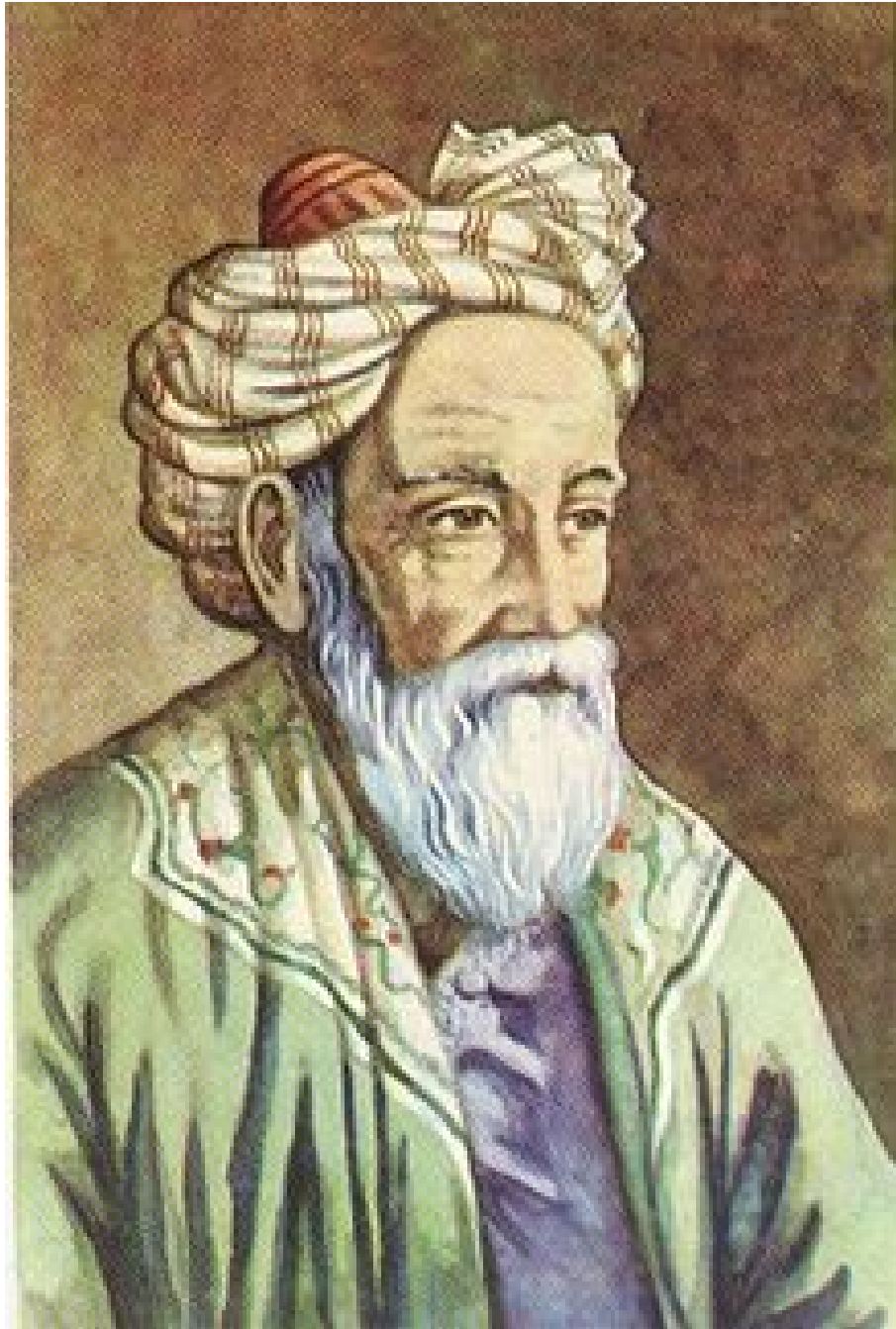


Figure 7.2: Omar Khayyam was a Persian mathematician, astronomer and poet. His work in mathematics was notable for his solutions to cubic equations, his understanding of the binomial theorem, and his discussions of the axioms of Euclid. As an astronomer, he directed the building of an observatory to reform the Persian calendar. Omar Khayyam's long poem, *Rubaiyat*, is known to western readers through Edward Fitzgerald's brilliant translation.

The Leaves of Life kep falling one by one.

*Morning a thousand Roses brings, you say;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?
And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobad away.*

*But come with old Khayyam, and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobad and Kaikhosru forgot:
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hatim Tai cry Supper – heed them not.*

*With me along the strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown,
Where name of Slave and Sultan is forgot –
And Peace is Mahmud on his Golden Throne!*

*A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread, – and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –
Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!*

*Some for the Glories of This World; and some
Sigh for the Prophet's Paradise to come;
Ah, take the Cash, and let the Promise go,
Nor heed the rumble of a distant Drum!*

*Were it not Folly, Spider-like to spin
The Thread of present Life away to win –
What? for ourselves, who know not if we shall
Breathe out the very Breath we now breathe in!*

*Look to the Rose that blows about us – “Lo,
Laughing,” she says, “into the World I blow:
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasure on the Garden throw.”*

*The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon
Turns Ashes – or it prospers; and anon,
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face
Lighting a little Hour or two – is gone.*

And those who husbanded the Golden Grain,

*And those who flung it to the Winds like Rain,
Alike to no such aureate Earth are turn'd
As, buried once, Men want dug up again.*

*Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Doorways are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultan after Sultan with his Pomp
Abode his Hour or two and went his way.*

*They say the Lion and the Lizard keep
The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:
And Bahram, that great Hunter – the Wild Ass
Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.*

*I sometimes think that never blows so red
The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in its Lap from some once lovely Head.*

*And this delightful Herb whose tender Green
Fledges the River's Lip on which we lean –
Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows
From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!*

*Ah, my Beloved, fill the Cup that clears
To-day of past Regrets and future Fears –
To-morrow? – Why, To-morrow I may be
Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n Thousand Years.*

*Lo! some we loved, the loveliest and best
That Time and Fate of all their Vintage prest,
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
And one by one crept silently to Rest.*

*And we, that now make merry in the Room
They left, and Summer dresses in new Bloom,
Ourselves must we beneath the Couch of Earth
Descend, ourselves to make a Couch – for whom?*

*Ah, make the most of what we may yet spend,
Before we too into the Dust descend;
Dust into Dust, and under Dust, to lie;
Sans Wine, sans Song, sans Singer, and – sans End!*

*Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
And those that after some To-morrow stare,
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries
“Fools! Your Reward is neither Here nor There!”*

*Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Works to Scorn
Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.*

*Oh, come with old Khayyam, and leave the Wise
To talk; one thing is certain, that Life flies;
One thing is certain, and the Rest is Lies;
The Flower that once has blown forever dies.*

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint, and heard great Argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same Door as in I went.*

*With them the Seed of Wisdom did I sow,
And with my own hand labour'd it to grow:
And this was all the Harvest that I reap'd –
“I came like Water and like Wind I go.”*

*Into this Universe, and Why not knowing,
Nor Whence, like Water willy-nilly flowing:
And out of it, as Wind along the Waste,
I know not Whither, willy-nilly blowing.*

*Up from Earth's Centre through the Seventh Gate
I rose, and on the Throne of Saturn sate,
And many Knots unravel'd by the Road;
But not the Master-Knot of Human Fate.*

*There was the Door to which I found no Key:
There was the Veil through which I could not see:
Some little talk awhile of Me and Thee
There was – and then no more of Thee and Me.*

7.3 Rumi, 1207-1273

*Longing is the core of mystery.
Longing itself brings the cure.
The only rule is, Suffer the pain.
Your desire must be disciplined,
and what you want to happen
in time, sacrificed*

Rumi - The Essential Rumi - Coleman Barks

*The Morning Wind Spreads
The morning wind spreads its fresh smell.
We must get up and take that in,
that wind that lets us live.
Breathe before it's gone
Rumi - 'The Essential Rumi' - Coleman Barks*

Only Breath

*Not Christian or Jew or Muslim, not Hindu
Buddhist, Sufi, or Zen. Not any religion
or cultural system. I am not from the East
or the West, not out of the ocean or up
from the ground, not natural or ethereal, not
composed of elements at all. I do not exist,
am not an entity in this world or in the next,
did not descend from Adam and Eve or any
origin story. My place is placeless, a trace
of the traceless. Neither body or soul.
I belong to the beloved, have seen the two
worlds as one and that one call to and know,
first, last, outer, inner, only that
breath breathing human being.*

Enough words?

*But that shadow has been serving you!
What hurts you, blesses you.
Darkness is your candle.
Your boundaries are your quest.
You must have shadow and light source both.
Listen, and lay your head under the tree of awe.*

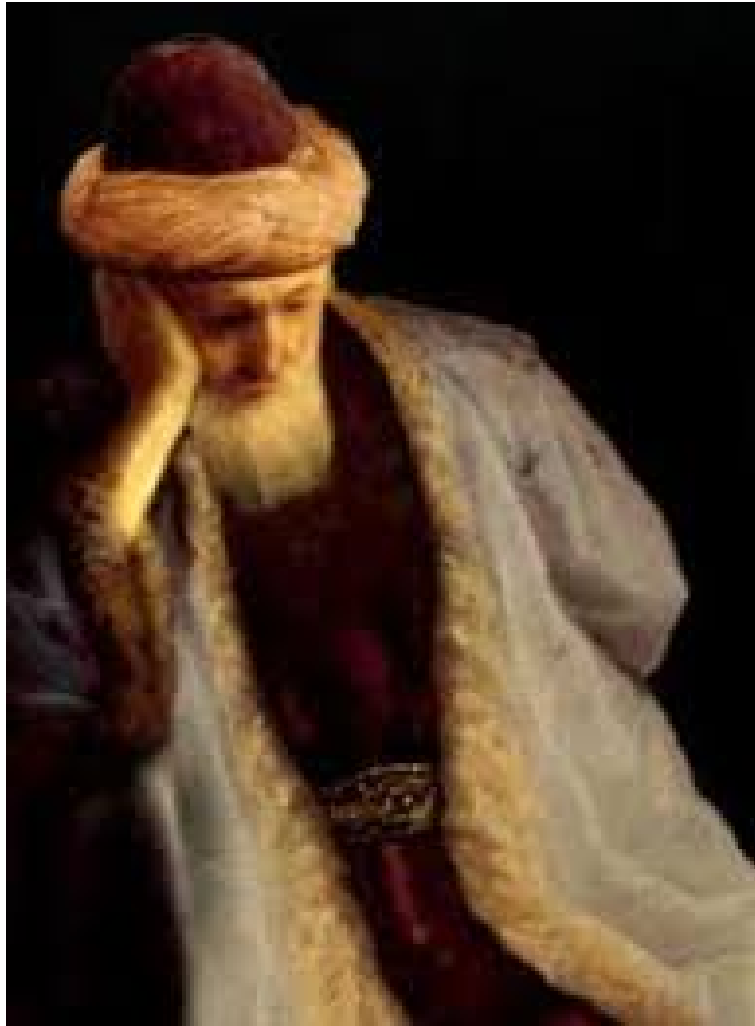


Figure 7.3: Jalaluddin Rumi, saint and mystic, inspiration for the Mevlevi Order of the whirling dervishes, is highly revered for his great poem *Mathnawi* which is a grand tribute to the depth of spiritual life. Rumi's poems have been translated many languages and he is read by Iranians, Tajiks, Turks, Greeks, Pashtuns, other Central Asian Muslims, and the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent. He is also a popular and widely-read poet in the United States. His name, "Rumi", means "Roman", and it refers to the fact that he was born in Anatolia, a region that was once part of the eastern Roman Empire.

Two kinds of intelligence

*There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired,
 As a child in school memorizes facts and concepts
 With such intelligence you rise in the world.
 There is another kind of tablet, one
 Already completed and preserved inside you.
 This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate.
 It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside
 Through the conduits of plumbing-learning.
 This second knowing is a fountainhead
 From within you, moving out.*

7.4 Saadi Shirazi, 1210-1292

*How could I ever thank my Friend?
 No thanks could ever begin to be worthy.
 Every hair of my body is a gift from Him;
 How could I thank Him for each hair?
 Praise that lavish Lord forever
 Who from nothing conjures all living beings!
 Who could ever describe His goodness?
 His infinite glory lays all praise waste.
 Look, He has graced you a robe of splendor
 From childhood's first cries to old age!
 He made you pure in His own image; stay pure.
 It is horrible to die blackened by sin.
 Never let dust settle on your mirror's shining;
 Let it once grow dull and it will never polish.
 When you work in the world to earn your living
 Do not, for one moment, rely on your own strength.
 Self-worshiper, don't you understand anything yet?
 It is God alone that gives your arms their power.
 If, by your striving, you achieve something good,
 Don't claim the credit all for yourself;
 It is fate that decides who wins and who loses
 And all success streams only from the grace of God.
 In this world you never stand by your own strength;*



Figure 7.4: Saadi in a rose garden, from a Mughal manuscript of his work. Saadi of Shiraz (1215-1292) was a great poet of Persia, author of the *Gulistan* (“Rose-Garden”) and the *Bostan* (“Orchard”). He also wrote many odes and lyrics. His pen name was simply Sadi. Saadi is famous for the depths of his social and moral thoughts.

It is the Invisible that sustains you every moment

7.5 Hafiz, 1315-1390

The Green Sea of Heaven

translated by Elizabeth T. Gray Jr

*I speak frankly and that makes me happy:
I am the slave of love, I am free of both worlds.*

*I am a bird from heaven's garden. How do I describe that separation,
my fall into this snare of accidents?
I was an angel and highest paradise was my place.
Adam brought me to this monastery in the city of ruin.*

*The hours' caress, the pool and shade trees of paradise
were forgotten in the breeze from your alleyway.*

*There is nothing on the tablet of my heart but my love's tall alif.
What can I do? My master taught me no other letter.*

*No astrologer knew the constellations of my fate.
O lord, when I was born of mother earth which stars were rising?*

*Ever since I became a slave at the door of love's tavern
sorrows come to me each moment with congratulations.*

*The pupil of my eye drains the blood from my heart.
I deserve it. Why did I give my heart to the darling of others?*

*Wipe the tears from Hafiz's face with soft curls
or else this endless torrent will uproot me.*



Figure 7.5: Entrance to the tomb of Hafiz. Hafiz of Shiraz was the greatest lyric poet of Persia. He took the poetic form of the *ghazal* to unparalleled heights of subtlety and beauty. People in the Persian-speaking world often learn his poems by heart, and use them as proverbs.

7.6 Jami, 1414-1492

*Whether your destiny is glory or disgrace,
Purify yourself of hatred and love of self.
Polish your mirror; and that sublime Beauty
From the regions of mystery
Will flame out in your heart
As it did for the saints and prophets.
Then, with your heart on fire with that Splendor,
The secret of the Beloved will no longer be hidden.*
Jami, translation by Andrew Harvey and Eryk Hanut - 'Perfume of the Desert'

*Who is man?
The reflection of the Eternal Light.
What is the world?
A wave on the Everlasting Sea.
How could the reflection be cut off from the Light?
How could the wave be separate from the Sea?
Know that this reflection and this wave are that very Light and Sea.*



Figure 7.6: Jami (Nur al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Ahmad al-Jami) is commonly called the last great classical poet of Persia. Saint and mystic, he composed numerous lyrics and idylls, as well as many works in prose. His *Salaman and Absal* is an allegory of profane and sacred love. Some of his other works include *Haft Awrang*, *Tuhfat al-Ahrar* and *Fatihah al-Shabab*. Jami was a prolific Sufi scholar, theologian and writer.



Figure 7.7: Youth seeking his father's advice about love, an illustration for one of Jami's poems.

Chapter 8

POETS OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND RUSSIA

8.1 Saint Francis, 1182-1226

The life of Saint Francis

Saint Francis of Assisi was born in 1181 in the Italian hilltop town of Assisi. His father, Pietro di Bernardone, was a prosperous silk merchant, and his mother Pica de Bourlemont, was a noblewoman from Provence. Saint Francis was originally called Giovanni, but his father later renamed him Francesco because of his successful business dealings in France and his admiration for all things French.

After leading the ordinary (somewhat dissolute) life of a wealthy young man of that period, Saint Francis underwent a religious conversion, following which he renounced his inheritance and embraced a life of poverty. Although not ordained as a priest, he began teaching what he believed to be the true Christian message. He soon acquired a small group of followers, and he traveled with them to Rome to ask Pope Innocent III for permission to found a new religious order. During his life, Saint Francis founded three religious orders.

Saint Francis continued to preach, and is even said to have preached to birds and animals, whom he regarded as his sisters and brothers. His attitude towards nature can be seen in his “Canticle of the Sun”:

Canticle of the Sun

*Most High, all powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, the honor,
and all blessing.*

*To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no man is worthy to mention Your name.*



Figure 8.1: Saint Francis preaching to the birds in a painting by Giotto. St. Francis of Assisi is one of the most venerated figures in Christianity. Canonized by Pope Gregory IX in 1228, he is the patron saint of Italy. His writing has had a strong influence on the Italian language.

*Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and you give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.*

*Praise be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon
and the stars, in heaven you formed them
clear and precious and beautiful.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,
and through the air, cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather through which
You give sustenance to Your creatures.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,
which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom you light the night and he is beautiful
and playful and robust and strong.*

*Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and governs us and who produces
varied fruits with colored flowers and herbs.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through those who give pardon for Your love,
and bear infirmity and tribulation.*

*Blessed are those who endure in peace
for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.*

*Praised be You, my Lord,
through our Sister Bodily Death,
from whom no living man can escape.*

*Woe to those who die in mortal sin.
Blessed are those whom death will
find in Your most holy will,
for the second death shall do them no harm.*

Praise and bless my Lord,

*and give Him thanks
and serve Him with great humility.*

Canonization

Pope Gregory IX canonized Francis on 16 July 1228. Along with Saint Catherine of Sienna, he was designated Patron Saint of Italy. He later became associated with patronage of animals and the natural environment, and it became customary for Catholic and Anglican churches to hold ceremonies blessing animals on his feast day of 4 October.

A prayer of Saint Francis

*Blessed is he who loves and does not therefore desire to be loved;
Blessed is he who fears and does not therefore desire to be feared;
Blessed is he who serves and does not therefore desire to be served;
Blessed is he who behaves well toward others and does not desire that others behave well
toward him;*

8.2 Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321

Inferno, Canto I

*Midway upon the journey of our life
I found myself within a forest dark,
For the straightforward pathway had been lost.*

*Ah me! how hard a thing it is to say
What was this forest savage, rough, and stern,
Which in the very thought renews the fear.*

*So bitter is it, death is little more;
But of the good to treat, which there I found,
Speak will I of the other things I saw there.*

*I cannot well repeat how there I entered,
So full was I of slumber at the moment
In which I had abandoned the true way.*

*But after I had reached a mountain's foot,
At that point where the valley terminated,*



Figure 8.2: Dante Alighieri in a posthumous portrait by Sandro Botticelli. Dante wrote in the Italian vernacular language rather than Latin, establishing a precedent that was later followed by Petrarch and Boccaccio. Dante's *Divina Commedia* has been described as the greatest poem in the Italian language.

Which had with consternation pierced my heart,

*Upward I looked, and I beheld its shoulders,
Vested already with that planet's rays
Which leadeth others right by every road.*

*Then was the fear a little quieted
That in my heart's lake had endured throughout
The night, which I had passed so piteously.*

*And even as he, who, with distressful breath,
Forth issued from the sea upon the shore,
Turns to the water perilous and gazes;*

*So did my soul, that still was fleeing onward,
Turn itself back to re-behold the pass
Which never yet a living person left.*

*After my weary body I had rested,
The way resumed I on the desert slope,
So that the firm foot ever was the lower.*

*And lo! almost where the ascent began,
A panther light and swift exceedingly,
Which with a spotted skin was covered o'er!*

*And never moved she from before my face,
Nay, rather did impede so much my way,
That many times I to return had turned.*

*The time was the beginning of the morning,
And up the sun was mounting with those stars
That with him were, what time the Love Divine*

*At first in motion set those beauteous things;
So were to me occasion of good hope,
The variegated skin of that wild beast,*

*The hour of time, and the delicious season;
But not so much, that did not give me fear
A lion's aspect which appeared to me.*

He seemed as if against me he were coming

*With head uplifted, and with ravenous hunger,
So that it seemed the air was afraid of him;*

*And a she-wolf, that with all hungerings
Seemed to be laden in her meagreness,
And many folk has caused to live forlorn!*

*She brought upon me so much heaviness,
With the affright that from her aspect came,
That I the hope relinquished of the height.*

*And as he is who willingly acquires,
And the time comes that causes him to lose,
Who weeps in all his thoughts and is despondent,*

*E'en such made me that beast withouten peace,
Which, coming on against me by degrees
Thrust me back thither where the sun is silent.*

*While I was rushing downward to the lowland,
Before mine eyes did one present himself,
Who seemed from long-continued silence hoarse.*

*When I beheld him in the desert vast,
"Have pity on me," unto him I cried,
"Whiche'er thou art, or shade or real man!"*

*He answered me: "Not man; man once I was,
And both my parents were of Lombardy,
And Mantuans by country both of them.*

*'Sub Julio' was I born, though it was late,
And lived at Rome under the good Augustus,
During the time of false and lying gods.*

*A poet was I, and I sang that just
Son of Anchises, who came forth from Troy,
After that Ilion the superb was burned.*

*But thou, why goest thou back to such annoyance?
Why climb'st thou not the Mount Delectable,
Which is the source and cause of every joy?*

*“Now, art thou that Virgilius and that fountain
Which spreads abroad so wide a river of speech?”
I made response to him with bashful forehead.*

*“O, of the other poets honour and light,
Avail me the long study and great love
That have impelled me to explore thy volume!*

*Thou art my master, and my author thou,
Thou art alone the one from whom I took
The beautiful style that has done honour to me.*

*Behold the beast, for which I have turned back;
Do thou protect me from her, famous Sage,
For she doth make my veins and pulses tremble.”*

*“Thee it behoves to take another road,”
Responded he, when he beheld me weeping,
”If from this savage place thou wouldst escape;*

*Because this beast, at which thou criest out,
Suffers not any one to pass her way,
But so doth harass him, that she destroys him;*

*And has a nature so malign and ruthless,
That never doth she glut her greedy will,
And after food is hungrier than before.*

*Many the animals with whom she weds,
And more they shall be still, until the Greyhound
Comes, who shall make her perish in her pain.*

*He shall not feed on either earth or pelf,
But upon wisdom, and on love and virtue;
'Twi'xt Feltro and Feltro shall his nation be;*

*Of that low Italy shall he be the saviour,
On whose account the maid Camilla died,
Euryalus, Turnus, Nisus, of their wounds;*

*Through every city shall he hunt her down,
Until he shall have driven her back to Hell,
There from whence envy first did let her loose.*

*Therefore I think and judge it for thy best
Thou follow me, and I will be thy guide,
And lead thee hence through the eternal place,*

*Where thou shalt hear the desperate lamentations,
Shalt see the ancient spirits disconsolate,
Who cry out each one for the second death;*

*And thou shalt see those who contented are
Within the fire, because they hope to come,
Whene'er it may be, to the blessed people;*

*To whom, then, if thou wishest to ascend,
A soul shall be for that than I more worthy;
With her at my departure I will leave thee;*

*Because that Emperor, who reigns above,
In that I was rebellious to his law,
Wills that through me none come into his city.*

*He governs everywhere, and there he reigns;
There is his city and his lofty throne;
O happy he whom thereto he elects!"*

*And I to him: "Poet, I thee entreat,
By that same God whom thou didst never know,
So that I may escape this woe and worse,*

*Thou wouldst conduct me there where thou hast said,
That I may see the portal of Saint Peter,
And those thou makest so disconsolate."*

Then he moved on, and I behind him followed.

8.3 Petrarch, 1304-1374

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?
(translated by Geoffrey Chaucer)

If no love is, O God, what fele I so?

*And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes cometh my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
When every torment and adversite
That cometh of hym, may to me savory thinke,
For ay thirst I, the more that ich it drynke.
And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
If harm agree me, whereto pleyne I thenne?
I noot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.
O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte,
How may of the in me swich quantite,
But if that I consente that it be?
And if that I consente, I wrongfully
Compleyne, iwis. Thus possed to and fro,
Al sterelees withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, betwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
Allas! what is this wondre maladie?
For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye.*



Figure 8.3: Petrarch was an Italian poet and humanist of the early Renaissance. His sonnets were widely admired throughout Europe. His work, together with that of Boccaccio, had a strong influence of the development of the modern Italian language.

8.4 Jean de la Fontaine, 1621-1695

Alice Sick

*Sick, Alice grown, and fearing dire event,
Some friend advised a servant should be sent
Her confessor to bring and ease her mind;—
Yes, she replied, to see him I'm inclined;
Let father Andrew instantly be sought:—
By him salvation usually I'm taught.*

*A messenger was told, without delay,
To take, with rapid steps, the convent way;
He rang the bell—a monk enquired his name,
And asked for what, or whom, the fellow came.
I father Andrew want, the wight replied,
Who's oft to Alice confessor and guide:
With Andrew, cried the other, would you speak?
If that's the case, he's far enough to seek;
Poor man! he's left us for the regions blessed,
And has in Paradise ten years confessed.*

An Imitation Of Anacreon

*Painter in Paphos and Cythera famed
Depict, I pray, the absent Iris' face.
Thou hast not seen the lovely nymph I've named;
The better for thy peace.—Then will I trace
For thy instruction her transcendent grace.
Begin with lily white and blushing rose,
Take then the Loves and Graces... But what good
Words, idle words? for Beauty's Goddess could
By Iris be replaced, nor one suppose
The secret fraud—their grace so equal shows.
Thou at Cythera couldst, at Paphos too,
Of the same Iris Venus form anew.*



Figure 8.4: Jean de la Fontaine, one of the most widely read French poets of the 17th century. He is known especially for his fables. His image can be found on French paintings, statues, medals, coins and postage stamps.

8.5 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832

Procemion

*In His blest name, who was His own creation,
 Who from all time makes making his vocation;
 The name of Him who makes our faith so bright,
 Love, confidence, activity, and might;
 In that One's name, who, named though oft He be,
 Unknown is ever in Reality:
 As far as ear can reach, or eyesight dim,
 Thou findest but the known resembling Him;
 How high so'er thy fiery spirit hovers,
 Its simile and type it straight discovers
 Onward thou'rt drawn, with feelings light and gay,
 Where'er thou goest, smiling is the way;
 No more thou numbrest, reckonest no time,
 Each step is infinite, each step sublime.*

*What God would outwardly alone control,
 And on his finger whirl the mighty Whole?
 He loves the inner world to move, to view
 Nature in Him, Himself in Nature too,
 So that what in Him works, and is, and lives,
 The measure of His strength, His spirit gives.*

*Within us all a universe doth dwell;
 And hence each people's usage laudable,
 That ev'ry one the Best that meets his eyes
 As God, yea e'en his God, doth recognise;
 To Him both earth and heaven surrenders he,
 Fears Him, and loves Him too, if that may be*

Courage

*Carelessly over the plain away,
 Where by the boldest man no path
 Cut before thee thou canst discern,
 Make for thyself a path!*

*Silence, loved one, my heart!
 Cracking, let it not break!
 Breaking, break not with thee!*



Figure 8.5: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe became a literary celebrity at the age of 25 with his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. After he moved to Weimar, he was ennobled by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Goethe's great masterpiece was his verse-drama *Faust*. In addition to being a writer and poet, he was also a statesman and scientist. More than 10,000 letters and 3,000 drawings by Goethe have survived.

8.6 Friederich von Schiller, 1759-1805

Schiller's Ode To Joy

(translated by Michael Kay)

*Joy! A spark of fire from heaven,
Daughter from Elysium,
Drunk with fire we dare to enter,
Holy One, inside your shrine.
Your magic power binds together,
What we by custom wrench apart,
All men will emerge as brothers,
Where you rest your gentle wings.*

*If you've mastered that great challenge:
Giving friendship to a friend,
If you've earned a steadfast woman,
Celebrate your joy with us!
Join if in the whole wide world there's
Just one soul to call your own!
He who's failed must steal away,
shedding tears as he departs.*

*All creation drinks with pleasure,
Drinks at Mother Nature's breast;
All the just, and all the evil,
Follow down her rosy path.
Kisses she bestowed, and grape wine,
Friendship true, proved e'en in death;
Every worm knows nature's pleasure,
Every cherub meets his God.*

*Gladly, like the planets flying
True to heaven's mighty plan,
Brothers, run your course now,
Happy as a knight in victory.*

*Be embracéd, all you millions,
Share this kiss with all the world!
Way above the stars, brothers,
There must live a loving father.
Do you kneel down low, you millions?
Do you see your maker, world?*

*Search for Him above the stars,
Above the stars he must be living.*

Schiller's Ode to Joy

the first few verses in the original German

*Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, den Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt,
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.*

*Seid umschlungen Millionen!
Diesen Kuss der ganzen Welt!
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Muss ein lieber Vater wohnen.*

*Wem der grosse Wurf gelungen,
Eines Freundes Freund zu sein,
Wer ein holdes Weib errungen,
Mische seinen Jubel ein!
Ja - wer auch nur eine Seele
Sein nennt auf dem Erdenrund!
Und wer's nie gekonnt, der stehle
Weinend sich aus diesem Bund!*

*Was den grossen Ring bewohnt
Huldige der Sympathe!
Zu den Sternen leitet sie,
Wo der Unbekannte thronet.*

*Freude trinken alle Wesen
An den Brüsten der Natur,
Alle Guten, alle Bösen
Folgen ihrer Rosenspur.
Küsse gab sie uns und Reben,
Einen Freund, geprüft im Tod,
Wollust ward dem Wurm gegeben,
Und der Cherub steht vor Gott.*



Figure 8.6: Friederich von Schiller was the son of an army physician, and he became a physician himself. He was also an historian, a famous playwright, and a poet. He became famous at the age of 22 through his revolutionary play *Die Räuber* (“The Robbers”). Because of this and other works, is considered to be Germany’s most important playwright. During the last seventeen years of his short life, Schiller worked together with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and they collaborated on many projects. Like Goethe, Schiller was ennobled by the Duke of Saxe-Weimar. Schiller’s *Ode to Joy* was immortalized when Beethoven used the poem as the text for the final movement of his Ninth Symphony.

*Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
Ahnest du den Schöpfer Welt?
Such ihn überm Sternenzelt,
über Sternen muss er wohnen.*

8.7 Alexander Pushkin, 1799-1837

O sing, fair lady, when with me

*O sing, fair lady, when with me
Sad songs of Georgia no more:
They bring into my memory
Another life, a distant shore.*

*Your beautiful, your cruel tune
Brings to my memory, alas,
The steppe, the night - and with the moon
Lines of a far, unhappy lass.*

*Forgetting at the sight of you
That shadow fateful, shadow dear,
I hear you singing - and anew
I picture it before me, here.*

*O sing, fair lady, when with me
Sad songs of Georgia no more:
They bring into my memory
Another life, a distant shore.*

The wondrous moment of our meeting

*The wondrous moment of our meeting...
Still I remember you appear
Before me like a vision fleeting,
A beauty's angel pure and clear.*

*In hopeless ennui surrounding
The worldly bustle, to my ear
For long your tender voice kept sounding,
For long in dreams came features dear.*

*Time passed. Unruly storms confounded
Old dreams, and I from year to year
Forgot how tender you had sounded,
Your heavenly features once so dear.*

*My backwoods days dragged slow and quiet –
Dull fence around, dark vault above –
Devoid of God and uninspired,
Devoid of tears, of fire, of love.*

*Sleep from my soul began retreating,
And here you once again appear
Before me like a vision fleeting,
A beauty's angel pure and clear.*

*In ecstasy my heart is beating,
Old joys for it anew revive;
Inspired and God-filled, it is greeting
The fire, and tears, and love alive.*



Figure 8.7: Alexander Pushkin in a portrait by Pytor Sokolov. Pushkin was born into a noble Russian family that could trace its roots back to the 12th century. His outstanding talents as a writer were recognized very early, while he was still in school. He wrote novels and plays, and is considered to be Russia's greatest poet, the father of modern Russian literature. His verse novel *Eugene Onegin* and his play *Boris Gudunov* are classics. Because of his libertarian writings, he was exiled for a period, but was later allowed to return to the court of the Tzar. Pushkin was killed in a duel with a man who had tried to seduce his young and beautiful wife.

8.8 Rainer Maria Rilke, 1875-1926

Autumn Day

*Lord, it is time. The summer was too long.
Lay your shadow on the sundials now,
and through the meadow let the winds throng.*

*Ask the last fruits to ripen on the vine;
give them further two more summer days
to bring about perfection and to raise
the final sweetness in the heavy wine.*

*Whoever has no house now will establish none,
whoever lives alone now will live on long alone,
will waken, read, and write long letters,
wander up and down the barren paths
the parks expose when the leaves are blown.*

The Sisters

*Look how the same possibilities
unfold in their opposite demeanors,
as though one saw different ages
passing through two identical rooms.*

*Each thinks that she props up the other,
while resting wearily on her support;
and they can't make use of one another,
for they cause blood to rest on blood,*

*when as in the former times they softly touch
and try, along the tree-lined walks,
to feel themselves conducted and to lead;
ah, the ways they go are not the same.*



Figure 8.8: Rainer Maria Rilke in 1910. Born in Prague, Rilke travelled extensively throughout Europe (including Russia, Spain, Germany, France and Italy) and, in his later years, settled in Switzerland. Rilke widely is recognized as one of the most lyrically intense German-language poets. In the United States, Rilke is one of the most popular and best-selling poets.

8.9 Bertolt Brecht, 1898-1956

How Fortunate The Man With None

*You saw sagacious Solomon
You know what came of him,
To him complexities seemed plain.
He cursed the hour that gave birth to him
And saw that everything was vain.
How great and wise was Solomon.
The world however did not wait
But soon observed what followed on.
It's wisdom that had brought him to this state.
How fortunate the man with none.*

*You saw courageous Caesar next
You know what he became.
They deified him in his life
Then had him murdered just the same.
And as they raised the fatal knife
How loud he cried: you too my son!
The world however did not wait
But soon observed what followed on.
It's courage that had brought him to that state.
How fortunate the man with none.*

*You heard of honest Socrates
The man who never lied:
They weren't so grateful as you'd think
Instead the rulers fixed to have him tried
And handed him the poisoned drink.
How honest was the people's noble son.
The world however did not wait
But soon observed what followed on.
It's honesty that brought him to that state.
How fortunate the man with none.*

*Here you can see respectable folk
Keeping to God's own laws.
So far he hasn't taken heed.
You who sit safe and warm indoors
Help to relieve our bitter need.
How virtuously we had begun.*

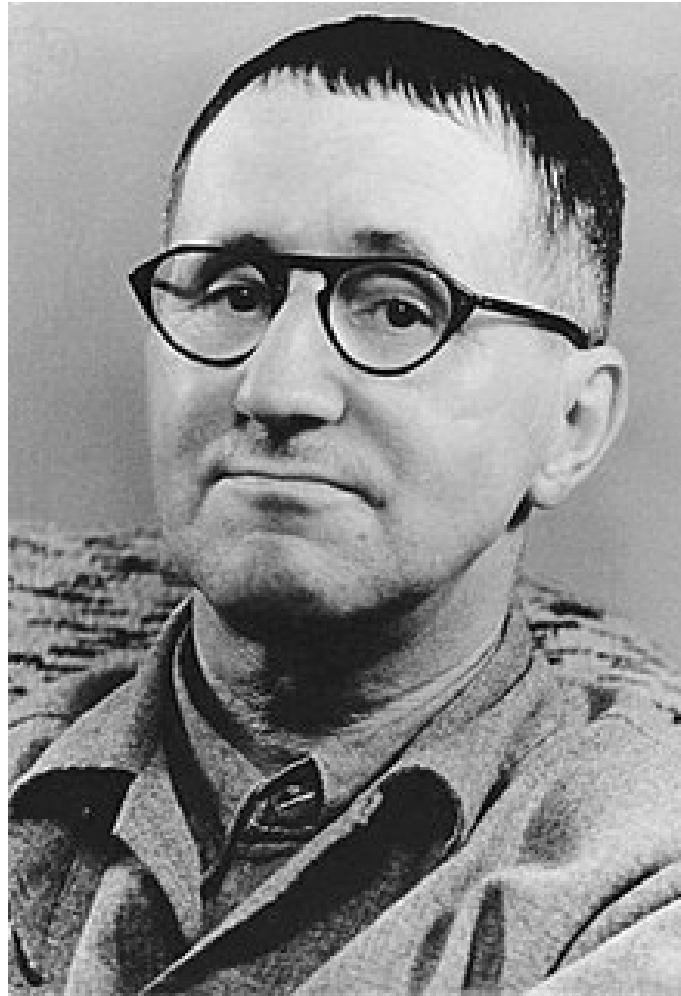


Figure 8.9: Bertolt Brecht. Besides being a poet, he was also a playwright and a theater director. Together with Kurt Weill, he composed the famous *Three-Penny Opera*.

*The world however did not wait
But soon observed what followed on.
It's fear of god that brought us to that state.
How fortunate the man with none.*

My young son asks me

*My young son asks me: Must I learn mathematics?
What is the use, I feel like saying. That two pieces
Of bread are more than one's about all you'll end up with.
My young son asks me: Must I learn French?*

*What is the use, I feel like saying. This State's collapsing.
And if you just rub your belly with your hand and
Groan, you'll be understood with little trouble.
My young son asks me: Must I learn history?
What is the use, I feel like saying. Learn to stick
Your head in the earth, and maybe you'll still survive.*

*Yes, learn mathematics, I tell him.
Learn your French, learn your history!*

Chapter 9

ENGLISH POETS

9.1 Geoffrey Chaucer, c.1340's-1400

Troilus And Criseyde: Book 03
(the first few verses)

Incipit prohemium tercii libri.

*O blisful light of whiche the bemes clere
Adorneth al the thridde hevene faire!
O sonnes lief, O Ioves doughter dere,
Plesaunce of love, O goodly debonaire,
In gentil hertes ay redy to repaire!
O verray cause of hele and of gladnesse,
Y-heried be thy might and thy goodnesse!*

*In hevene and helle, in erthe and salte see
Is felt thy might, if that I wel descerne;
As man, brid, best, fish, herbe and grene tree
Thee fele in tymes with vapour eterne.
God loveth, and to love wol nought werne;
And in this world no lyves creature,
With-outen love, is worth, or may endure.*

*Ye Ioves first to thilke effectes glade,
Thorugh which that thinges liven alle and be,
Comeveden, and amorous him made
On mortal thing, and as yow list, ay ye
Yeve him in love ese or adversitee;
And in a thousand formes doun him sente*

For love in erthe, and whom yow liste, he hente.

*Ye fierse Mars apeysen of his ire,
And, as yow list, ye maken hertes digne;
Algates, hem that ye wol sette a-fyre,
They dreden shame, and vices they resigne;
Ye do hem corteys be, fresshe and benigne,
And hye or lowe, after a wight entendeth;
The Ioyes that he hath, your might him sendeth.*

*Ye holden regne and hous in unitee;
Ye soothfast cause of frendship been also;
Ye knowe al thilke covered qualitee
Of thinges which that folk on wondren so,
Whan they can not construe how it may io,
She loveth him, or why he loveth here;
As why this fish, and nought that, comth to were*

*Ye folk a lawe han set in universe,
And this knowe I by hem that loveres be,
That who-so stryveth with yow hath the werse:
Now, lady bright, for thy benignitee,
At reverence of hem that serven thee,
Whos clerk I am, so techeth me devyse
Som Ioye of that is felt in thy servyse.*

*Ye in my naked herte sentement
Inhelde, and do me shewe of thy swetnesse. –
Caliope, thy vois be now present,
For now is nede; sestow not my destresse,
How I mot telle anon-right the gladnesse
Of Troilus, to Venus heryinge?
To which gladnes, who nede hath, god him bringe!*

Prologue to the Canterbury Tales

the first 100 lines

*Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veyne in swich licour,
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;
Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth*



Figure 9.1: A 19th century portrait of Geoffrey Chaucer. Besides being a poet, Chaucer was a diplomat, civil servant, Member of Parliament, astronomer and philosopher. He is best known for his *Canterbury Tales*, written in Middle English, at a time when most literary works were in French or Latin. Chaucer has been called “the father of English literature”.

*Inspired hath in every holt and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
 Hath in the Ram his halfe cours y-ronne,
 And smale fowles maken melodye,
 That slepen al the night with open ye,
 (So priketh hem nature in hir corages:
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
 And palmers for to seken straunge strondes,
 To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;
 And specially, from every shires ende
 Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende,
 The holy blisful martir for to seke,
 That hem hath holpen, whan that they were seke.
 Bifel that, in that sesoun on a day,
 In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
 At night was come in-to that hostelrye
 Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,
 Of sondry folk, by aventure y-falle
 In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,
 That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde;
 The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
 And wel we weren esed atte beste.
 And shortly, whan the sonne was to reste,
 So hadde I spoken with hem everichon,
 That I was of hir felawshipe anon,
 And made forward 18 erly for to ryse,
 To take our wey, ther as I yow devyse.
 But natheles, whyl I have tyme and space,
 Er that I ferther in this tale pace,
 Me thinketh it acordaunt to resoun,
 To telle yew al the condicioun
 Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
 And whiche they weren, and of what degree;
 And eek in what array that they were inne:
 And at a knight than wol I first biginne.
 A KNIGHT ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That fro the tyme that he first bigan
 To ryden out, he loved chivalrye,
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisye.
 Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
 And thereto hadde he riden (no man ferre)*

*As wel in cristendom as hethenesse,
 And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
 At Alisaundre he was, whan it was wonne;
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bigonne
 Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.
 In Lettow hadde he reysed and in Ruce,
 No cristen man so ofte of his degree.
 In Gernade at the sege eek hadde he be
 Of Algezir, and riden in Belmarye.
 At Lyeyes was he, and at Satalye,
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Grete See
 At many a noble aryve hadde he be,
 At mortal batailles hadde he been fiftene,
 And foughten for our feith at Tramissene
 In listes thryes, and ay slayn his foo.
 This ilke worthy knight hadde been also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,
 Ageyn another hethen in Turkye:
 And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
 And though that he were worthy, he was wys,
 And of his port as meek as is a mayde.
 He nevere yet no vileinye ne sayde
 In al his lyf, un-to no maner wight.
 He was a verray parfit gentil knight.
 But for to tellen yow of his array,
 His hors were goode, but he was nat gay.
 Of fustian he wered a gipoun
 Al bismotered with his habergeoun.
 For he was late y-come from his viage,
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.
 With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
 A lovyer, and a lusty bacheler,
 With lokkes crulle, as they were leyd in presse.
 Of twenty yeer of age he was, I gesse.
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
 And wonderly delivere, and greet of strengthe.
 And he hadde been somtyme in chivachye,
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and Picardye,
 And born him wel, as of so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrouded was he, as it were a mede
 Al ful of fresshe floures, whyte and rede,
 Singinge he was, or floytinge, 57 al the day;*

*He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gowne, with sleeves longe and wyde.
 Wel coude he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
 He coude songes make and wel endyte,
 Iuste and eek daunce, and wel purtreye and wryte.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
 He sleep namore than doth a nightingale.
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servisable,
 And carf biforn his fader at the table.*

9.2 William Shakespeare, 1564-1616

Aubade

*Hark! hark! the lark at heaven's gate sings,
 And Phoebus 'gins arise,
 His steeds to water at those springs
 On chaliced flowers that lies;
 And winking Mary-buds begin
 To ope their golden eyes:
 With everything that pretty bin,
 My lady sweet, arise!
 Arise, arise!*

Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind

*Blow, blow, thou winter wind
 Thou art not so unkind
 As man's ingratitude;
 Thy tooth is not so keen,
 Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude.*

*Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
 Most freindship if feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then heigh-ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.*

*Freeze, freeze thou bitter sky,
 That does not bite so nigh*

*As benefits forgot:
 Though thou the waters warp,
 Thy sting is not so sharp
 As a friend remembered not.
 Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly:
 Most freindship if feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then heigh-ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.*

All the World's a Stage

*All the world's a stage,
 And all the men and women merely players;
 They have their exits and their entrances,
 And one man in his time plays many parts,
 His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant,
 Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
 Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel
 And shining morning face, creeping like snail
 Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
 Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
 Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
 Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,
 Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel,
 Seeking the bubble reputation
 Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,
 In fair round belly with good capon lined,
 With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,
 Full of wise saws and modern instances;
 And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
 Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,
 With spectacles on nose and pouch on side;
 His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
 For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
 Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
 And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
 That ends this strange eventful history,
 Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
 Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

Silvia

Who is Silvia? What is she?

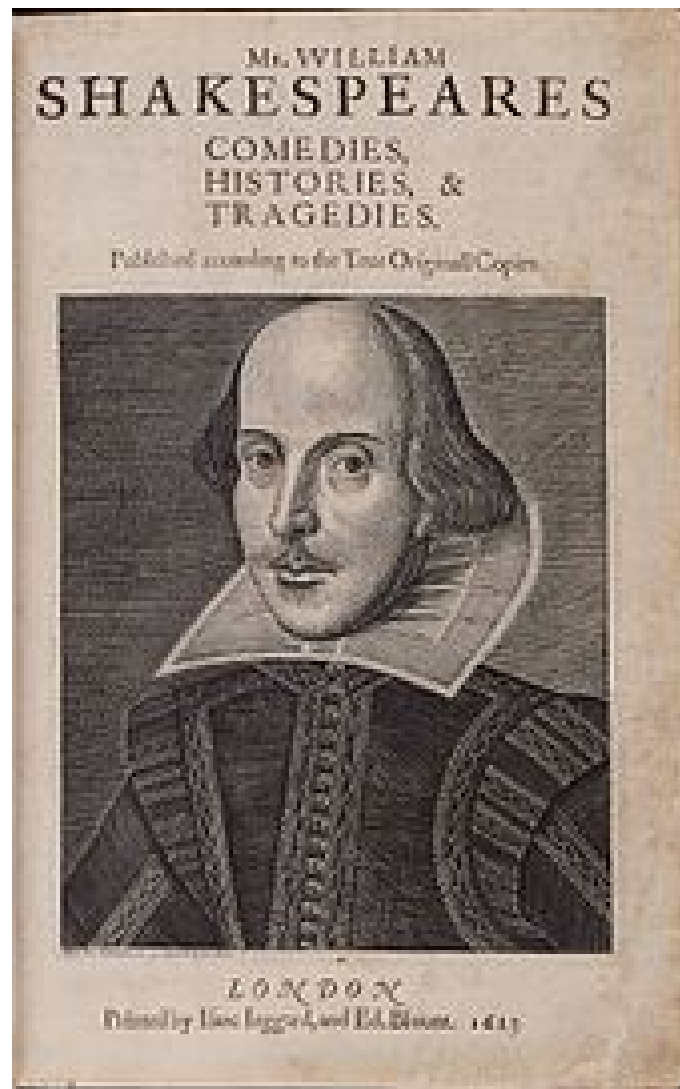


Figure 9.2: The title page of the First Folio, 1623, with an engraved portrait of Shakespeare. He was undoubtedly the greatest dramatist in the English language, and among the greatest of all time in any language. His works could have been lost to future generations if his friends had not collected them after his death and published them in the First Folio.

*That all our swains commend her?
 Holy, fair, and wise is she;
 The heaven such grace did lend her,
 That she might admired be.*

*Is she kind as she is fair?
 For beauty lives with kindness:
 Love doth to her eyes repair,
 To help him of his blindness;
 And, being help'd, inhabits there.*

*Then to Silvia let us sing,
 That Silvia is excelling;
 She excels each mortal thing
 Upon the dull earth dwelling:
 To her let us garlands bring.*

Sonnet 73: That time of year thou mayst in me behold

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

9.3 John Milton, 1608-1674

How Soon Hath Time

*How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
 Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!*

*My hasting days fly on with full career,
 But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
 That I to manhood am arrived so near,
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
 It shall be still in strictest measure even
 To that same lot, however mean or high,
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.*

On His Blindness

*When I consider how my light is spent
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
 And that one talent which is death to hide
 Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present
 My true account, lest he returning chide,
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent
 That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
 Either man's work or his own gifts: who best
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
 Is kingly; thousands at his bidding speed
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
 They also serve who only stand and wait."*

Eve speaks to Adam, from Paradise Lost

*With thee conversing I forget all time;
 All seasons, and their change, all please alike.
 Sweet is the breath of Morn, her rising sweet,
 With charm of earliest birds: pleasant the sun,
 When first on this delightful land he spreads
 His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower,
 Glistening with dew; fragrant the fertile earth
 After soft showers; and sweet the coming on
 Of grateful Evening mild; then silent Night
 With this her solemn bird and this fair moon,*



Figure 9.3: John Milton is best known for his epic poem, *Paradise Lost*, which is considered to be one of the finest compositions in the English language. He lived at a time of civil war in England and was on the side of the victorious Parliamentarians. As a result, he held governmental offices until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. By that time, Milton was completely blind, but he continued to write.

*And these the gems of Heaven, her starry train:
 But neither breath of Morn when she ascends
 With charm of earliest birds; nor rising sun
 On this delightful land, nor herb, fruit, flower,
 Glistening with dew; nor fragrance after showers;
 Nor grateful Evening mild; nor silent Night
 With this her solemn bird; nor walk by moon,
 Or glittering star-light without thee is sweet*

9.4 William Blake, 1757-1827

Education as an engraver and printmaker

William Blake was born in 1757 in the Soho district of London. He was the third of seven children, two of whom died in infancy. His parents, who were English Dissenters, seem to have been reasonable wealthy during his childhood, since his father was able to purchase many books for him. Among these were books of engravings and drawings through which Blake became familiar with the works of Michelangelo, Raphael and Albrecht Dürer.

Recognizing their son's extremely independent temperament and his gifts as an artist, his parents sent him to an ordinary school only long enough to learn reading and writing, after which he was tutored at home by his mother, and later apprenticed to an engraver and printmaker. After he had finished his apprenticeship, the young Blake became a student at the Royal Academy. Finally, he opened his own engraving and printmaking shop.

Blake continued to read avidly on topics of all kinds, but was most influenced by his studies of the Bible.

Marriage

In 1782, while recovering from the pain of a rejected marriage proposal, Blake met Catherine Boucher, who was five years his junior. He told Catherine about the pain he had experienced and asked "Do you pity me?" When she answered that she did, Blake replied "Then I love you".

Blake's marriage to Catherine was an extremely happy one. She was illiterate, but he taught her to read and write. Later he also trained her as an engraver. She was an invaluable help to him, and she lifted his spirits whenever he was burdened by misfortunes. She said of her husband, "He is always in Heaven".

Political activity

William Blake's first collection of poems, *Poetical Sketches*, was printed around 1783. After his father's death, Blake and former fellow apprentice James Parker opened a print shop

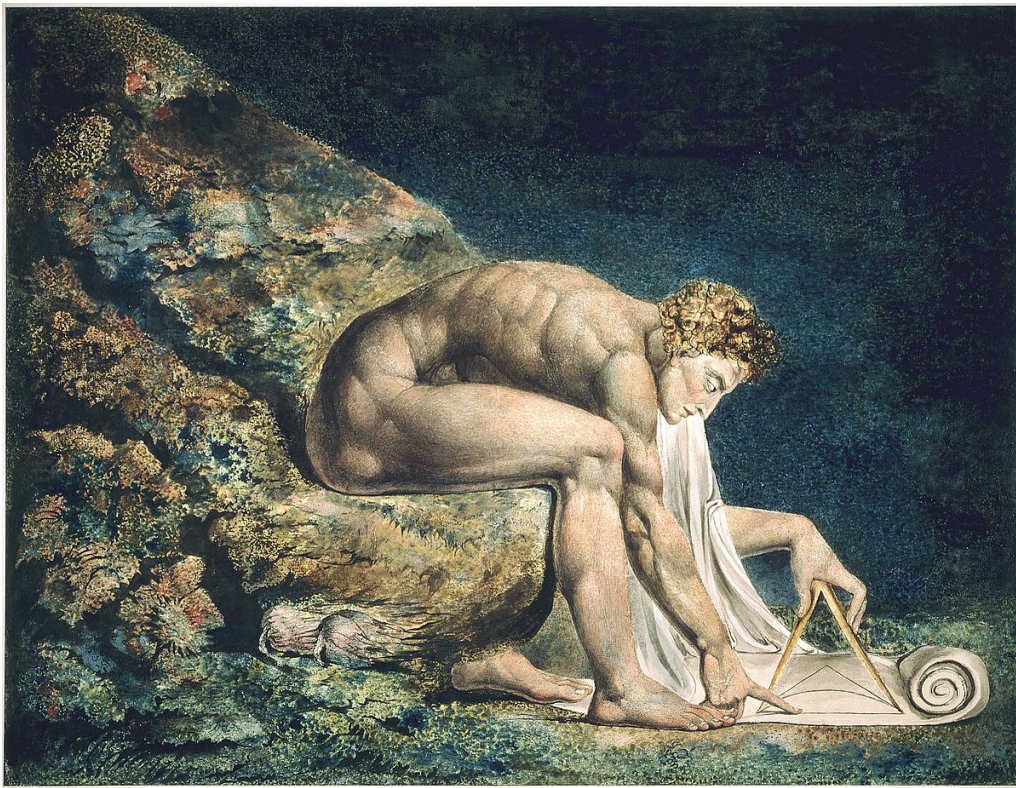


Figure 9.4: Newton depicted in a print by William Blake.



Figure 9.5: **William Blake** in a portrait by **Thomas Phillips**.

in 1784, and began working with radical publisher Joseph Johnson. Johnson's house was a meeting-place for some leading English intellectual dissidents of the time: theologian and scientist Joseph Priestley, philosopher Richard Price, artist John Henry Fuseli, early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft and English-American revolutionary Thomas Paine. Along with William Wordsworth and William Godwin, Blake had great hopes for the French and American revolutions, but despaired with the rise of Robespierre and the Reign of Terror in France.

Blake illustrated *Original Stories from Real Life* (2nd edition, 1791) by Mary Wollstonecraft. They seem to have shared some views on sexual equality and the institution of marriage. In 1793 Blake published *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, in which he condemned the cruel absurdity of enforced marriage without love and defended the right of women to complete self-fulfilment.

Some verses from Blake's *Auguries of Innocence*

*To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour*

*A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage*

*A Dove house filled with Doves & Pigeons
Shudders Hell thr' all its regions*

*A dog starvd at his Masters Gate
Predicts the ruin of the State*

*A Horse misusd upon the Road
Calls to Heaven for Human blood*

*Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear*

*A Skylark wounded in the wing
A Cherubim does cease to sing*

*The Game Cock clipd & armd for fight
Does the Rising Sun affright*

*Every Wolfs & Lions howl
Raises from Hell a Human Soul*

*The wild deer, wandring here & there
Keeps the Human Soul from Care*

*The Lamb misusd breeds Public Strife
And yet forgives the Butchers knife*

*The Bat that flits at close of Eve
Has left the Brain that wont Believe*

*The Owl that calls upon the Night
Speaks the Unbelievers fright*

*He who shall hurt the little Wren
Shall never be beloved by Men*

*He who the Ox to wrath has moved
Shall never be by Woman loved*

*The wanton Boy that kills the Fly
Shall feel the Spiders enmity*

*He who torments the Chafers Sprite
Weaves a Bower in endless Night*

*The Catterpillar on the Leaf
Repeats to thee thy Mothers grief*

*Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgment draweth nigh*

*He who shall train the Horse to War
Shall never pass the Polar Bar*

*The Beggars Dog & Widows Cat
Feed them & thou wilt grow fat*

*The Gnat that sings his Summers Song
Poison gets from Slanders tongue*

*The poison of the Snake & Newt
Is the sweat of Envy's Foot*

*The poison of the Honey Bee
Is the Artists Jealousy*

*The Princes Robes & Beggars Rags
Are Toadstools on the Misers Bags*

*A Truth that's told with bad intent
Beats all the Lies you can invent*

*The Whore & Gambler by the State
Licenced build that Nations Fate*

*The Harlots cry from Street to Street
Shall weave Old Englands winding Sheet*

*The Winners Shout the Losers Curse
Dance before dead Englands Hearse*

*Every Night & every Morn
Some to Misery are Born
Every Morn and every Night
Some are Born to sweet delight
Some are Born to sweet delight
Some are Born to Endless Night.*

Jerusalem

*And did those feet in ancient time
Walk upon England's mountains green?
And was the holy Lamb of God
On England's pleasant pastures seen?*

*And did the Countenance Divine
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here
Among these dark Satanic Mills?*

*Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!*

*I will not cease from mental fight,
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand,
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

London

*I wandered through each chartered street
Near which the chartered Thames doth flow.
A mark in every face I meet,*

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

*In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear.*

*How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appalls,
And how the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace-walls.*

*But most, through midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.*

9.5 Robert Burns, 1759-1796

To A Mouse

On Turning her up in her Nest with the Plough

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

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

*I doubt na, whiles, but thou mayst thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:*

*I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss't!*

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

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

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

*But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
For promised joy.*

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

Coming Through The Rye

*Coming thro' the rye, poor body,
Coming thro' the rye,*



Figure 9.6: Robert Burns is regarded as the national poet of Scotland. Burns night is celebrated there each year, and Burns' song *Auld Lang Syne* is sung at the last day of the year (Hogmanay). Besides writing in the Scottish dialect, Burns also wrote in English, especially when expressing his political beliefs. He was a pioneer of the romantic movement, of liberalism and of socialism.

*She draiglet a' her petticoatie
Coming thro' the rye.*

*O, Jenny's a' wat, poor body;
Jenny's seldom dry;
She draiglet a' her petticoatie
Coming thro' the rye.*

*Gin a body meet a body
Coming thro' the rye,
Gin a body kiss a body-
Need a body cry?*

*Gin a body meet a body
Coming thro' the glen,
Gin a body kiss a body-
Need the warld ken?*

Auld Lang Syne

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne?*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,
And surely I'll be mine!
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae run about the braes,
And pu'd the gowans fine;*

*But we've wandered mony a weary fit
Sin' auld lang syne.*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae paidled i' the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine;
But seas between us braid hae roared
Sin' auld lang syne.*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.*

*And there's a hand, my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine!
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught
For auld lang syne.*

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne*

9.6 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834

Kubla Khan

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.*

*So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:*

*And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

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

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

*A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!*

*And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed
And drunk the milk of Paradise.*



Figure 9.7: Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1795. He was one of the “Lake Poets”, whose three main figures were Coleridge, William Wordsworth and Robert Southey. The group also included Dorothy Wordsworth and Charles and Mary Lamb. These poets lived in the Lake District of England, and were associated with the romantic movement. Coleridge’s health was never good, and to overcome pain he took laudanum, eventually becoming addicted to opium. According to Coleridge, *Kubla Khan* was composed in a dream (perhaps induced by opium). After waking from the dream, and while he was in the process of writing the poem down, Coleridge was interrupted by a visitor, and thus he forgot the remainder of the poem, which otherwise would have been much longer.

9.7 William Wordsworth, 1770-1850

Composed Upon Westminster Bridge

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

I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud

*I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company!
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

For oft, when on my couch I lie

*In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.*

The World Is Too Much With Us

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. - Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.*

She dwelt among the untrodden ways

*She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:*

*A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
- Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.*

*She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!*



Figure 9.8: William Wordsworth, together with his close friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, launched the romantic movement in English literature with their joint publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. Wordsworth became the Poet Laureate of England in 1843, a position that he held until his death. Wordsworth's most famous work is his long autobiographical poem, *Prelude*, which he continued to revise over many years.

Perfect Woman

*She was a phantom of delight
 When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
 A lovely apparition, sent
 To be a moment's ornament;
 Her eyes as stars of twilight fair;
 Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
 But all things else about her drawn
 From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
 A dancing shape, an image gay,
 To haunt, to startle, and waylay.*

*saw her upon nearer view,
 A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
 Her household motions light and free,
 And steps of virgin liberty;
 A countenance in which did meet
 Sweet records, promises as sweet;
 A creature not too bright or good
 For human nature's daily food;
 For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
 Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.*

*And now I see with eye serene
 The very pulse of the machine;
 A being breathing thoughtful breath,
 A traveller between life and death;
 The reason firm, the temperate will,
 Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
 A perfect Woman, nobly plann'd,
 To warn, to comfort, and command;
 And yet a Spirit still, and bright
 With something of angelic light.*

To the Skylark

*Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound?
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground?
 Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,*

Those quivering wings composed, that music still!

*Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!*

9.8 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822

A pioneer of non-violent resistance to tyranny

Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Shelley is today considered to be one of the major English-language poets. Less well known is the fact that he was a pioneer of non-violent resistance to tyranny, whose ideas influenced Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the eldest legitimate son of Sir Timothy Shelley, Baronet and Whig Member of Parliament. His mother was a wealthy Sussex landowner. Shelley was thus the heir to a baronetcy and a large estate. He had a happy childhood, but was unhappy at Eton College, where he was regularly mobbed because of his strong principles and his refusal to take part in sports.

In 1810, after graduating from Eton, Shelley became a student at Oxford University. Legend has it that he attended only one lecture. However, while at Oxford, he was extremely active as a writer, publishing a series of books: the Gothic novel, *Zastrozzi* (1810), *St. Irvyne; or, The Rosicrucian: A Romance* (dated 1811), *Original Poetry by Victor and Cazire* (written together with his sister Elizabeth) and a collection of poetry entitled *Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson* (written in collaboration with Thomas Jefferson Hogg).

Expelled from Oxford

All these books could have been considered subversive by the Oxford authorities, but no action was taken. However, when Shelley anonymously published *The Necessity of Atheism* in 1811, the University authorities threatened to expel him if he did not renounce his authorship. Shelley refused and was expelled. His influential father then intervened, and persuaded the authorities to reinstate his son if he would renounce his authorship as well as the principles expressed in the pamphlet. However, Shelley once again refused. This led to an estrangement between father and son.



Figure 9.9: Percy Bysshe Shelley in a portrait by Alfred Clint.

Sir Thomas cut off his son's allowance, and from then on, Shelley's financial circumstances became precarious. He was still the heir to an estate with an income of 6,000 pounds per year, in those days an enormous sum, and he could (and did) borrow money against his future inheritance, but the amount that he could raise in that way was limited.

Godwin's disciple

After being expelled from Oxford, Shelley visited the poet Robert Southey, who informed him that the once universally popular revolutionary author William Godwin was still alive. Shelley who had always been an ardent admirer of Godwin's writing, was greatly excited by the news, and he immediately contacted Godwin, offering himself as a disciple.

At that time, England was going through a period of reaction against the excesses of the French Revolution, and Godwin's books and articles were no longer popular. Left with two infant daughters to care for after the death of his wife, Godwin had been driven to marry his neighbor, Mary Jane Claremont, a widow who herself had a young daughter. Thus, when Shelley arrived at Godwin's household he met three attractive young girls, Fanny Imlay, Jane Claremont and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin. All three had been educated by Godwin.

Here is Jane Claremont's description of the household: "All the family worked hard, learning and studying: We all took the liveliest interest in the great questions of the day. Common topics, gossiping, scandal, found no entrance in our circle for we had been taught by Mr. Godwin to think it the greatest misfortune to be fond of the world, or worldly pleasures or of luxury or money; and that there was no greater happiness than to think well of those around us, to love them, and to delight in being useful or pleasing to them".

"The name of Godwin has been used to excite in me feelings of reverence and admiration", the 20-year-old Shelley had written in his letter to Godwin. "...I had enrolled your name on the list of the honourable dead. I had felt regret that the glory of your being had passed from this earth of ours. It is not so. You still live, and I firmly believe are still planning the welfare of human kind.

"I am young", Shelley wrote, "You have gone before me, I doubt not a veteran to me in the years of persecution. Is it strange that, defying persecution as I have done, I should outstep the limits of custom's prescription, and endeavour to make my desire useful by friendship with William Godwin?"

Godwin answered immediately, and in the voluminous correspondence which followed he soon recognized Shelley's genius.

Inspired by Godwin's *Political Justice*, Shelley had decided to devote both his life and his fortune to political reform. (The fortune, however, was only a distant future prospect.) In his letters, Godwin advised slow changes through education as the best means of reform but Shelley's whole temperament rebelled against caution and gradualism.

During the spring of 1812 Shelley wrote *An Address to the Irish People* and travelled to Ireland to work for the cause of Catholic emancipation. He assured the worried Godwin that the pamphlet contained 'no religion but benevolence, no cause but virtue, no party

but the world'. Shelley soon found himself so surrounded by beggars and government spies that he was forced to leave Ireland.

Shelley's letters had by this time captured the imagination of the entire Godwin household, and whenever a new one arrived with its familiar handwriting, all three daughters and Mary Jane waited excitedly "on tiptoe" to know the news. Shelley, who dreamed of establishing a utopian community of free and enlightened friends, invited Godwin to come to Devon for a visit and Godwin (who was in the habit of making a small excursion during his summer vacation) did so; but after a terrible journey by boat in stormy weather he arrived at Lynemouth only to find Shelley gone. Alarmed by the arrest of his servant Dan (who had been posting Shelley's *Declaration of Rights* and his ballad *The Devil's Walk*), the young poet had left quietly with his entourage before he himself was arrested.

A wild romance

In 1814, Shelley had lodgings in Fleet Street but, between May and July, he lived mainly with the Godwin family. Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin was at that time sixteen and a half years old and extremely pretty, with long blond hair and her father's expressive eyes. She had just returned from Scotland, where she had lived for two years with family friends, ostensibly for the sake of her health. Probably the real reason for Mary's stay in Scotland was friction with her step-mother: Mary's affection for her father had been enough to excite the jealousy of the new Mrs Godwin.

Shelley was immediately electrified by meeting Mary. As she told him of her daydreams, of her writing, and of the wild Scottish landscapes which she had just experienced, Mary seemed to him to combine the emotional sensitivity of Mary Wollstonecraft with the imagination and mental power of William Godwin. In an ode to Mary, Shelley wrote:

*They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not, for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in a radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory, still her fame
Shines on thee through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter from thy Sire of an immortal name.*

For her part, Mary was fascinated by the openness, generosity and warmth of the brilliant young writer who was her father's best-loved disciple. In her copy of Shelley's revolutionary poem *Queen Mab*, she wrote: "This book is sacred to me... I love the author beyond all power of expression..."

Because of her step-mother's jealousy, it was uncomfortable for Mary to be at home; and she was in the habit of taking a book to the old St Pancreas churchyard where her mother was buried. Shelley followed her there and under the willow tree beside Mary

Wollstonecraft's grave they declared their love for each other. Meanwhile, Mary's step-sister Jane, who had stage-managed the meeting, watched from a distant tombstone. Jane was (of course) also in love with Shelley and Fanny, the third sister, was in love with him too.

On 28 July 1814, Godwin awoke to find a note on his dressing table: Shelley had eloped with Mary and, amazingly, he and Mary had taken Jane with them. Mary was 16 years old, Jane 15, and Shelley 21.

The fugitives had left at five in the morning and hurried to Dover where they embarked for France in a small boat. After a stormy and dangerous night on the Channel, they arrived at Calais. Meanwhile, Mrs Godwin set off in pursuit, hoping to rescue Jane and with the help of information from the London stables, she traced the runaways to their lodgings in Calais. Jane spent the next night with her mother, but in the morning she decided firmly to continue with Mary and Shelley.

Why had Shelley and Mary taken Jane? For one thing, Jane was the only one of the three who spoke fluent French and she was good at making practical arrangements. Shelley also thought that Jane needed to be rescued from the influence of the new Mrs Godwin. "I am not in the least in love with her", Shelley is said to have explained, "but she is a nice little girl, and her mother is such a vulgar, commonplace woman, without an idea of philosophy. I do not think she is a proper person to form the mind of a young girl."

After arriving in Paris, Shelley, Mary and Jane bought a mule and they set out for Switzerland, sometimes riding the mule but for the most part walking. Switzerland was the country of Rousseau and the setting of Godwin's novel, *Fleetwood*. They hoped that it would prove to be a land of enlightenment and freedom. After a few weeks in Switzerland, however, Shelley's financial problems forced them to return to England. Mary later described the journey in her *History of a Six Week's Tour*.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Jane now changed her name to one which she considered to be more romantic: Claire. Since she was no longer permitted a share of Shelley, Claire decided to capture a poet of her own and with remarkable resourcefulness and determination she managed to seduce Lord Byron, then at the height of his fame. This was an extraordinary accomplishment since Byron was being pursued by hordes of fashionable and beautiful women, including the famous Lady Caroline Lamb. However, Byron was soon forced to leave England because of scandals resulting from his affairs, especially his relationship with his half-sister Augusta.

On 2 May 1816, Shelley and Mary left England too, planning never to return. Shelley's financial position had improved following the death of his grandfather in 1815. Shelley and Mary took Claire Clairmont with them. She was already pregnant with Lord Byron's child, although probably none of them knew it. They headed for Geneva, hoping to meet Lord Byron there. Claire was anxious to show off her catch to Shelley and the two poets were looking forward to meeting each other. Although Shelley was not yet famous as a writer, Byron had read and admired his work.

Byron had rented a large house called Villa Diodati, near Lake Geneva, and he was

staying there with his personal physician, Dr Polidori. Shelley, Mary and Claire found quarters at the nearby Maison Chapuis, and before long the whole Villa Diodati group had settled into a routine of excursions on the lake or walks along the shore, followed by long evenings of conversation at Villa Diodati. Whenever the weather was bad, as it frequently was that summer, Shelley, Mary and Claire spent the night at Diodati instead of returning to Maison Chapuis.

Because of Byron's fame, their movements were followed avidly by scandalized English tourists, who spent hours looking at the party through field-glasses and telescopes. Stories of imorality filtered back to England; and the rumors had some foundation, since Byron had resumed his affair with Claire. He looked down on her, but Claire was very pretty, and, as Byron explained, "I could not exactly play the stoic with a woman who has scrambled eight hundred miles to unphilosophize me".

Byron was writing the third canto of *Childe Harold*, and in the evenings he often read new sections of it to the others. The romantic mood of the poem and the splendor of the distant Alps contributed to the atmosphere of the summer evenings at Diodati.

Byron also retold for his friends the myth of Prometheus Porphyros, which he had translated from Aeschylus at Harrow. In this myth, Prometheus steals the sacred fire of the gods and gives it to mankind. Punished by Zeus, Prometheus is chained forever to a rock in the Caucasus, while an eagle tears out his vitals. A later version of the myth, Prometheus Plasticator, was popular among the Romans, and in this later version, Prometheus creates or recreates mankind by giving life to a figure of clay.

Both Byron and Shelley recognized the symbolic possibilities of the myth. Prometheus had already been used as a symbol of the creative artist but Shelley, with his interest in science, saw that Prometheus could also stand as a symbol for scientific creativity. Benjamin Franklin had recently performed the famous experiment in which he flew a kite during a thunderstorm, thus drawing down lightning and showing it to be identical with electricity. Franklin, Shelley realized, could be thought of as a modern Prometheus, who defied the thunderbolts of Zeus and brought the sacred fire of the gods down from heaven for the use of mankind.

The weather worsened at Diodati, and for many days, heavy rain and lightning confined the party to the villa. To pass the time, they read aloud to each other from a book of German ghost stories. The storm outside and the strange Gothic stories had a strong effect on Shelley's imagination, and one night he rushed out of the room with a cry of terror, explaining later that he had seen a vision of a woman with eyes instead of breasts.

"We will each write a ghost story", Byron said, and his idea was adopted with enthusiasm. Dr Polidori began a tale of a skull-headed woman; and both Byron and Shelley began stories too but, being poets, they soon tired of writing prose. Mary was unable to think of an idea sufficiently horrible to produce terror in a reader. Every morning she was asked whether she had found a theme and she was forced to answer sadly that she had not.

Meanwhile, Byron and Shelley continued to talk of the possibilities of the myth of Prometheus, especially as a symbol for scientific creativity. Perhaps, one day, science might achieve the Promethean feat of creating life. Shelley was especially interested in

experiments with electricity, such as the discovery by Galvani that an electrical current could cause the legs of a dismembered frog to move.

“Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley”, Mary wrote later. Finally, well past midnight, Mary went to bed; but she was unable to sleep. Images from the conversation, to which she had been an attentive but almost silent listener, passed uncontrollably through her mind. Later, remembering this half-waking dream, she wrote:

“I saw, with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world.”

Mary realized that she had found her theme. In fact, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, not yet 19 years old, had discovered an enduring symbol for science out of control, science pursued without regard for its social consequences. The next day, encouraged by Shelley, she began to write *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*,

A few poems by Shelley

Ozymandias

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

The Peterloo Massacre and *The Masque of Anarchy*

Shelley wrote his poem *The Masque of Anarchy* in response to the Peterloo Massacre, which took place at St. Peter’s field, Manchester on the 16th of August 1819. Cavalry soldiers of the government charged a crowd of 50,000 citizens who were peacefully assembled to ask for better representation in Parliament. They were suffering from unemployment and from famine produced by the Corn Laws. The cavalry slashed down hundreds of the protesters

with their sabres. including women and children. Shelley's poem advocating non-violent resistance to tyranny was an inspiration to Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi. Here is the poem:

*Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war.*

*And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there;
Slash, and stab, and maim and hew;
What they like, that let them do.*

*With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay,
Till their rage has died away:*

*Then they will return with shame,
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek:*

*Rise, like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number!
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you:
Ye are many, they are few!*

A few verses from *Prometheus Unbound*

*This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep:
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dead endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.*

*Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance*

*Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
 And if, with infirm hand, Eternity,
 Mother of many acts and hours, should free
 The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
 These are the spells by which to re-assume
 An empire o'er the disentangled doom.*

*To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
 To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
 To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
 To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
 From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
 Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
 This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
 Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
 This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.*

Ode to the West Wind

*O Wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being-
 Thou from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
 Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes! - O thou
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed
 The wing'd seeds, where they lie cold and low,
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until
 Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow
 Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
 With living hues and odours plain and hill-
 Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere-
 Destroyer and Preserver - hear, O hear!*

*Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
 Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
 Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
 Angels of rain and lightning! they are spread
 On the blue surface of thine airy surge,
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
 Of some fierce Maenad, ev'n from the dim verge
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height-*

*The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge
Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might
Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: - O hear!*

*Thou who didst waken from his summer-dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,
Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,
All overgrown with azure moss, and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers
Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know
Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear
And tremble and despoil themselves: - O hear!*

*If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share
The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! - if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seem'd a vision, - I would ne'er have striven
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
O lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd
One too like thee - tameless, and swift, and proud*

*Make me thy lyre, ev'n as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! be thou me, impetuous one!*

*Drive my dead thoughts over the universe,
 Like wither'd leaves, to quicken a new birth;
 And, by the incantation of this verse,
 Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd herth
 Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
 Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth
 The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
 If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?*

To a Skylark

*Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from Heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
 In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.*

*Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
 Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
 And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.*

*In the golden lightning
 Of the sunken sun,
 O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
 Thou dost float and run;
 Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.*

*The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight;
 Like a star of Heaven,
 In the broad day-light
 Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,*

*Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
 Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear
 Until we hardly see, we feel that it is there.*

All the earth and air

*With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and Heaven is overflow'd.*

*What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.*

*Like a Poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:*

*Like a high-born maiden
In a palace-tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:*

*Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering un beholden
Its a:ereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:*

*Like a rose embower'd
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflower'd,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves:*

*Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.*

*Teach us, Sprite or Bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:*

*I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.*

*Chorus Hymeneal,
Or triumphal chant,
Match'd with thine would be all
But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.*

*What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?*

*With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest: but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.*

*Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?*

*We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.*

*Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.*

*Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures*

*That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!*

*Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now.*

9.9 John Keats, 1795-1821

Ode On A Grecian Urn

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

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

*Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!*

*For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.*

*Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.*

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

When I Have Fears That I May Cease To Be

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



Figure 9.10: John Keats in a posthumous portrait by William Hilton. His work was badly received during his lifetime, and he died at the age of 25. Byron wrote: “Who killed John Keats? I, said the Quarterly, savage and tarterly, ’twas one of my feats”. Today Keats is much loved, and considered to have been a major poet of the romantic era.

*Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.*

9.10 Lord Byron, 1788-1824

She Walks In Beauty

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

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

*And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!*

When We Two Parted

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

The dew of the morning



Figure 9.11: George Gordon, Lord Byron in a portrait by Thomas Phillips. His most famous poems are the long narrative poems *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. Many of his shorter lyrics also became very popular. Byron was a close friend of Shelley, and they spent much time together during Byron's seven-year stay in Italy. Byron died of disease while fighting for the cause of Greek independence, and in Greece he is regarded as a hero. Byron's daughter, Augusta Ada, Countess Lovelace, was an accomplished mathematician and a pioneer of computer science.

*Sank chill on my brow-
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.*

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

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

9.11 William Butler Yeats, 1865-1939

The Second Coming

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

*Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.*

*The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
 When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
 Troubles my sight: 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?*

The Lake Isle Of Innisfree

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

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

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



Figure 9.12: William Butler Yeats, photographed in 1903. His publication of *The Celtic Twilight* in 1893 launched the Irish literary revival. In 1923, Yeats was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. Yeats served two terms as a Senator of the Irish Republic.

9.12 Wilfred Owen, 1893-1918

Expressing the horror of war

Wilfred Owen and his mentor, Siegfried Sassoon were two poets who eloquently described the horrors of World War I. They met in a military hospital, after both had been wounded in the war. Owen had been writing poetry since the age of 11, but not about war. When he became friends with Sassoon during their hospital stay, Owen was inspired by Sassoon's example and realized that the horrors of trenches and gas warfare deserved to be described realistically in poetry. Against the strong advice of Sassoon, Owen insisted on returning to active duty in France, where he wrote the eloquent and bitter war poems for which he is remembered.

Owen was killed in action exactly one week before the end of the war. His mother received the telegram informing her of his death on Armistice Day, as the church bells were ringing out in celebration. Here are two of Owen's poems:

Dulce et decorum Est

*Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind;
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.*

*Gas! GAS! Quick, boys! - An ecstasy of fumbling
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.
In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.*

*If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud*

*Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,
 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
 Pro patria mori.*

The parable of the old man and the young

*So Abram rose, and clave the wood, and went,
 And took the fire with him, and a knife.
 And as they sojourned both of them together,
 Isaac the first-born spake and said, My Father,
 Behold the preparations, fire and iron,
 But where the lamb for this burnt-offering?
 Then Abram bound the youth with belts and straps,
 and builded parapets and trenches there,
 And stretchèd forth the knife to slay his son.
 When lo! an angel called him out of heaven,
 Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
 Neither do anything to him. Behold,
 A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
 Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.*

*But the old man would not so, but slew his son,
 And half the seed of Europe, one by one.*

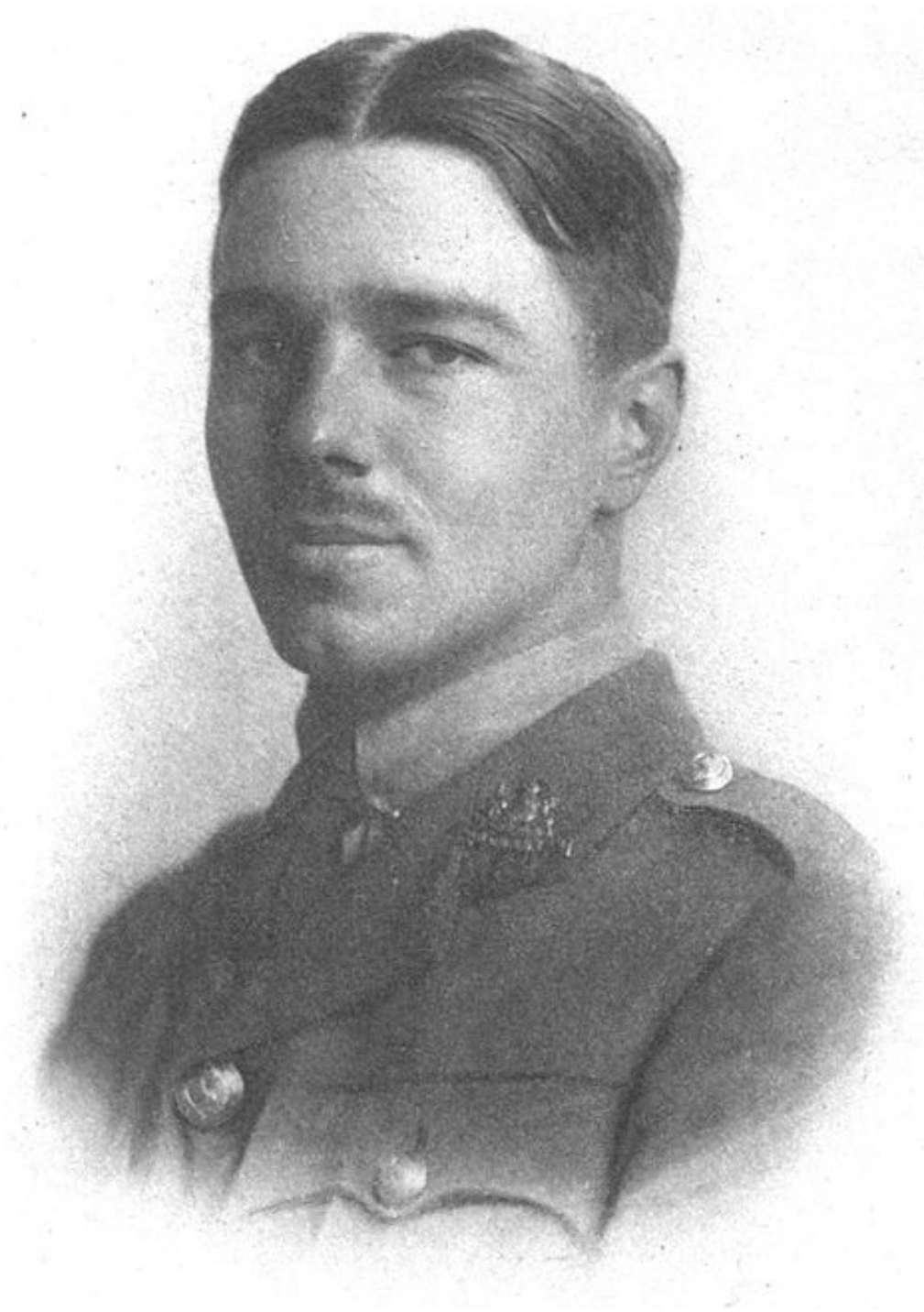


Figure 9.13: Wilfred Owen.

Siegfried Sassoon

Siegfried Sassoon was born into a wealthy family, and prior to World War I, he led a privileged life. During the war, he served in France, and he received the Military Cross for bringing back a wounded soldier under heavy fire. After being wounded, he shared a hospital room with Wilfred Owen. Sassoon's bitter poems describing the horrors of war inspired Owen's own poems. Here are two by Sassoon:

Attack

*At dawn the ridge emerges massed and dun
In the wild purple of the glow'ring sun,
Smouldering through spouts of drifting smoke that shroud
The menacing scarred slope; and, one by one,
Tanks creep and topple forward to the wire.
The barrage roars and lifts. Then, clumsily bowed
With bombs and guns and shovels and battle-gear,
Men jostle and climb to, meet the bristling fire.
Lines of grey, muttering faces, masked with fear,
They leave their trenches, going over the top,
While time ticks blank and busy on their wrists,
And hope, with furtive eyes and grappling fists,
Flounders in mud. O Jesus, make it stop!*

The death bed

*He drowsed and was aware of silence heaped
Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls;
Aqueous like floating rays of amber light,
Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep.
Silence and safety; and his mortal shore
Lipped by the inward, moonless waves of death.*

*Someone was holding water to his mouth.
He swallowed, unresisting; moaned and dropped
Through crimson gloom to darkness; and forgot
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.
Water - calm, sliding green above the weir;
Water - a sky-lit alley for his boat,
Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflected flowers
And shaken hues of summer: drifting down,
He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept.*

*Night, with a gust of wind, was in the ward,
Blowing the curtain to a gummering curve.
Night. He was blind; he could not see the stars
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud;
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green,
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.*

*Rain - he could hear it rustling through the dark;
Fragrance and passionless music woven as one;
Warm rain on drooping roses; pattering showers
That soak the woods; not the harsh rain that sweeps
Behind the thunder, but a trickling peace,
Gently and slowly washing life away.*

*He stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
Leaped like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs.
But someone was beside him; soon he lay
Shuddering because that evil thing had passed.
And death, who'd stepped toward him, paused and stared.*

*Light many lamps and gather round his bed.
Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live.
Speak to him; rouse him; you may save him yet.
He's young; he hated war; how should he die
When cruel old campaigners win safe through?*

*But death replied: "I choose him." So he went,
And there was silence in the summer night;
Silence and safety; and the veils of sleep.
Then, far away, the thudding of the guns.*



Figure 9.14: Siegfried Sassoon.

9.13 Dylan Thomas, 1914-1953

A Child's Christmas in Wales

One Christmas was so much like another, in those years around the sea-town corner now and out of all sound except the distant speaking of the voices I sometimes hear a moment before sleep, that I can never remember whether it snowed for six days and six nights when I was twelve or whether it snowed for twelve days and twelve nights when I was six.

All the Christmases roll down toward the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the firemen.

It was on the afternoon of the Christmas Eve, and I was in Mrs. Prothero's garden, waiting for cats, with her son Jim. It was snowing. It was always snowing at Christmas. December, in my memory, is white as Lapland, though there were no reindeers. But there were cats. Patient, cold and callous, our hands wrapped in socks, we waited to snowball the cats. Sleek and long as jaguars and horrible-whiskered, spitting and snarling, they would slink and sidle over the white back-garden walls, and the lynx-eyed hunters, Jim and I, fur-capped and moccasined trappers from Hudson Bay, off Mumbles Road, would hurl our deadly snowballs at the green of their eyes. The wise cats never appeared.

We were so still, Eskimo-footed arctic marksmen in the muffling silence of the eternal snows - eternal, ever since Wednesday - that we never heard Mrs. Prothero's first cry from her igloo at the bottom of the garden. Or, if we heard it at all, it was, to us, like the far-off challenge of our enemy and prey, the neighbor's polar cat. But soon the voice grew louder. "Fire!" cried Mrs. Prothero, and she beat the dinner-gong.

And we ran down the garden, with the snowballs in our arms, toward the house; and smoke, indeed, was pouring out of the dining-room, and the gong was bombilating, and Mrs. Prothero was announcing ruin like a town crier in Pompeii. This was better than all the cats in Wales standing on the wall in a row. We bounded into the house, laden with snowballs, and stopped at the open door of the smoke-filled room.

Something was burning all right; perhaps it was Mr. Prothero, who always slept there after midday dinner with a newspaper over his face. But he was standing in the middle of the room, saying, "A fine Christmas!" and smacking at the smoke with a slipper.

"Call the fire brigade," cried Mrs. Prothero as she beat the gong. "There won't be there," said Mr. Prothero, "it's Christmas." There was no fire to be seen, only clouds of smoke and Mr. Prothero standing in the middle of them, waving his slipper as though he were conducting. "Do something," he said. And we threw all our snowballs into the smoke -

I think we missed Mr. Prothero - and ran out of the house to the telephone box. "Let's call the police as well," Jim said. "And the ambulance." "And Ernie Jenkins, he likes fires."

But we only called the fire brigade, and soon the fire engine came and three tall men in helmets brought a hose into the house and Mr. Prothero got out just in time before they turned it on. Nobody could have had a noisier Christmas Eve. And when the firemen turned off the hose and were standing in the wet, smoky room, Jim's Aunt, Miss. Prothero, came downstairs and peered in at them. Jim and I waited, very quietly, to hear what she would say to them. She said the right thing, always. She looked at the three tall firemen in their shining helmets, standing among the smoke and cinders and dissolving snowballs, and she said, "Would you like anything to read?"

Years and years ago, when I was a boy, when there were wolves in Wales, and birds the color of red-flannel petticoats whisked past the harp-shaped hills, when we sang and wallowed all night and day in caves that smelt like Sunday afternoons in damp front farmhouse parlors, and we chased, with the jawbones of deacons, the English and the bears, before the motor car, before the wheel, before the duchess-faced horse, when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback, it snowed and it snowed. But here a small boy says: "It snowed last year, too. I made a snowman and my brother knocked it down and I knocked my brother down and then we had tea."

"But that was not the same snow," I say. "Our snow was not only shaken from white wash buckets down the sky, it came shawling out of the ground and swam and drifted out of the arms and hands and bodies of the trees; snow grew overnight on the roofs of the houses like a pure and grandfather moss, minutely -ivied the walls and settled on the postman, opening the gate, like a dumb, numb thunder-storm of white, torn Christmas cards."

"Were there postmen then, too?" "With sprinkling eyes and wind-cherried noses, on spread, frozen feet they crunched up to the doors and mittened on them manfully. But all that the children could hear was a ringing of bells." "You mean that the postman went rat-a-tat-tat and the doors rang?" "I mean that the bells the children could hear were inside them." "I only hear thunder sometimes, never bells." "There were church bells, too." "Inside them?" "No, no, no, in the bat-black, snow-white belfries, tugged by bishops and storks. And they rang their tidings over the bandaged town, over the frozen foam of the powder and ice-cream hills, over the crackling sea. It seemed that all the churches boomed for joy under my window; and the weathercocks crew for Christmas, on our fence."

"Get back to the postmen" "They were just ordinary postmen, found of walking and dogs and Christmas and the snow. They knocked on the doors with blue knuckles" "Ours has got a black knocker..." "And then they stood on the white Welcome mat in the little, drifted porches and huffed and puffed, making ghosts with their breath, and jogged from foot to foot like small boys wanting to go out." "And then the presents?" "And then the Presents, after the Christmas box. And the cold postman, with a rose on his button-nose,

tingled down the tea-tray-slithered run of the chilly glinting hill. He went in his ice-bound boots like a man on fishmonger's slabs. "He wagged his bag like a frozen camel's hump, dizzily turned the corner on one foot, and, by God, he was gone."

"Get back to the Presents." "There were the Useful Presents: engulfing mufflers of the old coach days, and mittens made for giant sloths; zebra scarfs of a substance like silky gum that could be tug-o'-warred down to the galoshes; blinding tam-o'-shanters like patchwork tea cozies and bunny-suited busbies and balaclavas for victims of head-shrinking tribes; from aunts who always wore wool next to the skin there were mustached and rasping vests that made you wonder why the aunts had any skin left at all; and once I had a little crocheted nose bag from an aunt now, alas, no longer whinnying with us. And pictureless books in which small boys, though warned with quotations not to, would skate on Farmer Giles' pond and did and drowned; and books that told me everything about the wasp, except why."

"Go on the Useless Presents." "Bags of moist and many-colored jelly babies and a folded flag and a false nose and a tram-conductor's cap and a machine that punched tickets and rang a bell; never a catapult; once, by mistake that no one could explain, a little hatchet; and a celluloid duck that made, when you pressed it, a most unducklike sound, a mew-ing moo that an ambitious cat might make who wished to be a cow; and a painting book in which I could make the grass, the trees, the sea and the animals any colour I pleased, and still the dazzling sky-blue sheep are grazing in the red field under the rainbow-billed and pea-green birds. Hardboileds, toffee, fudge and allsorts, crunches, cracknels, humbugs, glaciers, marzipan, and butterwelsh for the Welsh. And troops of bright tin soldiers who, if they could not fight, could always run. And Snakes-and-Families and Happy Ladders. And Easy Hobbi-Games for Little Engineers, complete with instructions. Oh, easy for Leonardo! And a whistle to make the dogs bark to wake up the old man next door to make him beat on the wall with his stick to shake our picture off the wall. And a packet of cigarettes: you put one in your mouth and you stood at the corner of the street and you waited for hours, in vain, for an old lady to scold you for smoking a cigarette, and then with a smirk you ate it. And then it was breakfast under the balloons."

"Were there Uncles like in our house?" "There are always Uncles at Christmas. The same Uncles. And on Christmas morning, with dog-disturbing whistle and sugar fags, I would scour the swatched town for the news of the little world, and find always a dead bird by the Post Office or by the white deserted swings; perhaps a robin, all but one of his fires out. Men and women wading or scooping back from chapel, with taproom noses and wind-bussed cheeks, all albinos, huddles their stiff black jarring feathers against the irreligious snow. Mistletoe hung from the gas brackets in all the front parlors; there was sherry and walnuts and bottled beer and crackers by the dessertspoons; and cats in their fur-about watched the fires; and the high-heaped fire spat, all ready for the chestnuts and the mulling pokers. Some few large men sat in the front parlors, without their collars, Uncles almost certainly, trying their new cigars, holding them out judiciously at arms' length, returning them to their mouths, coughing, then holding them out again as though waiting for the explosion; and

some few small aunts, not wanted in the kitchen, nor anywhere else for that matter, sat on the very edge of their chairs, poised and brittle, afraid to break, like faded cups and saucers."

Not many those mornings trod the piling streets: an old man always, fawn-bowled, yellow-gloved and, at this time of year, with spats of snow, would take his constitutional to the white bowling green and back, as he would take it wet or fire on Christmas Day or Doomsday; sometimes two hale young men, with big pipes blazing, no overcoats and wind blown scarfs, would trudge, unspeaking, down to the forlorn sea, to work up an appetite, to blow away the fumes, who knows, to walk into the waves until nothing of them was left but the two furling smoke clouds of their inextinguishable briars. Then I would be slap-dashing home, the gravy smell of the dinners of others, the bird smell, the brandy, the pudding and mince, coiling up to my nostrils, when out of a snow-clogged side lane would come a boy the spit of myself, with a pink-tipped cigarette and the violet past of a black eye, cocky as a bullfinch, leering all to himself.

I hated him on sight and sound, and would be about to put my dog whistle to my lips and blow him off the face of Christmas when suddenly he, with a violet wink, put his whistle to his lips and blew so stridently, so high, so exquisitely loud, that gobbling faces, their cheeks bulged with goose, would press against their tinsled windows, the whole length of the white echoing street. For dinner we had turkey and blazing pudding, and after dinner the Uncles sat in front of the fire, loosened all buttons, put their large moist hands over their watch chains, groaned a little and slept. Mothers, aunts and sisters scuttled to and fro, bearing tureens. Auntie Bessie, who had already been frightened, twice, by a clock-work mouse, whimpered at the sideboard and had some elderberry wine. The dog was sick. Auntie Dosie had to have three aspirins, but Auntie Hannah, who liked port, stood in the middle of the snowbound back yard, singing like a big-bosomed thrush. I would blow up balloons to see how big they would blow up to; and, when they burst, which they all did, the Uncles jumped and rumbled. In the rich and heavy afternoon, the Uncles breathing like dolphins and the snow descending, I would sit among festoons and Chinese lanterns and nibble dates and try to make a model man-o'-war, following the Instructions for Little Engineers, and produce what might be mistaken for a sea-going tramcar.

Or I would go out, my bright new boots squeaking, into the white world, on to the seaward hill, to call on Jim and Dan and Jack and to pad through the still streets, leaving huge footprints on the hidden pavements. "I bet people will think there's been hippos." "What would you do if you saw a hippo coming down our street?" "I'd go like this, bang! I'd throw him over the railings and roll him down the hill and then I'd tickle him under the ear and he'd wag his tail." "What would you do if you saw two hippos?"

Iron-flanked and bellowing he-hippos clanked and battered through the scudding snow toward us as we passed Mr. Daniel's house. "Let's post Mr. Daniel a snow-ball through his letter box." "Let's write things in the snow." "Let's write, 'Mr. Daniel looks like a spaniel' all over his lawn." Or we walked on the white shore. "Can the fishes see it's snowing?"

The silent one-clouded heavens drifted on to the sea. Now we were snow-blind travelers lost on the north hills, and vast dewlapped dogs, with flasks round their necks, ambled and shambled up to us, baying "Excelsior." We returned home through the poor streets where only a few children fumbled with bare red fingers in the wheel-rutted snow and cat-called after us, their voices fading away, as we trudged uphill, into the cries of the dock birds and the hooting of ships out in the whirling bay. And then, at tea the recovered Uncles would be jolly; and the ice cake loomed in the center of the table like a marble grave. Auntie Hannah laced her tea with rum, because it was only once a year.

Bring out the tall tales now that we told by the fire as the gaslight bubbled like a diver. Ghosts whooped like owls in the long nights when I dared not look over my shoulder; animals lurked in the cubbyhole under the stairs and the gas meter ticked. And I remember that we went singing carols once, when there wasn't the shaving of a moon to light the flying streets. At the end of a long road was a drive that led to a large house, and we stumbled up the darkness of the drive that night, each one of us afraid, each one holding a stone in his hand in case, and all of us too brave to say a word. The wind through the trees made noises as of old and unpleasant and maybe webfooted men wheezing in caves. We reached the black bulk of the house. "What shall we give them? Hark the Herald?" "No," Jack said, "Good King Wencelas. I'll count three." One, two three, and we began to sing, our voices high and seemingly distant in the snow-felted darkness round the house that was occupied by nobody we knew. We stood close together, near the dark door. Good King Wencelas looked out On the Feast of Stephen ... And then a small, dry voice, like the voice of someone who has not spoken for a long time, joined our singing: a small, dry, eggshell voice from the other side of the door: a small dry voice through the keyhole. And when we stopped running we were outside our house; the front room was lovely; balloons floated under the hot-water-bottle-gulping gas; everything was good again and shone over the town. "Perhaps it was a ghost," Jim said. "Perhaps it was trolls," Dan said, who was always reading. "Let's go in and see if there's any jelly left," Jack said. And we did that.

Always on Christmas night there was music. An uncle played the fiddle, a cousin sang "Cherry Ripe," and another uncle sang "Drake's Drum." It was very warm in the little house. Auntie Hannah, who had got on to the parsnip wine, sang a song about Bleeding Hearts and Death, and then another in which she said her heart was like a Bird's Nest; and then everybody laughed again; and then I went to bed. Looking through my bedroom window, out into the moonlight and the unending smoke-colored snow, I could see the lights in the windows of all the other houses on our hill and hear the music rising from them up the long, steady falling night. I turned the gas down, I got into bed. I said some words to the close and holy darkness, and then I slept.



Figure 9.15: Dylan Thomas at a bookstore in New York in 1952. Although he wrote in English rather than in Welsh, the people of Wales regard him as their great national poet. His verse play *Under Milk Wood* is much loved.

Chapter 10

SOME AMERICAN POETS

10.1 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807-1882

Evangeline: A Tale of Arcadie

(the first three verses)

*This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.*

*This is the forest primeval; but where are the hearts that beneath it
Leaped like the roe, when he hears in the woodland the voice of the huntsman
Where is the thatch-roofed village, the home of Acadian farmers,—
Men whose lives glided on like rivers that water the woodlands,
Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of heaven?
Waste are those pleasant farms, and the farmers forever departed!
Scattered like dust and leaves, when the mighty blasts of October
Seize them, and whirl them aloft, and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean
Naught but tradition remains of the beautiful village of Grand-Pre.*

*Ye who believe in affection that hopes, and endures, and is patient,
Ye who believe in the beauty and strength of woman's devotion,
List to the mournful tradition still sung by the pines of the forest;
List to a Tale of Love in Acadie, home of the happy.*

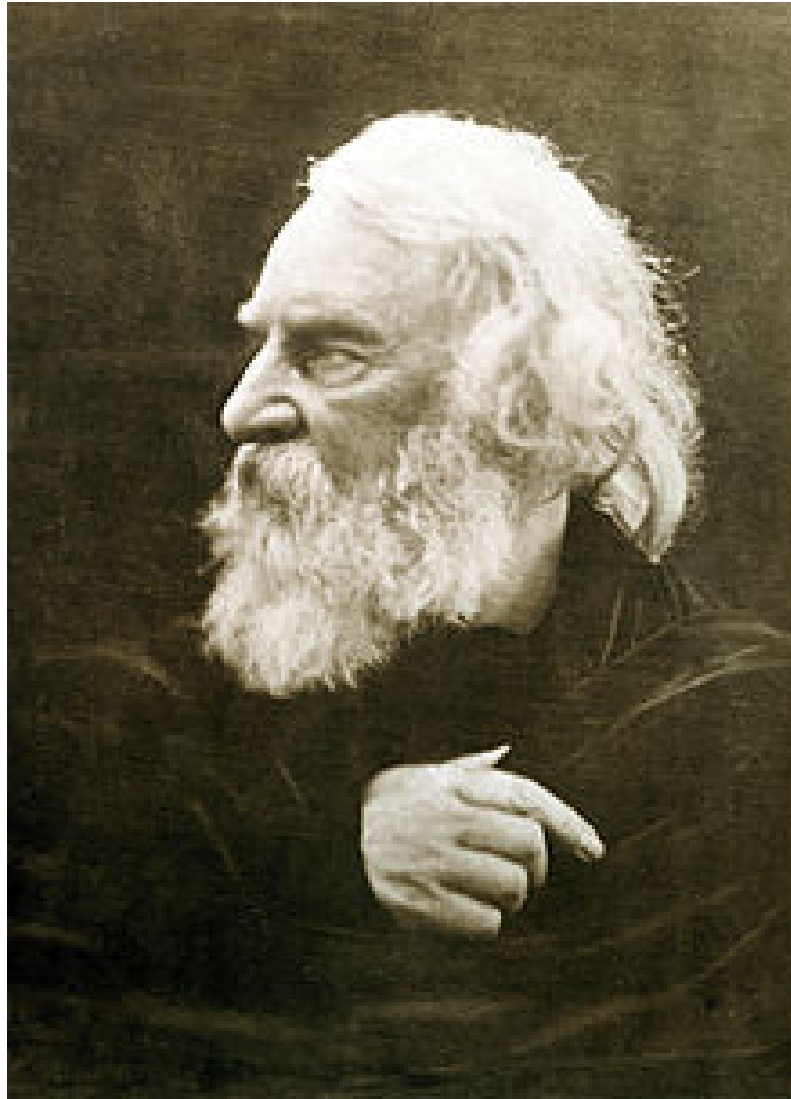


Figure 10.1: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, photographed in 1868. Born in Portland Maine, then a part of Massachusetts, he became a professor, first at Bowdoin and later at Harvard. He is famous for his poems, *Paul Revere's Ride*, *Song of Hiawatha*, and the long epic *Evangeline*. Longfellow also translated Dante's *Divine Comedy* into English.

Psalm of Life

*Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.*

*Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.*

*Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.*

*Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.*

*In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!*

*Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act, - act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!*

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;*

*Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.*

Let us, then, be up and doing,

*With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.*

10.2 Edgar Allan Poe, 1809-1849

The Raven

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

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

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

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

*Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"*

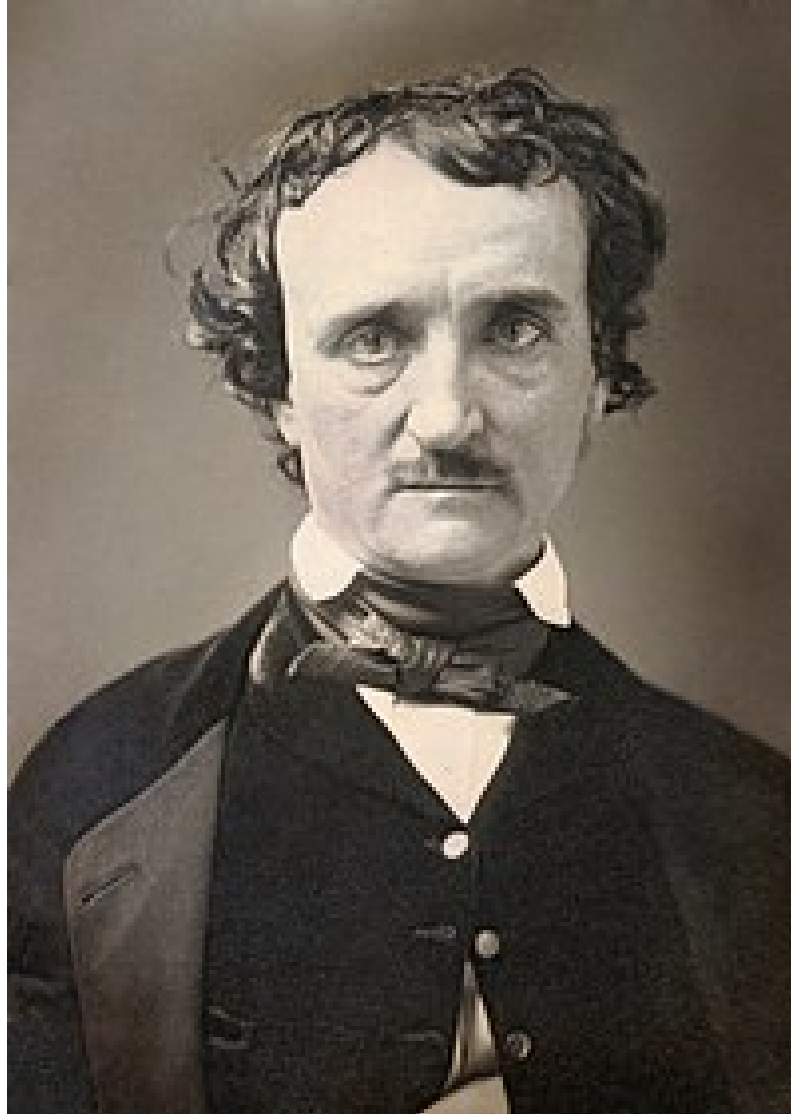


Figure 10.2: Edgar Allan Poe. He was the son of an actor and an actress. Poe's father abandoned the family, and his mother died. He was cared for by foster parents, although never formally adopted. Poe became a writer, the first in America to support himself by writing; but this was not easy, and he struggled with financial problems. Besides poetry, he also wrote short stories, especially featuring the macabre, as in *The Fall of The House of Usher*. Poe pioneered both the detective story and science fiction.

*This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!" -
Merely this, and nothing more.*

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

*Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door -
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door -
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.*

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

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

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

*Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore -
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore*

Of 'Never - nevermore'."

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

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

*Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee - by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite - respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore:
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."*

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

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

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

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

10.3 Walt Whitman, 1819-1892

When Lilacs Last in the Door-yard Bloom'd
 (the first seven verses)

*When lilacs last in the door-yard bloom'd,
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
 I mourn'd - and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.*

*O ever-returning spring! trinity sure to me you bring;
 Lilac blooming perennial, and drooping star in the west,
 And thought of him I love.*

*O powerful, western, fallen star!
 O shades of night! O moody, tearful night!
 O great star disappear'd! O the black murk that hides the star!
 O cruel hands that hold me powerless! O helpless soul of me!
 O harsh surrounding cloud, that will not free my soul!*

*In the door-yard fronting an old farm-house, near the white-wash'd palings,
 Stands the lilac bush, tall-growing, with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
 With many a pointed blossom, rising, delicate, with the perfume strong I love,
 With every leaf a miracle.....and from this bush in the door-yard,
 With delicate-color'd blossoms, and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,
 A sprig, with its flower, I break.*

*In the swamp, in secluded recesses,
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.*

*Solitary, the thrush,
 The hermit, withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
 Sings by himself a song.*

Song of the bleeding throat!

*Death's outlet song of life - (for well, dear brother, I know
If thou wast not gifted to sing, thou would'st surely die.)*

I Hear America Singing

*I HEAR America singing, the varied carols I hear;
Those of mechanics - each one singing his, as it should be, blithe and strong;
The carpenter singing his, as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his, as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work;
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat - the deckhand singing on the steam-
boatdeck;
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench - the hatter singing as he stands;
The wood-cutter's song - the ploughboy's, on his way in the morning, or at the noon
intermission, or at sundown;
The delicious singing of the mother-or of the young wife at work-or of the girl sewing or
washing - Each singing what belongs to her, and to none else;
The day what belongs to the day - At night, the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing, with open mouths, their strong melodious songs.*

O Captain! My Captain!

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.*

*O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up-for you the flag is flung-for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths-for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.*

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;

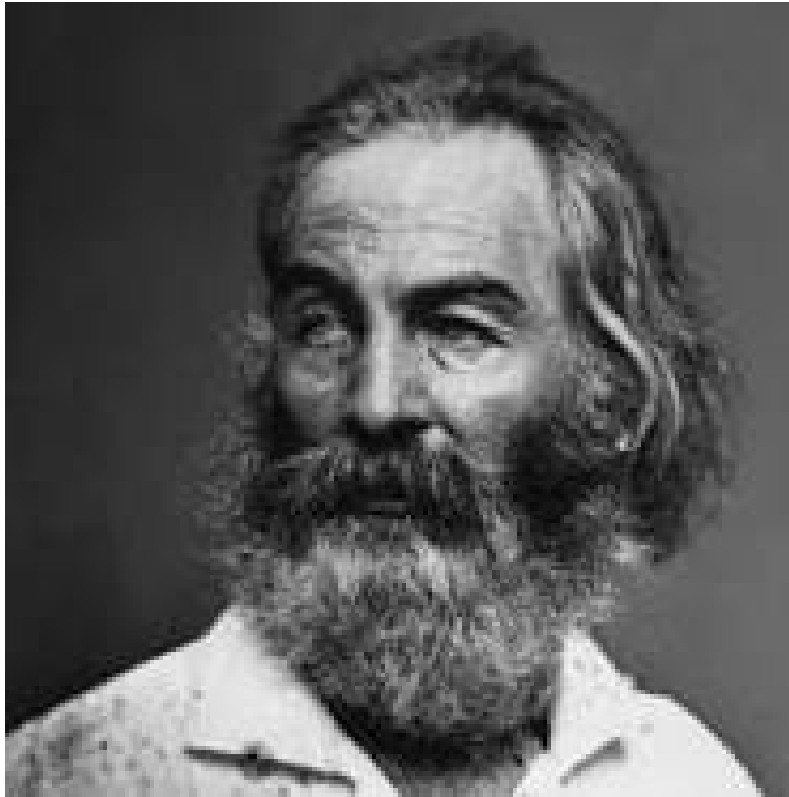


Figure 10.3: Walt Whitman (1819-1892). He pioneered distinctively modern American poetry in blank verse with his book *Leaves of Grass*, published with his own funds in 1855. He expanded and revised the book until the end of his life. Whitman worked in a variety of jobs, including journalism, after leaving school at the age of 11 to help to support his family. During the American Civil War, he served as a nurse to the wounded. Two of his most famous poems, *When Lilacs By The Dooryard Bloom'd* and *O Captain! My Captain!*, were written to mourn the death of Abraham Lincoln.

*My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
 From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;
 Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
 But I, with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.*

Verse 15 from *Song of Myself*

*The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
 The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild ascending lisp,*

*The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner,
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are ready,*

*The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe and looks at the oats and
rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-room;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript;
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by the bar-room stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the gate-keeper marks
who pass,
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do not know him;)
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their rifles, some sit on
logs,
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his saddle,
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the dancers bow to
each other,
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musical rain,
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins and bead-bags for sale,
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent sideways,
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-going passen-
gers,
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a ball, and stops
now and then
for the knots,
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first child,
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory or mill,
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies swiftly over the
note-book, the
sign-painter is lettering with blue and gold,
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the shoemaker
waxes his thread,*

*The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,
 The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,
 The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails sparkle!)
 The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,
 The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about the odd cent;)
 The bride unrumpled her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves slowly,
 The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
 The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled neck,
 The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each other,
 (Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)
 The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great Secretaries,
 On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,
 The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,
 The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,
 As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jingling of loose change,
 The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning the roof, the masons are calling
 for mortar,
 In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;
 Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is the fourth of Seventh-
 month, (what salutes of cannon and small arms!)
 Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the winter-grain
 falls in the ground;
 Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen surface,
 The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep with his axe,
 Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-trees,
 Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those drain'd by the Ten-
 nessee, or through those of the Arkansas,
 Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altamahaw,*

*Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons around them,
 In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's sport,
 The city sleeps and the country sleeps,
 The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,
 The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;
 And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,
 And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,
 And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.*

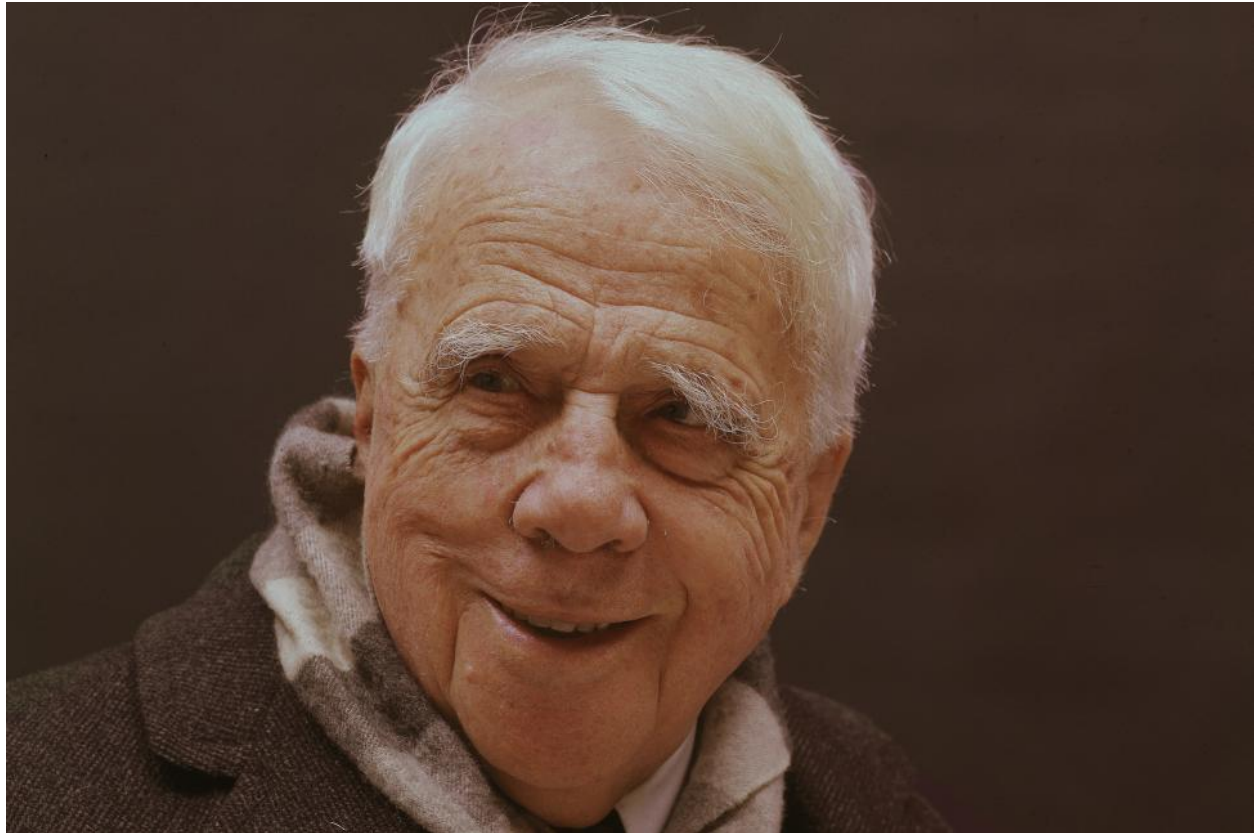


Figure 10.4: Robert Frost was the only poet to win four Pulitzer Prizes for his work. Although he was born in San Francisco, he came from an old New England family, and his poetry often describes life in rural New England. In many of his poems, Frost seems to be describing a concrete scene or experience, but at the end, the reader realizes that he has been aiming at something larger - he wants to tell us a universal truth about the human experience. The poems are constructed almost like the a pole-vaulter's run along the level track, followed by a final swing, high up into the air.

10.4 Robert Frost, 1874-1963

Two Tramps In Mud Time

*Out of the mud two strangers came
And caught me splitting wood in the yard,
And one of them put me off my aim
By hailing cheerily "Hit them hard!"
I knew pretty well why he had dropped behind
And let the other go on a way.
I knew pretty well what he had in mind:
He wanted to take my job for pay.*

*Good blocks of oak it was I split,
As large around as the chopping block;
And every piece I squarely hit
Fell splinterless as a cloven rock.
The blows that a life of self-control
Spare to strike for the common good,
That day, giving a loose to my soul,
I spent on the unimportant wood.*

*The sun was warm but the wind was chill.
You know how it is with an April day
When the sun is out and the wind is still,
You're one month on in the middle of May.
But if you so much as dare to speak,
A cloud comes over the sunlit arch,
A wind comes off a frozen peak,
And you're two months back in the middle of March.*

*A bluebird comes tenderly up to alight
And turns to the wind to unruffle a plume,
His song so pitched as not to excite
A single flower as yet to bloom.
It is snowing a flake; and he half knew
Winter was only playing possum.
Except in color he isn't blue,
But he wouldn't advise a thing to blossom.*

*The water for which we may have to look
In summertime with a witching wand,
In every wheelrut's now a brook,*

*In every print of a hoof a pond.
 Be glad of water, but don't forget
 The lurking frost in the earth beneath
 That will steal forth after the sun is set
 And show on the water its crystal teeth.*

*The time when most I loved my task
 The two must make me love it more
 By coming with what they came to ask.
 You'd think I never had felt before
 The weight of an ax-head poised aloft,
 The grip of earth on outspread feet,
 The life of muscles rocking soft
 And smooth and moist in vernal heat.*

*Out of the wood two hulking tramps
 (From sleeping God knows where last night,
 But not long since in the lumber camps).
 They thought all chopping was theirs of right.
 Men of the woods and lumberjacks,
 They judged me by their appropriate tool.
 Except as a fellow handled an ax
 They had no way of knowing a fool.*

*Nothing on either side was said.
 They knew they had but to stay their stay
 And all their logic would fill my head:
 As that I had no right to play
 With what was another man's work for gain.
 My right might be love but theirs was need.
 And where the two exist in twain
 Theirs was the better right—agreed.*

*But yield who will to their separation,
 My object in living is to unite
 My avocation and my vocation
 As my two eyes make one in sight.
 Only where love and need are one,
 And the work is play for mortal stakes,
 Is the deed ever really done
 For Heaven and the future's sakes.*

The Road Not Taken

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could
 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 I doubted if I should ever come back.
 I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
 I took the one less traveled by,
 And that has made all the difference.*

Fire and Ice

*Some say the world will end in fire,
 Some say in ice.
 From what I've tasted of desire
 I hold with those who favor fire.
 But if it had to perish twice,
 I think I know enough of hate
 To say that for destruction ice
 Is also great
 And would suffice.*

Mending Wall

*Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
 And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
 And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
 The work of hunters is another thing:*

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

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

*Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.*

*He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.*

10.5 T.S. Eliot, 1888-1965

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

*S'io credesse che mia risposta fosse
A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,
Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.
Ma perciocche giammai di questo fondo
Non torno vivo alcun, s'i'odo il vero,
Senza tema d'infamia ti rispondo.*

*Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument*

*Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question...
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
Let us go and make our visit.*

*In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.*

*The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.
And indeed there will be time
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;
There will be time, there will be time
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;
There will be time to murder and create,
And time for all the works and days of hands
That lift and drop a question on your plate,
Time for you and time for me,
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,
And for a hundred visions and revisions,
Before the taking of a toast and tea.*

*In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.*

*And indeed there will be time
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
Time to turn back and descend the stair,
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair-
(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin-
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")*

*Do I dare
Disturb the universe?*

*In a minute there is time
For decisions and revisions which a minute win reverse.*

*For I have known them all already, known them all-
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;
I know the voices dying with a dying fall
Beneath the music from a farther room.
So how should I presume?*

*And I have known the eyes already, known them all-
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?
And how should I presume?*

*And I have known the arms already, known them all-
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.
And should I then presume?
And how should I begin?*

*Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?*

*I should have been a pair of ragged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.*

.

*And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in
upon a platter,*



Figure 10.5: Thomas Stearns Eliot, photographed in 1934 by Lady Ottoline Morrell. Eliot was born in St. Louis Missouri, but he left the United States for England at the age of 25, married in England, and later renounced his American citizenship. His poems, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *The Wasteland*, *The Hollow Men*, *Ash Wednesday*, and *Four Quartets*, pioneered modern forms of poetry. Eliot also authored the plays *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Cocktail Party*. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1948.

*I am no prophet-and here's no great matter;
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.*

*And would it have been worth it, after all,
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,
Would it have been worth while,
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,
To have squeezed the universe into a ball
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"-
If one, settling a pillow by her head,
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all."*

*And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along
the floor-
And this, and so much more?-
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."*

*No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous-
Almost, at times, the Fool.*

I grow old ... I grow old ...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

*Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.*

I do not think that they will sing to me.

*I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.*

*We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.*

10.6 Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1892-1950

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), is known for her lyric poetry, but she also wrote some of the finest sonnets in the English language, combining classic form with modern imagery. Many of these sonnets are based on the emotions that she experienced in her love affairs. However, my own favorite is a serious sequence of eighteen sonnets, *Epitaph for the Race of Man*, published in 1934, just as the catastrophe of World War II was about to engulf our planet.

The basic premise of Millay's *Epitaph* is that we know from the evolutionary history of life on earth, that no species survives forever. She speculates on what will be the final cause of the extinction of the human race, and concludes that Man will die by his own hand, since none the innumerable disasters that nature has thrown at us over the millennia has persuaded humankind "to lay aside the lever and the spade, and be as dust among the dusts that blow". Here are the eighteen sonnets from the sequence:

Epitaph For The Race Of Man

*Before this cooling planet shall be cold,
Long, long before the music of the Lyre,
Like the faint roar of distant breakers rolled
On reefs unseen, when wind and flood conspire
To drive the ships inshore - long, long, I say,
Before this ominous humming hits the ear,
Earth will have come upon a stiller day,
Man and his engines be no longer here.*



Figure 10.6: The beautiful red-haired American poet, Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950), was the daughter of a divorced, poor, but very literate, mother, Millay grew up in Maine. At 14, she won the St. Nicolas Gold Badge for poetry, and by 15, she had published her poetry in the high-profile anthology, *Current Literature*. She was able attend Vassar College, because her fees were paid by an admirer who was impressed by her talent. Millay often wrote sonnets, combining classic form with modern imagery, and many consider her sonnets to be the best written in the 20th century. The English novelist, Thomas Hardy, said of her, “America has two attractions: skyscrapers and Edna St. Vincent Millay”.

*High on his naked rock the mountain sheep
Will stand alone against the final sky,
Drinking a wind of danger new and deep,
Staring on Vega with a piercing eye,
And gather up his slender hooves and leap
From crag to crag down Chaos, and so go by.*

*When Death was young and bleaching bones were few,
A moving hill against the risen day
The dinosaur at morning made his way,
And dropped his dung along the blazing dew;
Trees with no name that now are agate grew
Lushly beside him in the steamy clay;
He woke and hungered, rose and stalked his prey,
And slept contented, in a world he knew.
In punctual season, with the race in mind,
His consort held aside her heavy tail,
And took the seed; and heard the seed confined
Roar in her womb; and made a nest to hold
A hatched-out conqueror . . . but to no avail:
The veined and fertile eggs are long since cold.*

*Cretaceous bird, your giant claw no lime
From bark of holly bruised or mistletoe
Could have arrested, could have held you so
Through fifty million years of jostling time;
Yet cradled with you in the catholic slime
Of the young ocean's tepid lapse and flow
Slumbered an agent, weak in embryo,
Should grip you straitly, in its sinewy prime.
What bright collision in the zodiac brews,
What mischief dimples at the planet's core
For shark, for python, for the dove that coos
Under the leaves? - what frosty fate's in store
For the warm blood of man, - man, out of ooze
But lately crawled, and climbing up the shore?*

*Oh Earth, unhappy planet, born to die,
Might I your scribe and your confessor be,
What wonders must you not relate to me
Of Man, who, when his destiny was high
Strode like the sun into the middle sky
And shone an hour, and who so bright as he,*

*And like the sun went down into the sea,
 Leaving no spark to be remembered by.
 But no; you have not learned in all these years
 To tell the leopard and the newt apart;
 Man, with his singular laughter, his droll tears,
 His engines and his conscience and his art,
 Made but a simple sound upon your ears:
 The patient beating of an animal heart.*

*When man is gone and only gods remain
 To stride the world, their mighty bodies hung
 With golden shields, and golden curls outflung
 Above their childish foreheads; when the plain
 Round skull of Man is lifted and again
 Abandoned by the ebbing wave, among
 The sand and pebbles of the beach, - what tongue
 Will tell the marvel of the human brain?
 Heavy with music once this windy shell,
 Heavy with knowledge of the clustered stars;
 The one-time tenant of this draughty hall
 Himself, in learned pamphlet, did foretell,
 After some aeons of study jarred by wars,
 This toothy gourd, this head emptied of all.*

*See where Capella with her golden kids
 Grazes the slope between the east and north?
 Thus when the builders of the pyramids
 Flung down their tools at nightfall and poured forth
 Homeward to supper and a poor man's bed,
 Shortening the road with friendly jest and slur,
 The risen She-Goat showing blue and red
 Climbed the clear dusk, and three stars followed her.
 Safe in their linen and their spices lie
 The kings of Egypt; even as long ago
 Under these constellations, with long eye
 And scented limbs they slept, and feared no foe.
 Their will was law; their will was not to die:
 And so they had their way; or nearly so.*

*He heard the coughing tiger in the night
 Push at his door; close by his quiet head
 About the wattled cabin the soft tread
 Of heavy feet he followed, and the slight*

*Sigh of the long banana leaves; in sight
 At last and leaning westward overhead
 The Centaur and the Cross now heralded
 The sun, far off but marching, bringing light.
 What time the Centaur and the Cross were spent
 Night and the beast retired into the hill,
 Whereat serene and undevoured he lay,
 And dozed and stretched and listened and lay still,
 Breathing into his body with content
 The temperate dawn before the tropic day.*

*Observe how Miyanoshita cracked in two
 And slid into the valley; he that stood
 Grinning with terror in the bamboo wood
 Saw the earth heave and thrust its bowels through
 The hill, and his own kitchen slide from view,
 Spilling the warm bowl of his humble food
 Into the lap of horror; mark how lewd
 This cluttered gulf, - 'twas here his paddy grew.
 Dread and dismay have not encompassed him;
 The calm sun sets; unhurried and aloof
 Into the riven village falls the rain;
 Days pass; the ashes cool; he builds again
 His paper house upon oblivion's brim,
 And plants the purple iris in its roof.*

*He woke in terror to a sky more bright
 Than middle day; he heard the sick earth groan,
 And ran to see the lazy-smoking cone
 Of the fire-mountain, friendly to his sight
 As his wife's hand, gone strange and full of fright;
 Over his fleeing shoulder it was shown
 Rolling its pitchy lake of scalding stone
 Upon his house that had no feet for flight.
 Where did he weep? Where did he sit him down
 And sorrow, with his head between his knees?
 Where said the Race of Man, "Here let me drown"?
 "Here let me die of hunger"? . "let me freeze"?
 By nightfall he has built another town:
 This boiling pot, this clearing in the trees.*

*The broken dike, the levee washed away,
 The good fields flooded and the cattle drowned,*

*Estranged and treacherous all the faithful ground,
 And nothing left but floating disarray
 Of tree and home uprooted, - was this the day
 Man dropped upon his shadow without a sound
 And died, having laboured well and having found
 His burden heavier than a quilt of clay?
 No, no. I saw him when the sun had set
 In water, leaning on his single oar
 Above his garden faintly glimmering yet ...
 There bulked the plough, here washed the updrifted weeds ...
 And scull across his roof and make for shore,
 With twisted face and pocket full of seeds.*

*Sweeter was loss than silver coins to spend,
 Sweeter was famine than the belly filled;
 Better than blood in the vein was the blood spilled;
 Better than corn and healthy flocks to tend
 And a tight roof and acres without end
 Was the barn burned and the mild creatures killed,
 And the back aging fast, and all to build:
 For then it was, his neighbor was his friend.
 Then for a moment the averted eye
 Was turned upon him with benignant beam,
 Defiance faltered, and derision slept;
 He saw in a not unhappy dream
 The kindly heads against the horrid sky,
 And scowled, and cleared his throat and spat, and wept.*

*Now forth to meadows as the farmer goes
 With shining buckets to the milking-ground,
 He meets the black ant hurrying from his mound
 To milk the aphid pastured on the rose;
 But no good-morrow, as you might suppose,
 No nod of greeting, no perfunctory sound
 Passes between them; no occasion's found
 For gossip as to how the fodder grows.
 In chilly autumn on the hardening road
 They meet again, driving their flocks to stall,
 Two herdsmen, each with winter for a goad;
 They meet and pass, and never a word at all
 Gives one to t'other. On the quaint abode
 Of each, the evening and the first snow fall.*

*His heatless room the watcher of the stars
 Nightly inhabits when the night is clear;
 Propping his mattress on the turning sphere,
 Saturn his rings or Jupiter his bars
 He follows, or the fleeing moons of Mars,
 Till from his ticking lens they disappear...
 Whereat he sighs, and yawns, and on his ear
 The busy chirp of Earth remotely jars.
 Peace at the void's heart through the wordless night,
 A lamb cropping the awful grasses, grazed;
 Earthward the trouble lies, where strikes his light
 At dawn industrious Man, and unamazed
 Goes forth to plough, flinging a ribald stone
 At all endeavor alien to his own.*

*Him not the golden fang of furious heaven,
 Nor whirling Aeolus on his awful wheel,
 Nor foggy specter ramming the swift keel,
 Nor flood, nor earthquake, nor the red tongue even
 Of fire, disaster's dog - him, him bereaven
 Of all save the heart's knocking, and to feel
 The air upon his face: not the great heel
 Of headless Force into the dust was driven.
 These sunken cities, tier on tier, bespeak
 How ever from the ashes with proud beak
 And shining feathers did the phoenix rise,
 And sail, and send the vulture from the skies...
 That in the end returned; for Man was weak
 Before the unkindness in his brother's eyes.*

*Now sets his foot upon the eastern sill
 Aldeberan, swiftly rising, mounting high,
 And tracks the Pleiads down the crowded sky,
 And drives his wedge into the western hill;
 Now for the void sets forth, and further still,
 The questioning mind of man... that by and by
 From the void's rim returns with swooping eye,
 Having seen himself into the maelstrom spill.
 Blench not, O race of Adam, lest you find
 In the sun's bubbling bowl anonymous death,
 Or lost in whistling space without a mind
 To monstrous Nothing yield your little breath:
 You shall achieve destruction where you stand,*

In intimate conflict, at your brother's hand.

*Alas for Man, so stealthily betrayed,
 Bearing the bad cell in him from the start,
 Pumping and feeding on his healthy heart
 That wild disorder never to be stayed
 When once established, destined to invade
 With angry hordes the true and proper part,
 'Til Reason joggles in the headsman's cart,
 And Mania spits from every balustrade.
 Would he had searched his closet for his bane,
 Where lurked the trusted ancient of his soul,
 Obsequious Greed, and seen that visage plain;
 Would he had whittled treason from his side
 In his stout youth and bled his body whole,
 Then had he died a king, or never died."*

*Only the diamond and the diamond's dust
 Can render up the diamond unto Man;
 One and invulnerable as it began
 Had it endured, but for the treacherous thrust
 That laid its hard heart open, as it must,
 And ground it down and fitted it to span
 A turbaned brow or fret an ivory fan,
 Lopped of its stature, pared of its proper crust.
 So Man, by all the wheels of heaven unscored,
 Man, the stout ego, the exuberant mind
 No edge could cleave, no acid could consume,
 Being split along the vein by his own kind,
 Gives over, rolls upon the palm abhorred,
 Is set in brass on the swart thumb of Doom.*

*Here lies, and none to mourn him but the sea,
 That falls incessant on the empty shore,
 Most various Man, cut down to spring no more;
 Before his prime, even in his infancy
 Cut down, and all the clamour that was he,
 Silenced; and all the riveted pride he wore,
 A rusted iron column whose tall core
 The rains have tunneled like an aspen tree.
 Man, doughty Man, what power has brought you low,
 That heaven itself in arms could not persuade
 To lay aside the lever and the spade*

*And be as dust among the dusts that blow?
Whence, whence the broadside? Whose the heavy blade?...
Strive not to speak, poor scattered mouth; I know.*

It seems to me that although Millay's words were extremely appropriate as a warning to humankind in 1934, they are even more heavy with meaning today. Millay speaks eloquently to us over the years:.

Conscientious Objector

*I shall die, but
that is all that I shall do for Death.
I hear him leading his horse out of the stall;
I hear the clatter on the barn-floor.
He is in haste; he has business in Cuba,
business in the Balkans, many calls to make this morning.
But I will not hold the bridle
while he clinches the girth.
And he may mount by himself:
I will not give him a leg up.*

*Though he flick my shoulders with his whip,
I will not tell him which way the fox ran.
With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him where
the black boy hides in the swamp.
I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death;
I am not on his pay-roll.*

*I will not tell him the whereabouts of my friends
nor of my enemies either.
Though he promise me much,
I will not map him the route to any man's door.
Am I a spy in the land of the living,
that I should deliver men to Death?
Brother, the password and the plans of our city
are safe with me; never through me Shall you be overcome.*

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 mine,
And then start down!*

Recuerdo

*We were very tired, we were very merry –
We had gone back and forth all night upon 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 the hill-top 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 the pears,
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.*

My Spirit, Sore from Marching

*My spirit, sore from marching
Toward that receding west
Where Pity shall be governor,
With Wisdom for his guest:*

*Lie down beside these waters
That bubble from the spring;
Hear in the desert silence
The desert sparrow sing;*

*Draw from the shapeless moment
Such pattern as you can;
And cleave henceforth to Beauty;
Expect no more from man.*

*Man, with his ready answer,
His sad and hearty word,
For every cause in limbo,
For every debt deferred,*

*For every pledge forgotten,
His eloquent and grim
Deep empty gaze upon you, –
Expect no more from him.*

*From pure and aimless Beauty
Your help and comfort take,
Beauty, that makes no promise,
And has no word to break;*

*Have eyes for Beauty only,
That has no eyes for you;
Follow her struck pavilion,
Halt with her retinue;*

*Have ears for Beauty only,
Follow her distant call.
Here's hope for saint and sinner;
Here's heresy for all.*

A Few Figs From Thistles

First Fig:

*My candle burns at both ends;
It will not last the night;*

*But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends-
It gives a lovely light.*

Second Fig:

*Safe upon the solid rock the ugly houses stand:
Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand!*

10.7 The San Francisco poets, 1950's and 1960's

Howl, by Allen Ginsberg, Part 1

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night, who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz, who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs illuminated, who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war, who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull, who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall, who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana for New York, who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls, incomparable blind; streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of Time between, Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind, who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought them down shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in the drear light of Zoo, who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford's floated out and sat through the stale beer after noon in desolate Fugazzi's, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox, who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge, lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon, yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and

wars, whole intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement, who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of Atlantic City Hall, suffering Eastern sweats and Tangerian bone-grindings and migraines of China under junk-withdrawal in Newark's bleak furnished room, who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts, who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward lonesome farms in grandfather night, who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telepathy and bop kabbalah because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas, who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary indian angels who were visionary indian angels, who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy, who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of Oklahoma on the impulse of winter midnight street light smalltown rain, who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America and Eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to Africa, who disappeared into the volcanoes of Mexico leaving behind nothing but the shadow of dungarees and the lava and ash of poetry scattered in fire place Chicago, who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the F.B.I. in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incomprehensible leaflets, who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism, who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed, who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the machinery of other skeletons, who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication, who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts, who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed with joy, who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love, who balled in the morning in the evenings in rose gardens and the grass of public parks and cemeteries scattering their semen freely to whomever come who may, who hiccuped endlessly trying to giggle but wound up with a sob behind a partition in a Turkish Bath when the blond & naked angel came to pierce them with a sword, who lost their love-boys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the womb and the one eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden threads of the craftsman's loom, who copulated ecstatic and insatiate with a bottle of beer a sweetheart a package of cigarettes a candle and fell off the bed, and continued along the floor and down the hall and ended fainting on the wall with a vision of ultimate cunt and come eluding the last gyzym of consciousness, who sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset, and were red eyed in the morning but prepared to sweeten the snatch of the sun rise, flashing buttocks under barns and naked in the lake, who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver—joy to the memory of his innumerable lays of girls in empty lots& diner backyards, moviehouses' rickety rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings& especially

secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys too, who faded out in vast sordid movies, were shifted in dreams, woke on a sudden Manhattan, and picked themselves up out of basements hung over with heartless Tokay and horrors of Third Avenue iron dreams & stumbled to unemployment offices, who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steamheat and opium, who created great suicidal dramas on the apartment cliff-banks of the Hudson under the wartime blue floodlight of the moon & their heads shall be crowned with laurel in oblivion, who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy bottom of the rivers of Bowery, who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music, who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to build harpsichords in their lofts, who coughed on the sixth floor of Harlem crowned with flame under the tubercular sky surrounded by orange crates of theology, who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish, who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable kingdom, who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg, who threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for Eternity outside of Time, & alarm clocks fell on their heads every day for the next decade, who cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and were forced to open antique stores where they thought they were growing old and cried, who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality, who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alley ways & firetrucks, not even one free beer, who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of the subway window, jumped in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the street, danced on broken wineglasses barefoot smashed phonograph records of nostalgic European 1930s German jazz finished the whiskey and threw up groaning into the bloody toilet, moans in their ears and the blast of colossal steam whistles, who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to each other's hotrod-Golgotha jail-solitude watch or Birmingham jazz incarnation, who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out if I had a vision or you had a vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity, who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver & waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver is lonesome for her heroes, who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salvation and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second, who crashed through their minds in jail waiting for impossible criminals with golden heads and the charm of reality in their hearts who sang sweet blues to Alcatraz, who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to tender Buddha or Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to the black locomotive or Harvard to Narcissus to Woodlawn to the daisychain or grave, who demanded sanity trials accusing the radio of hyp notism & were left with their insanity & their hands & a hung jury, who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of

*suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy, and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong & amnesia, who in humorless protest overturned only one symbolic pingpong table, resting briefly in catatonia, returning years later truly bald except for a wig of blood, and tears and fingers, to the visible mad man doom of the wards of the madtowns of the East, Pilgrim State's Rockland's and Greystone's foetid halls, bickering with the echoes of the soul, rocking and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench dolmen-realms of love, dream of life a nightmare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon, with mother finally *****, and the last fantastic book flung out of the tenement window, and the last door closed at 4. A.M. and the last telephone slammed at the wall in reply and the last furnished room emptied down to the last piece of mental furniture, a yellow paper rose twisted on a wire hanger in the closet, and even that imaginary, nothing but a hopeful little bit of hallucination—ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you're really in the total animal soup of time— and who therefore ran through the icy streets obsessed with a sudden flash of the alchemy of the use of the ellipse the catalog the meter & the vibrating plane, who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before you speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head, the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death, and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn shadow of the band and blew the suffering of America's naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to the last radio with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies good to eat a thousand years.*

Constantly Risking Absurdity by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

*Constantly risking absurdity
and death
whenever he performs
above the heads
of his audience
the poet like an acrobat
climbs on rime
to a high wire of his own making
and balancing on eyebeams
above a sea of faces
paces his way
to the other side of the day*



Figure 10.7: Allen Ginsberg. His poem *Howl* was confiscated by police and was the subject of an obscenity trial. Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs formed the core of the “Beat Generation” which vigorously opposed militarism, economic materialism and sexual repression. Ginsberg was a Buddhist, and he lived very modestly, always buying his cloths at second-hand stores.

*performing entrachats
 and sleight-of-foot tricks
 and other high theatrics
 and all without mistaking
 any thing
 for what it may not be
 For he's the super realist
 who must perform perceive
 taut truth
 before the taking of each stance or step
 in his supposed advance
 toward that still higher perch
 where Beauty stands and waits
 with gravity
 to start her death-defying leap
 And he
 a little charleychaplin man
 who may or may not catch
 her fair eternal form
 spreadeagled in the empty air
 of existence*

Wild Dreams Of A New Beginning by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

*There's a breathless hush on the freeway tonight
 Beyond the ledges of concrete
 restaurants fall into dreams
 with candlelight couples
 Lost Alexandria still burns
 in a billion lightbulbs
 Lives cross lives
 idling at stoplights
 Beyond the cloverleaf turnoffs
 'Souls eat souls in the general emptiness'
 A piano concerto comes out a kitchen window
 A yogi speaks at Ojai
 'It's all taking pace in one mind'
 On the lawn among the trees
 lovers are listening
 for the master to tell them they are one
 with the universe
 Eyes smell flowers and become them*

*There's a deathless hush
on the freeway tonight
as a Pacific tidal wave a mile high
sweeps in
Los Angeles breathes its last gas
and sinks into the sea like the Titanic all lights lit
Nine minutes later Willa Cather's Nebraska
sinks with it
The sea comes over in Utah
Mormon tabernacles washed away like barnacles
Coyotes are confounded & swim nowhere
An orchestra onstage in Omaha
keeps on playing Handel's Water Music
Horns fill with water
as bass players float away on their instruments
clutching them like lovers horizontal
Chicago's Loop becomes a rollercoaster
Skyscrapers filled like water glasses
Great Lakes mixed with Buddhist brine
Great Books watered down in Evanston
Milwaukee beer topped with sea foam
Beau Fleuve of Buffalo suddenly become salt
Manhattan Island swept clean in sixteen seconds
buried masts of Amsterdam arise
as the great wave sweeps on Eastward
to wash away over-age Camembert Europe
manhatta steaming in sea-vines
the washed land awakes again to wilderness
the only sound a vast thrumming of crickets
x a cry of seabirds high over
in empty eternity
as the Hudson retakes its thickets
and Indians reclaim their canoes*

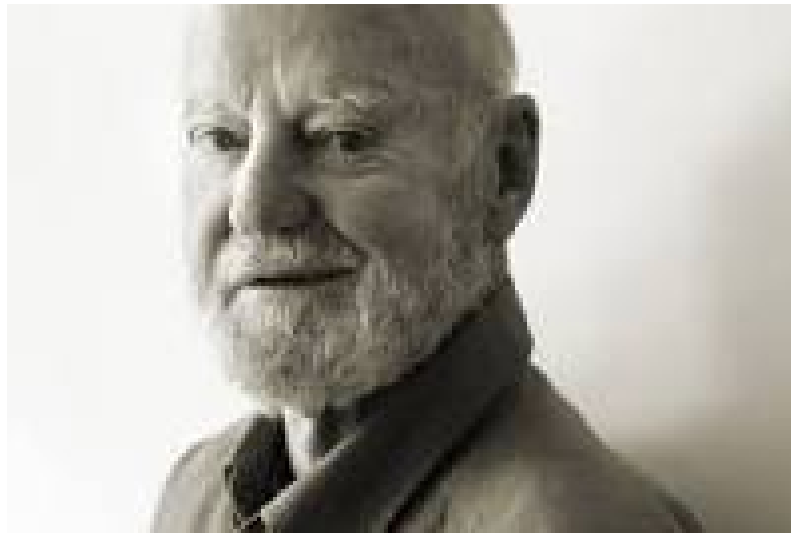


Figure 10.8: Lawrence Ferlanghetti was born in 1919 and he is now over 100 years old. He was the co-founder of the City Lights Bookstore in San Francisco, a center for poets of the counterculture. His collection of poems, *A Coney Island of the Mind*, has been translated into nine languages and has sold more than a million copies.

Chapter 11

POETS OF LATIN AMERICA

11.1 Aztec poetry, pre-Columbian

Stand Up, Beat Your Drum, By Nezahualcoyotl

*Stand up, beat your drum:
give of yourself, know friendship. -Aya!-
Let your hearts be taken
with many colours -Yehuaya!-
only here perhaps are lent to us
our tobacco pipes, our flowers,
Ohuaya Ohuaya.*

*Stand up, my friend,
elated take your flowers to the drum:
your bitterness flees.
Adorn yourself with them:
the flowers raise their heads,
cocoa flowers of precious gold -Aya!-
are being scattered,
Ohuaya Ohuaya.*

*Beautifully sing here
the turquoise bird, the quetzal, the trogon:
the macaw's song presides, and
all the jingling rattles and drums answer,
Ohuaya Ohuaya.*

*I drink cocoa:
with it I am glad -Aya!-*

*my heart takes pleasure, my heart is happy,
Ohuaya Ohuaya.*

Flowers Are Our Only Garments, By Nezahualcoyotl

*Flowers are our only garments,
only songs make our pain subside,
diverse flowers on earth,
Ohuaya ohuaya.*

*Perhaps my friends will be lost,
my companions will vanish
when I lie down in that place, I Yoyontzin -Ohuaye!-
in the place of song and of Life Giver,
Ohuaya ohuaya.*

*Does no one know where we are going?
Do we go to God's home or
do we live only here on earth?
Ah ohuaya.*

*Let your hearts know,
oh princes, oh eagles and jaguars
that we will not be friends forever,
only for a moment here, then we go
to Life Giver's home,
Ohuaya ohuaya.*

Sacred Hymn, Anonymous

*My heart is a flower,
it bursts open,
Lord of Midnight,
Oaya ouayaye.*

*Already the Goddess has come,
our Earthmother has come,
Oaya ouayaye.*

*The god of corn, born in Paradise,
where flowers bloom,*



Figure 11.1: Aztec writing.

*on the day One Flower,
Yantala yantata ayyao ayyaue
tilili yyao ayaue oayyaue.*

*The god of corn,
born in the region of rain and mist,
where the children of men are conceived,
home of the Lords of Jewelled Fish,
Yyao yantala yantata ayyao ayyaue
tilili yyao ayaue oayyaue.*

*Dawn arrives, radiant sunrise.
Multi-coloured spoonbillsdrink nectar from the standing flowers,
Yantala yantata ayyao ayyaue
tilili yyao ayaue oayyaue.*

*Here on earth,
in the market you appear.
I am the lord,
I, Quetzalcoatl,
Yantala yantata ayyao ayyaue
tili*

11.2 Gabriela Mistral, 1889-1957

The Sad Mother

*Sleep, sleep, my beloved,
without worry, without fear,
although my soul does not sleep,
although I do not rest.*

*Sleep, sleep, and in the night
may your whispers be softer
than a leaf of grass,
or the silken fleece of lambs.*

*May my flesh slumber in you,
my worry, my trembling.
In you, may my eyes close
and my heart sleep.*

To See Him Again

*Never, never again?
Not on nights filled with quivering stars,
or during dawn's maiden brightness
or afternoons of sacrifice?*

*Or at the edge of a pale path
that encircles the farmlands,
or upon the rim of a trembling fountain,
whitened by a shimmering moon?*

*Or beneath the forest's
luxuriant, raveled tresses
where, calling his name,
I was overtaken by the night?
Not in the grotto that returns
the echo of my cry?*

*Oh no. To see him again –
it would not matter where –
in heaven's deadwater
or inside the boiling vortex,*



Figure 11.2: Gabriela Mistral was a Chilean diplomat, educator and poet. In 1945 she received the Nobel Prize in Literature “for her lyric poetry which, inspired by powerful emotions, has made her name a symbol of the idealistic aspirations of the entire Latin American world”.

under serene moons or in bloodless fright!

*To be with him...
every springtime and winter,
united in one anguished knot
around his bloody neck!*

11.3 Pablo Neruda, 1904-1973

Love Sonnet XVII

*I do not love you as if you were a salt rose, or topaz
or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.*

*I love you as the plant that never blooms
but carries in itself the light of hidden flowers;
thanks to your love a certain solid fragrance,
risen from the earth, lives darkly in my body.*

*I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where.
I love you straightforwardly, without complexities or pride;
So I love you because I know no other way*

*than this: where I does not exist, nor you,
so close that your hand on my chest is my hand,
so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep.*

If You Forget Me

*I want you to know
one thing.*

*You know how this is:
if I look
at the crystal moon, at the red branch
of the slow autumn at my window,
if I touch*



Figure 11.3: The photo shows Pablo Neruda as a young man. Neruda was a Chilean diplomat and politician as well as a poet. He served as a Senator, representing the Chilean Communist Party. When the Communist Party was outlawed, a warrant was issued for his arrest, but after being hidden by friends, he escaped over a mountain pass into Argentina. Famous as a poet since the age of 13, Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971. Returning to Chile after accepting the prize, he was invited by Salvador Allende to read his poems before an audience of 70,000 people.

*near the fire
the impalpable ash
or the wrinkled body of the log,
everything carries me to you,
as if everything that exists,
aromas, light, metals,
were little boats
that sail
toward those isles of yours that wait for me.*

*Well, now,
if little by little you stop loving me
I shall stop loving you little by little.*

*If suddenly
you forget me
do not look for me,
for I shall already have forgotten you.*

*If you think it long and mad,
the wind of banners
that passes through my life,
and you decide
to leave me at the shore
of the heart where I have roots,
remember
that on that day,
at that hour,
I shall lift my arms
and my roots will set off
to seek another land.*

*But
if each day,
each hour,
you feel that you are destined for me
with implacable sweetness,
if each day a flower
climbs up to your lips to seek me,
ah my love, ah my own,
in me all that fire is repeated,
in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,
my love feeds on your love, beloved,*

*and as long as you live it will be in your arms
without leaving mine*

11.4 Octavio Paz, 1914-1998

Between going and staying the day wavers

*Between going and staying the day wavers,
in love with its own transparency.
The circular afternoon is now a bay
where the world in stillness rocks.*

*All is visible and all elusive,
all is near and can't be touched.*

*Paper, book, pencil, glass,
rest in the shade of their names.*

*Time throbbing in my temples repeats
the same unchanging syllable of blood.*

*The light turns the indifferent wall
into a ghostly theater of reflections.*

*I find myself in the middle of an eye,
watching myself in its blank stare.*

*The moment scatters. Motionless,
I stay and go: I am a pause.*



Figure 11.4: Octavio Paz was a Mexican poet and diplomat who was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1990. He became interested in literature as a young boy, reading many classical works in his grandfather's extensive library. Octavio Paz published his first poems at the age of 17. Two years later, he published a collection of his poems entitled *Luna Silvestre* ("Wild Moon"). His long poem *Entre la piedra y la flor* ("Between the Stone and the Flower", 1941) describes the life of Mexican peasants under the oppressive rule of landlords. Paz traveled to Spain during the Spanish Civil War, expressing his opposition to fascism and his solidarity with the Republican cause. He served Mexico as a diplomat in a number of countries, including India, Japan and Switzerland.

11.5 Nicanor Parra, 1914-2018

Young Poets

*Write as you will
In whatever style you like
Too much blood has run under the bridge
To go on believing
That only one road is right.*

In poetry everything is permitted.

*With only this condition of course,
You have to improve the blank page.*

The Last Toast

*Whether we like it or not,
We have only three choices:
Yesterday, today and tomorrow.*

*And not even three
Because as the philosopher says
Yesterday is yesterday
It belongs to us only in memory:
From the rose already plucked
No more petals can be drawn.*

*The cards to play
Are only two:
The present and the future.*

*And there aren't even two
Because it's a known fact
The present doesn't exist
Except as it edges past
And is consumed...,
like youth.*

*In the end
We are only left with tomorrow.
I raise my glass*

To the day that never arrives.

*But that is all
we have at our disposal.*



Figure 11.5: Nicanor Parra in 1935. He was a first-generation member of the gifted Parra family, which has now contributed to Chilean culture for four generations. After studying physics, mathematics and cosmology at Brown University and Oxford, Nicanor Parra returned to his own country and became professor of theoretical physics at the University of Chile. In the meantime, he published dozens of books of poetry, and his informal style of writing became highly influential. He was proposed four times for the Nobel Prize in Literature, and he also received both the Spanish Ministry of Culture's Cervantes Prize and the Pablo Neruda Ibero-American Poetry Award.

Index

- A Bath When You're Born, 58
A Bee, 55
A Caterpillar, 55
A Child's Christmas In Wales, 171
A Cicada Shell, 55
A Cold Rain Starting, 55
A Cool Fall Night, 56
A Cuckoo Cries, 56
A Few Figs From Thistles, 209
A Friend Sends Her Perfumed Carriage, 50
A Monk Sips Morning Tea, 56
A Song of Departure, 51
Achaeans, 11
Afternoon On A Hill, 207
Alas For Youth, 71
Albrecht Dürer, 126
Alexander Pushkin, 106
Alexis, 36
Alice Sick, 98
All The World's A Stage, 121
Allen Ginsberg, 210
Alone and Drinking Under The Moon, 48
Alone, Looking for Blossoms, 46
An Aging Willow, 60
An Imitation of Anacreon, 98
An Introduction, 66
Anaximander, 11
Anaximenes, 11
Ancient Greek poetry and drama, 23
Antigone, 24
Aristophanes, 26
Armistice Day, 165
Athens, 23
Atoms, 31
Aubade, 120
Auguries of Innocence, 128
Auld Lang Syne, 135
Autumn Day, 109
Autumn Love, 51
Aztec poetry, 219
Ballad of the Old Cypress, 47
Basho, 55
Bass, 60
Bertolt Brecht, 111
Between Going And Staying, 227
Blake, 126
Blow, Blow, Thou Winter Wind, 120
Brecht, 111
Buddhism, 45
Burns, 132
Byron, 160
Canterbury Tales, 116
Canticle of the Sun, 87
Chaucer, 115
Chorus from Antigone, 24
Christian ethics, 87
Coleridge, 136
Come With Me To Crete, 29
Coming Through The Rye, 133
Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, 140
Conscientious Objector, 207
Constantly Risking Absurdity, 213
Courage, 100
Dante Alighieri, 90
Day's End, 48
Delphic Oracle, 23
Democritus, 31
Dervishes, 78

- Dionysus, 23
 Dorians, 11
 Downpour, 60
 Dulce Et Decorum Est, 165
 Dylan Thomas, 171

 Edgar Allan Poe, 180
 Edna St. Vincent Millay, 199
 Edward Fitzgerald, 73
 Egypt, 9
 Eliot, 194
 Enough Words?, 78
 Epicurus, 31
 Epitaph for the Race of Man, 199
 Ethical message of Greek drama, 23
 Euripides, 25
 European poetry, 87
 Evangeline: A Taler Of Arcade, 177
 Evans, Sir Arthur, 9
 Eve Speaks To Adam, 124
 Evolutionary history of life, 199
 Excessive pride, 23
 Expelled from Oxford, 144
 Expressing the horror of war, 165
 Extinction, 199

 Ferdowsi, 71
 Ferlanghetti, 213
 Fire And Ice, 192
 First Folio, 121
 Flowers Are Our Only Garments, 220
 Frankenstein, 148
 Freedom, 63
 Friederich von Schiller, 103
 Frost, 190

 Gabriela Mistral, 222
 Gas warfare, 165
 Geoffrey Chaucer, 115
 George Gordon, Lord Byron, 160
 Ginsberg, 210
 Glittering-minded deathless Aphrodite, 28
 Goethe, 100
 Greece, 9

 Greek city-states, 23
 Greek poetry and drama, 23

 Hafiz, 82
 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 177
 Heraclitus, 31
 Homer, 10
 Homer's Iliad, 12
 Homer's Odyssey, 14
 How Fortunate The Man With None, 111
 How Soon Hath Time, 123
 Howl, 210
 Hubris, 23
 Human sacrifice, 166

 I Hear America Singing, 185
 I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud, 140
 If No Love Is, 95
 If You Forget Me, 224
 Iliad, 12
 In This World, 58
 Inferno, 90
 Ink, 45
 Ionians, 11

 Jack Kerouac, 60
 Jami, 84
 Jean de la Fontaine, 98
 Jerusalem, 128
 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 100
 John Keats, 157
 John Milton, 123
 Juvenal, 40

 Kamala Surayya, 66
 Keats, 157
 Knossos, 9
 Kobayashi Issa, 58
 Kubla Khan, 136
 Kurt Weill, 112

 Lawrence Ferlanghetti, 213
 Leucippus, 31
 Li Ching Chao, 50

- Li Po, 48, 49
 Lily, 60
 London, 128
 Longfellow, 177
 Lord Byron, 160
 Love and War, 33
 Love Sonnet XVII, 224
 Lucretius, 31
 Lysistrata, 26

 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, 148
 Media, 25
 Mending Wall, 192
 Mesopotamia, 9
 Michelangelo, 126
 Miletus, 11
 Millay, Edna St. Vincent, 199
 Milton, 123
 Minoan civilization, 9
 Mistral, 222
 My Grandmother's House, 68
 My Spirit Sore From Marching, 208
 My Young Son Asks Me, 112
 Mycenae, 10
 Mycenaean civilization, 9, 10

 Neruda, 224
 Newton, 128
 Nezahualcoyotl, 219
 Nicandor Parra, 229
 Nobel Prize in Literature, 61, 163, 196, 222,
 224, 227, 230

 O Captain, My Captain, 185
 Octavio Paz, 227
 Ode On A Grecian Urn, 157
 Ode to Joy, 103
 Ode To The West Wind, 152
 Odyssey, 14
 Oh Sing Fair Lady, 106
 Omar Khayyam, 73
 On Fidelity, 35
 On His Blindness, 124
 On the Nature of Things, 33

 One Day in Spring, 64
 Only Breath, 78
 Ovid, 33
 Owen, 165
 Ozymandias, 150

 Pablo Neruda, 224
 Parmenides, 31
 Parra, 229
 Paz, 227
 Percy Bysshe Shelley, 144
 Perfect Woman, 143
 Petrarch, 95
 Pissing in the Snow, 58
 Poe, 180
 Poets of Latin America, 219
 Poison gas, 165
 Pope Gregory IX, 90
 Pope Innocent III, 87
 Power of Love, 23
 Prayer of Saint Francis, 90
 Printing, 31, 45
 Procemion, 100
 Prometheus Unbound, 151
 Prufrock, 194
 Psalm Of Life, 179
 Pushkin, 106

 Rainer Maria Rilke, 109
 Raphael, 126
 Recuerdo, 208
 Revenge of the gods, 23
 Reverence for Life, 87
 Rilke, 109
 Robert Burns, 132
 Robert Frost, 190
 Rumi, 78

 Saadi Shirazi, 80
 Sacred Hymn, 220
 Saint Francis, 87
 Samuel Butler, 14
 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 136
 San Francisco Poets, 210

- Sapho, 28
 Sassoon, 168
 Satire, 40
 Schiller, 103
 Schliemann, Heinrich, 10
 Shahnemah by Ferdowsi, 71
 Shakespeare, 120
 She Dwelt Among Untrodden Ways, 141
 She Walks In Beauty, 160
 Shelley, 144
 Siegfried Sassoon, 165, 168
 Silvia, 121
 Snow in My Shoe, 60
 Song Of Myself, 186
 Sophocles, 23
 Speech of the nurse from Media, 25
 Stand Up, Beat Your Drum, 219
 Stopping By Woods, 194

 T'ang Dynasty, 45
 T.S. Eliot, 194
 Tagore, 61
 Taking Leave of a Friend, 49
 Thales, 11
 That Pretty Girl, 58
 That Time Of Year, 123
 The Attack, 168
 The Death Bed, 168
 The Golden Boat, 65
 The Great Sea of Heaven, 82
 The Iliad, 12
 The Lake Isle Of Innisfree, 163
 The Last Toast, 229
 The Looking Glass, 68
 The Masque Of Anarchy, 150
 The Odyssey, 14
 The Old Man And The Young, 166
 The Peterloo Massacre, 150
 The Raven, 180
 The Road Not Taken, 192
 The Rubaiyat, 73
 The Sad Mother, 222
 The Second Coming, 162

 The Sisters, 109
 The Trojan Women, 25
 The West Wind Whispered, 60
 The Wondrous Moment Of Our Meeting, 106
 The World Is Too Much With Us, 141
 Thomas, 171
 Three-Penny Opera, 112
 To A Mouse, 132
 To A Skylark, 143, 154
 To See Him Again, 222
 Trench warfare, 165
 Troilus and Criseyde, 115
 Trojan wars, 10
 Trojan Women, 25
 Troy, 10
 Tu Fu, 46
 Two Kinds of Intelligence, 80
 Two Tramps In Mud Time, 190

 Ulysses returns to Ithica, 22
 Unending Love, 63

 Virgil, 36

 Waiting, 65
 Walt Whitman, 184
 When I Have Fears, 158
 When Lilacs In The Dooryard Bloom'd, 184
 When We Two Parted, 160
 Where The Mind Is Without Fear, 61
 Whitecaps on the Bay, 60
 Whitman, 184
 Wild Dreams Of A New Beginning, 215
 Wilfred Owen, 165
 William Blake, 126
 William Butler Yeats, 162
 William Shakespeare, 120
 William Wordsworth, 140
 With My Father, 58
 Wordsworth, 140

 Yeats, 162