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John Keats Robert Burns G.M.
Hopkins Dylan Thomas Alfred
Tennyson William Wordsworth

Immortal Poems of the English Language

An Anthology Edited by Oscar Williams

447 British and American Masterpieces by 150 Poets

Immortal Poems of the English Language

**An Anthology
Edited by Oscar Williams**



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## INTRODUCTION

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It is absurd to think that the only way to tell if a poem is lasting is to wait and see if it lasts. The right reader of a good poem can tell the moment it strikes him that he has taken an immortal wound—that he will never get over it. That is to say, permanence in poetry, as in love, is perceived instantly. It hasn't to await the test of time. The proof of a poem is not that we have never forgotten it, but we knew at sight we never could forget it,

—Robert Frost

A poem is immortal not only because it continues to be read by generation after generation of readers but also because each sensitive reader, having once experienced the poem, absorbs the experience and continues to feel it always, and further, because a true poem expresses an immortal human truth. Anyone who knows how to love, or to suffer, or to think, anyone who wishes to live fully, needs and seeks poetry. But not everyone finds it easy to buy all the books he wants and certainly no one can carry his entire library in his pocket. It is for these reasons that I have compiled this Pocket Anthology of *Immortal Poems of the English Language*.

A poem that excites us is not like a novel or an article, to be read and finished. A poem, if it is a good one, is inexhaustible; we want to read it to refresh the dull moments of the day, over and over, wherever we may be. This collection is designed for that purpose. The selections are as comprehensive and representative of the great poetry of the English language, by both American and British poets, as is possible in a pocket-size book; and the arrangement is chronological. In

addition to 400 shorter songs, lyrics and passages from plays, I have used many long poems in all their exciting entirety, including *The Rape of the Lock* by Alexander Pope, *A Song to David* by Christopher Smart, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by S. T. Coleridge, *Tam O'Shanter* by Robert Burns, *Lycidas*, *Il Penseroso* and *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* by John Milton, *Adonais* by Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Deserted Village* by Oliver Goldsmith, *The Scholar-Gypsy* by Matthew Arnold, *The Eve of St. Agnes* by John Keats, *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám*, *The Wreck of the Deutschland* by Gerard Manley Hopkins, most of which have never, within my knowledge, been included thus in a book of this scope and price. I have represented, with especial amplitude, those poets who are generally considered "major," because of quantity, quality and reputation, such as Shakespeare, Donne, Milton, Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, Tennyson, Whitman. I have also given a fair percentage of the space to poetry of the twentieth century, the most important poetry perhaps, for a twentieth-century reader; the work of such poets as Emily Dickinson, G. M. Hopkins, W. B. Yeats, Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Wilfred Owen, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, is presented generously. For we of today want to hear the contemporary poet expressing the strange, fearful and wonderful experiences of our own time. These poems are also immortal although they have not yet spent centuries in print, for they are alive, alive with the force of our own living time. I believe that their quality is such that the reader will see for himself that they are worthy to live for future generations as well.

Every selection herein has given this editor that "immortal wound" of which Robert Frost speaks. I hope that the reader, with his own sensibility, will be receptive to the sting and permanence of each poem, so that through his own immortal wounds he extends, for his generation, the influence and immortality of the poems.

—Oscar Williams

~~~~~  
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

1340? — 1400

~~~~~  
Balade

Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere;
Ester, ley thou thy meknesse al a-doun;
Hyd, Jonathas, al thy frendly manere;
Penalopee, and Marcia Catoun,
Mak of your wyfhod no comparisoun;
Hyde ye your beautes, Isoude and Eleyne,
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

Thy faire bodye, lat hit nat appere,
Lavyne; and thou, Lucesse of Rome toun,
And Polixene, that boghte love so dere,
Eek Cleopatre, with al thy passioun,
Hyde ye your trouthe in love and your renoun;
And thou, Tisbe, that hast for love swich peyne;
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

Herro, Dido, Laudomia, alle in-fere,
Eek Phyllis, hanging for thy Demophoun,
And Canace, espyed by thy chere,
Ysiphile, betrayed with Jasoun,
Mak of your trouthe in love no bost ne soun;
Nor Ypermistre or Adriane, ne pleyne;
Alceste is here, that al that may desteyne.

The Complaint of Chaucer to His Purse

To you, my purse, and to non other wight
Complayne I, for ye be my lady derel
I am so sory, now that ye been light;
For certes, but ye make me hevvy chere,

Hyd, hide; *gilte*, golden; *clere*, bright; *desteyne*, bedim; *swich*, such; *peyne*, distress; *in-fere*, together; *eek*, also; *espyed*, disclosed; *chere*, appearance; *bost*, boast; *soun*, sound; *pleyne*, lament.

Me were as leef be layd upon my bere;
 For whiche unto your mercy thus I crye:
 Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moote I dyel

Now voucheth sauf this day, or hit be night,
 That I of you the blisful soun may here,
 Or see your colour lyk the sonne bright,
 That of yelownesse hadde never pere.
 Ye be my lyf, ye be myn hertes stere,
 Quene of comfort and of good companye:
 Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moote I dyel

Now purse, that be to me my lyves light,
 And saveour, as doun in this world here,
 Out of this tounne help me through your might,
 Sin that ye wole nat been my tresorere;
 For I am shave as nye as any frere.
 But yet I pray unto your curtesye:
 Beth hevy ageyn, or elles moote I dyel

L'ENVOY DE CHAUCER

O conquerour of Brutes Albyon,
 Which that by lyne and free eleccion
 Ben verray king, this song to you I send;
 And ye, that mowen al our harmes amend,
 Have mind upon my supplicacioun!

~~~~~

JOHN SKELTON

1460? — 1529

~~~~~

Lullay, Lullay

With, Lullay, lullay, like a childe
 Thou slepist to long, thou art begilde.

Stere, pilot; *nye*, close; *frere*, friar; *lyne*, descent; *mowen*, have power to; *harmes*, misfortune.

The Falcon

Lully, lulley! lully, lulley!
The faucon hath borne my make away!

He bare him up, he bare him down,
He bare him into an orchard brown.

In that orchard there was an halle,
That was hangéd with purple and pall.

And in that hall there was a bed,
It was hangéd with gold sa red.

And in that bed there li'th a knight,
His woundés bleeding day and night.

At that bed's foot there li'th a hound,
Licking the blood as it runs down.

By that bed-side kneeleth a may,
And she weepeth both night and day.

And at that bed's head standeth a stone,
Corpus Christi written thereon.

Lully, lulley! lully, lulley!
The faucon hath borne my make away.

My Love in Her Attire

My love in her attire doth show her wit,
It doth so well become her:
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For winter, spring, and summer.
No beauty she doth miss,
When all her robes are on:
But Beauty's self she is,
When all her robes are gone.

Maks, mate; may, maid.

O Western Wind

O western wind, when wilt thou blow,
That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, if my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again!

Love Not Me

Love not me for comely grace,
For my pleasing eye or face,
Nor for any outward part:
No, nor for a constant heart!
For these may fail or turn to ill:
So thou and I shall sever.
Keep therefore a true woman's eye,
And love me still, but know not why!
So hast thou the same reason still
To doat upon me ever.

There is a Lady Sweet and Kind

There is a Lady sweet and kind,
Was never face so pleased my mind;
I did but see her passing by,
And yet I love her till I die.

Her gesture, motion, and her smiles,
Her wit, her voice my heart beguiles,
Beguiles my heart, I know not why,
And yet I love her till I die.

Cupid is wingèd and doth range,
Her country so my love doth change:
But change she earth, or change she sky,
Yet will I love her till I die.

Who Is at My Window?

Who is at my window? Who? Who?
 Go from my window! Go! Go!
 Who calls there, like a stranger,
 Go from my window! Go!

—Lord, I am here, a wretched mortal,
 That for thy mercy doth cry and call
 Unto thee, my lord celestial,
 See who is at thy window, who?—

Remember thy sin, remember thy smart,
 And also for thee what was my part,
 Remember the spear that pierced my heart,
 And in at my door thou shalt go.

I ask no thing of thee therefore,
 But love for love, to lay in store.
 Give me thy heart; I ask no more,
 And in at my door thou shalt go.

Who is at my window? Who?
 Go from my window! Go!
 Cry no more there, like a stranger,
 But in at my door thou go!

Quia Amore Languo

In a valley of this restless mind
 I sought in mountain and in mead,
 Trusting a true love for to find.
 Upon an hill then took I heed;
 A voice I heard (and near I yede)
 In great dolour complaining tho:
 See, dear soul, how my sides bleed
Quia amore languo.

Yede, went.

Upon this hill I found a tree,
Under a tree a man sitting;
From head to foot wounded was he;
His hearte blood I saw bleeding:
A seemly man to be a king,
A gracious face to look unto.
I asked why he had paining;
Quia amore languet.

I am true love that false was never;
My sister, man's soul, I loved her thus.
Because we would in no wise dis sever
I left my kingdom glorious.
I purveyed her a palace full precious;
She fled, I followed, I loved her so
That I suffered this pain piteous
Quia amore languet.

My fair love and my spouse bright!
I saved her from beating, and she hath me bet;
I clothed her in grace and heavenly light;
This bloody shirt she hath on me set;
For longing of love yet would I not let;
Sweet strokes are these: lo!
I have loved her ever as I her het
Quia amore languet.

I crowned her with bliss and she me with thorn;
I led her to chamber and she me to die;
I brought her to worship and she me to scorn;
I did her reverence and she me villainy.
To love that loveth is no maistry;
Her hate made never my love her foe
Ask me then no question why—
Quia amore languet.

Het, promised.

Look unto mine handes, man!
 These gloves were given me when I her sought;
 They be not white, but red and wan;
 Embroidered with blood my spouse them brought.
 They will not off; I loose hem nought:
 I woo her with hem wherever she go.
 These hands for her so friendly fought
Quia amore languet.

Marvel not, man, though I sit still.
 See, love hath shod me wonder strait:
 Buckled my feet, as was her will,
 With sharp nails (well thou may'st wait!)
 In my love was never desait;
 All my membres I have opened her to;
 My body I made her herte's bait
Quia amore languet.

In my side I have made her nest;
 Look in, how wet a wound is herel
 This is her chamber, here shall she rest,
 That she and I may sleep in fere.
 Here may she wash, if any filth were;
 Here is seat for all her woe;
 Come when she will, she shall have cheer
Quia amore languet.

I will abide till she be ready,
 I will her sue if she say nay;
 If she be retchless I will be greedy,
 If she be dangerous I will her pray;
 If she weep, then bide I ne may:
 Mine arms ben spread to clip her me to.
 Cry once, I come: now, soul, assay!
Quia amore languet.

Fair love, let us go play:
 Apples ben ripe in my gardayne.
 I shall thee clothe in a new array,

To send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the sel

"Mak haste, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne."

"O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.

"Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir my deir master,
That we will cum to harme."

O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone;
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Thair hats they swam aboone.

O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spens
Cum sailing to the land.

O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se thame na mair.

Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spens,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

Laith, loth; *owre*, before; *swam aboone*, floated above; *kems*, combs.
combs.

Lord Randal

“O where hae ye been, Lord Randal, my son?
 O where hae ye been, my handsome young man?”
 “I hae been to the wild wood; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I’m weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
 Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?”
 “I din’d wi my true-love; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I’m weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randal, my son?
 What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?”
 “I gat eels boiled in broo; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I’m weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randal, my son?
 What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young
 man?”

“O they swelld and they died; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I’m weary wi hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“O I fear ye are poisond, Lord Randal, my son!
 O I fear ye are poisond, my handsome young man!”
 “O yes! I am poisond; mother, make my bed soon,
 For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down.”

Helen of Kirconnell

I wish I were where Helen lies,
 Night and day on me she cries;
 O that I were where Helen lies,
 On fair Kirconnell lea!

Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
 And curst the hand that fired the shot,
 When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
 And died to succour me!

O think na ye my heart was sair,
When my Love droop'd and spak nae mair!
There did she swoon wi' meikle care,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

As I went down the water side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
On fair Kirconnell lea;

I lighted down my sword to draw,
I hackéd him in pieces sma',
I hackéd him in pieces sma',
For her sake that died for me.

O Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll mak a garland o' thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I die!

O that I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
Says, "Haste, and come to me!"

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
If I were with thee, I'd be blest,
Where thou lies low and taks thy rest,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding-sheet drawn owre my een,
And I in Helen's arms lying,
On fair Kirconnell lea.

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
And I am weary of the skies,
For her sake that died for me.

The Wife of Usher's Well

There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them o'er the sea.

They hadna been a week from her,
A week but barely ane,
Whan word came to the carline wife
That her three sons were gane.

They hadna been a week from her,
A week but barely three,
Whan word came to the carline wife
That her sons she'd never see.

"I wish the wind may never cease,
Nor fashes in the flood,
Till my three sons come hame to me,
In earthly flesh and blood."

It fell about the Martinmas,
When nights are lang and mirk,
The carline wife's three sons came home,
And their hats were o the birk.

It neither grew in syke nor ditch,
Nor yet in ony sheugh;
But at the gates o' Paradise,
That birk grew fair eneugh.

"Blow up the fire, my maidens,
Bring water from the well;
For a' my house shall feast this night,
Since my three sons are well."

And she has made to them a bed,
She's made it large and wide,

Carline, peasant; *fashes*, troubles; *birk*, birch; *syke*, trench; *sheugh*, furrow.

And she's taen her mantle her about,
Sat down at the bed-side.

Up then crew the red, red cock,
And up and crew the gray;
The eldest to the youngest said,
" 'T is time we were away."

The cock he hadna crawd but once,
And clappd his wings at a',
When the youngest to the eldest said,
"Brother we must awa.

"The cock doth craw, the day doth daw,
The channerin worm doth chide;
Gin we be mist out o our place,
A sair pain we maun bide.

"Fare ye weel, my mother dear!
Fareweel to barn and byre!
And fare ye weel, the bonny lass
That kindles my mother's fire!"

Tom O' Bedlam's Song

From the hag and hungry goblin
That into rags would rend ye,
And the spirit that stands by the naked man
In the book of moons, defend ye,
That of your five sound senses
You never be forsaken,
Nor wander from yourselves with Tom,
Abroad to beg your bacon.

*While I do sing: Any food,
Any feeding, drink, or clothing?
Come, dame or maid, be not afraid,
Poor Tom will injure nothing.*

Channerin, devouring; byre, cattle-shed.

~~~~~  
SIR THOMAS WYATT

1503 — 1542

~~~~~

They Flee from Me

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

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

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

~~~~~  
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

1554 — 1586

~~~~~  
Desire

Thou blind man's mark, thou fool's self-chosen snare,
Fond Fancy's scum and dregs of scattered thought,
Band of all evils, cradle of causeless care,
Thou web of will whose end is never wrought;
Desire! desire, I have too dearly bought
With price of mangled mind thy worthless ware;
Too long, too long asleep thou hast me brought,
Who should my mind to higher things prepare.
But yet in vain thou hast my ruin sought,
In vain thou mad'st me to vain things aspire,
In vain thou kindlest all thy smoky fire.
For virtue hath this better lesson taught,
Within myself to seek my only hire,
Desiring nought but how to kill desire.

Loving in Truth

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

*Double Sestine***STREPHON**

You goat-herd Gods, that love the grassy mountains,
You nymphs that haunt the springs in pleasant valleys,
You Satyrs joyed with free and quiet forests,
Vouchsafe your silent ears to playning music,
Which to my woes gives still an early morning:
And draws the dolour on till weary evening.

KLAUS

O Mercury, forgoer to the evening,
O heavenly huntress of the savage mountains,
O lovely star, entitled of the morning,
While that my voice doth fill these woeful valleys
Vouchsafe your silent ears to playning music,
Which oft doth *Echo* tired in secret forests.

STREPHON

I that was once free-burgess of the forests
Where shade from sun, and sports I sought at evening,
I that was once esteemed for pleasant music,
Am banished now among the monstrous mountains
Of huge despair, and foul affliction's valleys,
Am grown a screech-owl to myself each morning.

KLAUS

I that was once delighted every morning,
Hunting the wild inhabitors of forests,
I that was once the music of these valleys,
So darkened am, that all my day is evening,
Heart-broken so, that mole-hills seem high mountains,
And fill the vales with cries instead of music.

STREPHON

Long since, alas, my deadly Swannish music
Hath made itself a crier of the morning,
And hath with wailing strength climbed highest mountains:
Long since my thoughts more desert be than forests:

Long since I see my joys come to their evening,
And state thrown down to over-trodden valleys.

KLAIUS

Long since the happy dwellers of these valleys,
Have prayed me leave my strange exclaiming music,
Which troubles their day's work, and joys of evening:
Long since I hate the night, more hate the morning:
Long since my thoughts chase me like beasts in forests,
And make me wish myself laid under mountains.

STREPHON

Meseems I see the high and stately mountains
Transform themselves to low dejected valleys:
Meseems I hear in these ill-changed forests
The nightingales do learn of owls their music:
Meseems I feel the comfort of the morning
Turned to the mortal serene of an evening.

KLAIUS

Meseems I see a filthy cloudy evening,
As soon as sun begins to climb the mountains:
Meseems I feel a noisome scent, the morning
When I do smell the flowers of these valleys:
Meseems I hear, when I do hear sweet music,
The dreadful cries of murdered men in forests.

STREPHON

I wish to fire the trees of all these forests:
I give the sun a last farewell each evening;
I curse the fiddling finders out of music:
With envy do I hate the lofty mountains;
And with despite despise the humble valleys:
I do detest night, evening, day, and morning.

KLAIUS

Curse of myself my prayer is, the morning:
My fire is more, than can be made with forests;
My state more base, than are the basest valleys:
I wish no evening more to see, each evening;

Shamed I have myself in sight of mountains,
And stop mine ears, lest I go mad with music.

STREPHON

For she, whose parts maintained a perfect music,
Whose beauty shined more than the blushing morning,
Who much did pass in state the stately mountains,
In straightness passed the cedars of the forests,
Hath cast me wretch into eternal evening,
By taking her two suns from these dark valleys.

KLAIUS

For she, to whom compared, the Alps are valleys,
She, whose least word brings from the spheres their music,
At whose approach the sun rose in the evening,
Who, where she went, bare in her forehead morning,
Is gone, is gone from these our spoiled forests,
Turning to deserts our best pastured mountains.

STREPHON These mountains witness shall, so shall these valleys,

KLAIUS These forests eke, made wretched by our music,

STREPHON Our morning hymn is this,

KLAIUS and song at evening.



SIR WALTER RALEIGH

1552 — 1618



*The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd**

If all the world and love were young
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

*See page 45.

Tell fortune of her blindness;
 Tell nature of decay;
 Tell friendship of unkindness;
 Tell justice of delay:
 And if they will reply,
 Then give them all the lie.

Tell faith it's fled the city;
 Tell how the country erreth;
 Tell manhood shakes off pity
 And virtue least preferreth:
 And if they do reply,
 Spare not to give the lie.

Tell arts they have no sound-
 ness,
 But vary by esteeming;
 Tell schools they want pro-
 foundness,
 And stand too much on
 seeming:
 If arts and schools reply,
 Give arts and schools the lie.

So when thou hast, as I
 Commanded thee, done
 blabbing
 —Although to give the lie
 Deserves no less than stab-
 bing—
 Stab at thee he that will,
 No stab the soul can kill.

~~~~~  
 SIR EDWARD DYER

1550? — 1607

~~~~~  
My Mind to Me a Kingdom Is

My mind to me a kingdom is,
 Such present joys therein I find
 That it excels all other bliss
 That earth affords or grows by kind:
 Though much I want which most would have,
 Yet still my mind forbids to crave.

No princely pomp, no wealthy store,
 No force to win the victory,
 No wily wit to salve a sore,
 No shape to feed a loving eye;
 To none of these I yield as thrall:
 For why? My mind doth serve for all.

I see how plenty surfeits oft,
 And hasty climbers soon do fall;
I see that those which are aloft
 Mishap doth threaten most of all;
They get with toil, they keep with fear:
Such cares my mind could never bear.
Content to live, this is my stay;
 I seek no more than may suffice;
I press to bear no haughty sway;
 Look, what I lack my mind supplies:
Lo, thus I triumph like a king,
Content with that my mind doth bring.
Some have too much, yet still do crave;
 I little have, and seek no more.
They are but poor, though much they have,
 And I am rich with little store:
They poor, I rich; they beg, I give;
They lack, I leave; they pine, I live.
I laugh not at another's loss;
 I grudge not at another's pain;
No worldly waves my mind can toss;
 My state at one doth still remain:
I fear no foe, I fawn no friend;
I loathe not life, nor dread my end.
Some weigh their pleasure by their lust,
 Their wisdom by their rage of will;
Their treasure is their only trust;
 A cloaked craft their store of skill:
But all the pleasure that I find
Is to maintain a quiet mind.
My wealth is health and perfect ease;
 My conscience clear my chief defence;
I neither seek by bribes to please,
 Nor by deceit to breed offence:
Thus do I live; thus will I die;
Would all did so as well as I!

EDMUND SPENSER

1552 — 1599

My Love Is Like to Ice

My love is like to ice, and I to fire:
How comes it then that this her cold so great
Is not dissolved through my so hot desire,
But harder grows the more I her entreat?
Or how comes it that my exceeding heat
Is not allayed by her heart-frozen cold,
But that I burn much more in boiling sweat,
And feel my flames augmented manifold?
What more miraculous thing may be told,
That fire, which all things melts, should harden ice,
And ice, which is congealed with senseless cold,
Should kindle fire by wonderful device?
Such is the power of love in gentle mind,
That it can alter all the course of kind.

One Day I Wrote Her Name

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,
But came the waves and washèd it away:
Again I wrote it with a second hand,
But came the tide and made my pains his prey.
"Vain man," said she, "that dost in vain essay
A mortal thing so to immortalize;
For I myself shall like to this decay,
And eke my name be wipèd out likewise."
"Not so," quoth I; "let baser things devise
To die in dust, but you shall live by fame;
My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,
And in the heavens write your glorious name:
Where, whenas Death shall all the world subdue,
Our love shall live, and later life renew."

Prothalamion

Calm was the day, and through the trembling air
Sweet, breathing Zephyrus did softly play
A gentle spirit, that lightly did delay
Hot Titan's beams, which then did glister fair;
When I (whom sullen care,
Through discontent of my long fruitless stay
In princes' court, and expectation vain
Of idle hopes, which still to fly away,
Like empty shadows, did afflict my brain)
Walked forth to ease my pain
Along the shore of silver streaming Thames;
Whose ruddy bank, the which his river hems,
Was painted all with variable flowers,
And all the meads adorned with dainty gems
Fit to deck maidens' bowers,
And crown their paramours
Against the bridal day, which is not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.
There, in a meadow, by the river's side,
A flock of nymphs I chanced to espy,
All lovely daughters of the flood thereby,
With goodly greenish locks, all loose untied,
As each had been a bride.
And each one had a little wicker basket,
Made of fine twigs, entrailéd curiously,
In which they gathered flowers to fill their flasket,
And with fine fingers cropt full feateously
The tender stalks on high.
Of every sort, which in that meadow grew,
They gathered some: the violet, pallid blue,
The little daisy, that at evening closes,
The virgin lily, and the primrose true,
With store of vermeil roses,
To deck their bridegroom's posies
Against the bridal day, which was not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

With that I saw two swans of goodly hue
Come softly swimming down along the Lee;
Two fairer birds I yet did never see.
The snow, which doth the top of Pindus strew,
Did never whiter shew,
Nor Jove himself, when he a swan would be
For love of Leda, whiter did appear;
Yet Leda was, they say, as white as he,
Yet not so white as these, nor nothing near;
So purely white they were,
That even the gentle stream, the which them bare,
Seemed foul to them, and bade his billows spare
To wet their silken feathers, lest they might
Soil their fair plumes with water not so fair,
And mar their beauties bright,
That shone as heaven's light,
Against their bridal day, which was not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

Eftsoons the nymphs, which now had flowers their fill,
Ran all in haste to see that silver brood,
As they came floating on the crystal flood;
Whom when they saw, they stood amazed still,
Their wondering eyes to fill;
Them seemed they never saw a sight so fair
Of fowls so lovely, that they sure did deem
Them heavenly born, or to be that same pair
Which through the sky draw Venus' silver team;
For sure they did not seem
To be begot of any earthly seed,
But rather angels, or of angels' breed;
Yet were they bred of summer's heat, they say,
In sweetest season, when each flower and weed
The earth did fresh array;
So fresh they seemed as day,
Even as their bridal day, which was not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

Yet therein now doth lodge a noble peer,
Great England's glory, and the world's wide wonder,
Whose dreadful name late through all Spain did thunder,
And Hercules' two pillars standing near
Did make to quake and fear:
Fair branch of honor, flower of chivalry!
That fillest England with thy triumph's fame,
Joy have thou of thy noble victory,
And endless happiness of thine own name,
That promiseth the same;
That through thy prowess, and victorious arms,
Thy country may be freed from foreign harms;
And great Elisa's glorious name may ring
Through all the world, filled with thy wide alarms,
Which some brave muse may sing
To ages following,
Upon the bridal day, which is not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

From those high towers this noble lord issuing,
Like radiant Hesper, when his golden hair
In th' ocean billows he hath bathéd fair,
Descended to the river's open viewing,
With a great train ensuing.
Above the rest were goodly to be seen
Two gentle knights of lovely face and feature
Beseeming well the bower of any queen,
With gifts of wit, and ornaments of nature,
Fit for so goodly stature,
That like the twins of Jove they seemed in sight,
Which deck the baldrick of the heavens bright;
They two, forth pacing to the river's side,
Received those two fair brides, their love's delight;
Which, at th' appointed tide,
Each one did make his bride
Against their bridal day, which is not long—
Sweet Thames! run softly, till I end my song.

~~~~~  
G E O R G E P E E L E

1558 — 1598  
~~~~~

Bathsheba's Song

Hot sun, cool fire, tempered with sweet air,
Black shade, fair nurse, shadow my white hair.
Shine, sun; burn, fire; breathe, air, and ease me;
Black shade, fair nurse, shroud me and please me;
Shadow, my sweet nurse, keep me from burning,
Make not my glad cause cause of mourning.

Let not my beauty's fire
Inflame unstaid desire,
Nor pierce any bright eye
That wand'reth lightly.

~~~~~  
S A M U E L D A N I E L

1562 — 1619  
~~~~~

Care-charmer Sleep

Care-charmer Sleep, son of the sable Night,
Brother to Death, in silent darkness born,
Relieve my languish, and restore the light,
With dark forgetting of my cares return.
And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventur'd youth;
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the torment of the night's untruth.
Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow;
Never let rising sun approve you liars,
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow.
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain;
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

~~~~~  
MICHAEL DRAYTON

1568 — 1631

~~~~~

Farewell to Love

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;
Nay I have done, you get no more of me;
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.

~~~~~

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

1564 — 1593

~~~~~

*The Passionate Shepherd to His Love**

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

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

*See page 33.

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

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

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

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

What Is Beauty?

What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then?
If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,
And every sweetness that inspir'd their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admired themes;
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein as in a mirror we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit—
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combin'd in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.

From Tamburlaine the Great

Who Ever Loved, That Loved Not at First Sight?

It lies not in our power to love or hate,
For will in us is overruled by fate.
When two are stripped, long ere the course begin,
We wish that one should lose, the other win;
And one especially do we affect
Of two gold ingots, like in each respect:
The reason no man knows; let it suffice
What we behold is censured by our eyes.
Where both deliberate, the love is slight:
Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

From Hero and Leander

Helen

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burned the topless towers of Ilium?—
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss!—
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flees!—
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked,
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumèd crest;
Yes, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars;
Brighter art thou than flaming Jupiter
When he appeared to hapless Semele;
More lovely than the monarch of the sky
In wanton Arethusa's azured arms;
And none but thou shalt be my paramour!

From The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus

Because thou art not seen,
 Although thy breath be rude.
 Heigh-hol sing, heigh-hol unto the green holly:
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.

Freeze, freeze, thou bitter sky,
 That dost not bite so nigh
 As benefits forgot:
 Though thou the waters warp,
 Thy sting is not so sharp
 As friends remember'd not.
 Heigh-hol sing, heigh-hol unto the green holly:
 Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly:
 Then, heigh-ho, the holly!
 This life is most jolly.

It Was a Lover and His Lass

It was a lover and his lass,
 With a hey, and a ho, and hey nonino,
 That o'er the green corn-field did pass
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
 When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding:
 Sweet lovers love the spring.

Between the acres of the rye,
 With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
 These pretty country folk would lie,
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
 When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding:
 Sweet lovers love the spring.

This carol they began that hour,
 With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
 How that a life was but a flower
 In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,

When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

And therefore take the present time,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
For love is crowned with the prime
In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding:
Sweet lovers love the spring.

When That I Was and a Little Tiny Boy

When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came to man's estate
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
'Gainst knaves and thieves men shut the gate,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came, alas! to wive,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
By swaggering could I never thrive,
For the rain it raineth every day.

But when I came unto my beds,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
With toss-pots still had drunken heads,
For the rain it raineth every day.

A great while ago the world begun,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
But that's all one, our play is done,
And we'll strive to please you every day.

O Mistress Mine

O Mistress mine, where are you roaming?
 O, stay and hear; your true love's coming,
 That can sing both high and low:
 Trip no further, pretty sweetening;
 Journeys end in lovers meeting,
 Every wise man's son doth know.

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
 Present mirth hath present laughter;
 What's to come is still unsure:
 In delay there lies no plenty;
 Then, come kiss me, sweet and twenty,
 Youth's a stuff will not endure.

Winter

When icicles hang by the wall,
 And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
 And Tom bears logs into the hall,
 And milk comes frozen home in pail,
 When blood is nipp'd and ways be foul,
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit;
 Tu-who, a merry note,
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

When all aloud the wind doth blow,
 And coughing drowns the parson's saw,
 And birds sit brooding in the snow,
 And Marion's nose looks red and raw,
 When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl,
 Then nightly sings the staring owl,
 Tu-whit;
 Tu-who, a merry note,
 While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.

Take, O Take Those Lips Away

Take, O take those lips away,
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn:
But my kisses bring again, bring again;
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain, seal'd in vain.

Fear No More

Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages;
Thou thy worldly task has done,
Home art gone and ta'en thy wages:
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

Fear no more the frown o' the great;
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke;
Care no more to clothe and eat;
To thee the reed is as the oak:
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this and come to dust.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone;
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finish'd joy and moan:
All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee and come to dust.

No exorciser harm thee!
Nor no witchcraft charm thee!
Ghost unlaid forbear thee!
Nothing ill come near thee!
Quiet consummation have;
And renown'd be thy grave!

Hark, Hark! the Lark

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 every thing that pretty is,
 My lady sweet, arise:
 Arise, arise!

And Will A' Not Come Again?

And will a' not come again?
 And will a' not come again?
 No, no, he is dead,
 Go to thy death-bed,
 He never will come again.
 His beard was as white as snow,
 All flaxen was his poll:
 He is gone, he is gone,
 And we cast away moan:
 God ha' mercy on his soull

Full Fathom Five

Full fathom five thy father lies;
 Of his bones are coral made;
 Those are pearls that were his eyes:
 Nothing of him that doth fade,
 But doth suffer a sea-change
 Into something rich and strange.
 Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
 Ding-dong.
 Hark! now I hear them—Ding-dong, bell.

Shall I Compare Thee

Shall I compare thee to a Summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And Summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:

But thy eternal Summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

When in Disgrace with Fortune

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewEEP my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possess,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;

Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising—
Haply I think on thee: and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at Heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love rememb'rd such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

When to the Sessions

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
 I summon up remembrance of things past,
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
 Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
 And weep afresh love's long-since-cancell'd woe,
 And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight:

Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
 The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restored and sorrows end.

Full Many a Glorious Morning

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
 Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
 Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
 Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy;
 Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
 With ugly rack on his celestial face,
 And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
 Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:

Even so my sun one early morn did shine
 With all-triumphant splendour on my brow;
 But out, alack! he was but one hour mine;
 The region cloud hath mask'd him from me now.
 Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth;
 Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun
 staineth.

What Is Your Substance

What is your substance, whereof are you made,
That millions of strange shadows on you tend?
Since every one hath, every one, one shade,
And you, but one, can every shadow lend.
Describe Adonis, and the counterfeit
Is poorly imitated after you;
On Helen's cheek all art of beauty set,
And you in Grecian tires are painted new:

Speak of the spring and plenty of the year,
The one doth shadow of your beauty show,
The other as your bounty doth appear;
And you in every blessèd shape we know.
In all external grace you have some part,
But you like none, none you, for constant heart.

Not Marble, nor the Gilded Monuments

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.

'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wears this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

Like as the Waves

Like as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end;
Each changing place with that which goes before,
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crown'd,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave doth now his gift confound.

Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow:
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

When I Have Seen by Time's Fell Hand

When I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss and loss with store;

When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminat,
That Time will come and take my love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

Since Brass, nor Stone, nor Earth

Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'er-sways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wrackful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?

O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

Tired with All These

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry,—
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimm'd in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,

And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly doctor-like controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill:
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

From You Have I Been Absent

From you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dress'd in all his trim,
Hath put a spirit of youth in everything,
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew;

Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you, you pattern of all those.
Yet seem'd it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

No More Be Grieved

No more be grieved at that which thou hast done,
Roses have thorns, and silver fountains mud,
Clouds and eclipses stain both moon and sun,
And loathsome canker lives in sweetest bud.
All men make faults, and even I in this,
Authorizing thy trespass with compare,
Myself corrupting, salving thy amiss,
Excusing thy sins more than thy sins are:

For to thy sensual fault I bring in sense,
Thy adverse party is thy advocate,
And 'gainst myself a lawful plea commence,
Such civil war is in my love and hate,
That I an accessory needs must be,
To that sweet thief which sourly robs from me.

When in the Chronicle

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.

So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing:
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

Not Mine Own Fears

Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
Can yet the lease of my true love control,
Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom.
The mortal moon hath her eclipse endured,
And the sad augurs mock their own presage;
Incertainties now crown themselves assured,
And peace proclaims olives of endless age.

Now with the drops of this most balmy time
My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes:
And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are
spent.

The Marriage of True Minds

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove:
 O, no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
 That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be
 taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom:—
 If this be error and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

The Expense of Spirit

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

Mad in pursuit and in possession so;
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;
 A bliss in proof, and prov'd, a very woe;
 Before, a joy propos'd; behind, a dream.
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

My Mistress' Eyes

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

Poor Soul, the Centre

Poor soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Thral to these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?

Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on men,
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

The Heavenly Rhetoric

Did not the heavenly rhetoric of thine eye,
 'Gainst whom the world cannot hold argument,
 Persuade my heart to this false perjury?
 Vows for thee broke deserve not punishment.
 A woman I forswore; but I will prove,
 Thou being a goddess, I forswore not thee:
 My vow was earthly, thou a heavenly love;
 Thy grace being gain'd cures all disgrace in me.
 Vows are but breath, and breath a vapour is:
 Then thou, fair sun, which on my earth doth shine,
 Exhalest this vapour-vow; in thee it is:
 If broken then, it is no fault of mine:
 If by me broke, what fool is not so wise
 To lose an oath to win a paradise?

From *Love's Labour's Lost*

Imagination

Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,
 Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
 More than cool reason ever comprehends.
 The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
 Are of imagination all compact:—
 One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,—
 That is the madman: the lover, all as frantic,
 Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt:
 The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
 And, as imagination bodies forth
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
 Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
 A local habitation and a name.
 Such tricks hath strong imagination,
 That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
 It comprehends some bringer of that joy;
 Or in the night, imagining some fear,
 How easy is a bush supposed a bear!

From *A Midsummer
Night's Dream*

To Gild Refinèd Gold

To gild refinèd gold, to paint the lily,
To throw perfume on the violet,
To smooth the ice, or add another hue
Unto the rainbow, or with taper-light
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish,
Is wasteful and ridiculous excess.

From *King John*

To Thine Own Self Be True

There, my blessings with thee!
And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar;
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
Bear 't that the opposèd may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are most select and generous, chief in that.
Neither a borrower, nor a lender be;
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

From *Hamlet*

To Be, or Not to Be

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and, by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: aye, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.

From *Hamlet*

The Seven Ages of Man

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.
And then the whining school-boy, 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 honour, 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 lin'd,
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 slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well sav'd 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.

From As You Like It

Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

From *Macbeth*

The Quality of Mercy

The quality of mercy is not strained,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
The thronèd monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway,
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings;
It is an attribute to God himself,
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,
That in the course of justice none of us
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

From *The Merchant of Venice*

Our Revels Now Are Ended

Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

From The Tempest

The Phoenix and the Turtle

Let the bird of loudest lay
On the sole Arabian tree,
Herald sad and trumpet be,
To whose sound chaste wings obey.

But thou shrieking harbinger,
Foul precurrer of the fiend,
Augur of the fever's end,
To this troop come thou not near.

From this session interdict
Every fowl of tyrant wing
Save the eagle, feathered king.
Keep the obsequy so strict.

Let the priest in surplice white
That defunctive music can,
Be the death-divining swan,
Lest the requiem lack his right.

And thou, treble-dated crow,
That thy sable gender mak'st

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
 Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
 In every street these tunes our ears do greet,
 Cuckoo, jug, jug, pu we, to witta woo.
 Spring, the sweet spring!

~~~~~  
 THOMAS CAMPION

1567 — 1620  
 ~~~~~

There Is a Garden in Her Face

There is a garden in her face
 Where roses and white lilies grow;
 A heavenly paradise is that place
 Wherein all pleasant fruits do flow.
 There cherries grow which none may buy,
 Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Those cherries fairly do enclose
 Of orient pearl a double row,
 Which when her lovely laughter shows,
 They look like rose-buds filled with snow;
 Yet them nor peer nor prince can buy,
 Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

Her eyes like angels watch them still,
 Her brows like bended bows do stand,
 Threatening with piercing frowns to kill
 All that attempt, with eye or hand,
 Those sacred cherries to come nigh
 Till "Cherry ripe" themselves do cry.

~~~~~  
BEN JONSON

1578 — 1637  
~~~~~

To Celia

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope that there
It could not withered be;
But thou thereon didst only breathe
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear
Not of itself but thee!

It Is Not Growing Like a Tree

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make Man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.

The Hour Glass

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

~~~~~

JOHN DONNE

1573 — 1631

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Song

Go and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,
 Tell me where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
 Teach me to hear mermaids' singing,
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.
 If thou be'st born to strange sights,
 Things invisible go see,
 Ride ten thousand days and nights,
 Till Age snow white hairs on thee;
 Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me

All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear
 No where
 Lives a woman true and fair.

If thou find'st one, let me know;
 Such a pilgrimage were sweet,
 Yet do not; I would not go,
 Though at next door we might meet.
 Though she were true when you met her,
 And last till you write your letter,
 Yet she
 Will be
 False, ere I come, to two or three.

Love's Deity

I long to talk with some old lover's ghost
 Who died before the god of love was born.
 I cannot think that he who then loved most,
 Sunk so low as to love one which did scorn.
 But since this god produced a destiny
 And that vice-nature, custom, lets it be,
 I must love her that loves not me.

Sure, they which made him god, meant not so much,
 Nor he in his young godhead practiced it.
 But when an even flame two hearts did touch,
 His office was indulgently to fit
 Actives to passives. Correspondency
 Only his subject was; it cannot be
 Love, till I love her who loves me.

But every modern god will not extend
 His vast prerogative as far as Jove.
 To rage, to lust, to write to, to commend,
 All is the purlieu of the god of love.
 O! were we wakened by this tyranny

To ungod this child again, it could not be
I should love her who loves not me.

Rebel and atheist too, why murmur I,
As though I felt the worst that love could do?
Love may make me leave loving, or might try
A deeper plague, to make her love me too;
Which, since she loves before, I'm loth to see.
Falsehood is worse than hate; and that must be,
If she whom I love, should love me.

The Good Morrow

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did till we loved? were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

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

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

A Lecture Upon the Shadow

Stand still, and I will read to thee
A lecture, love, in Love's philosophy.
 These three hours that we have spent,
 Walking here, two shadows went
Along with us, which we ourselves produced;
 But, now the sun is just above our head,
 We do those shadows tread,
And to brave clearness all things are reduced.
 So whilst our infant loves did grow,
 Disguises did, and shadows, flow
 From us and our cares; but, now 'tis not so.

That love hath not attained the highest degree,
Which is still diligent lest others see.

Except our loves at this noon stay,
We shall new shadows make the other way.
 As the first were made to blind
 Others, these which come behind
Will work upon ourselves, and blind our eyes.
 If our loves faint, and westwardly decline,
 To me thou, falsely, thine,
And I to thee, mine actions shall disguise.
 The morning shadows wear away,
 But these grow longer all the day;
 But oh, love's day is short, if love decay.

Love is a growing, or full constant light,
And his first minute after noon, is night.

The Relic

When my grave is broke up again
Some second guest to entertain,
(For graves have learn'd that womanhead
To be to more than one a bed)
And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
Will he not let us alone,
And think that there a loving couple lies,
Who thought that this device might be some way
To make their souls, at the last busy day,
Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?

If this fall in a time, or land,
Where mis-devotion doth command,
Then he that digs us up will bring
Us to the Bishop and the King,
To make us Relics; then
Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I
A something else thereby;
All women shall adore us, and some men;
And since at such time, miracles are sought,
I would have that age by this paper taught
What miracles we harmless lovers wrought.

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,
Yet knew not what we lov'd, nor why,
Difference of sex no more we knew
Than our Guardian Angels do;
Coming and going, we
Perchance might kiss, but not between those meals;
Our hands ne'er touch'd the seals
Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free:
These miracles we did; but now alas,
All measure, and all language, I should pass
Should I tell what a miracle she was.

The Ecstasy

Where, like a pillow on a bed,
A pregnant bank swell'd up, to rest
The violet's reclining head,
Sat we two, one another's best.
Our hands were firmly cemented
By a fast balm, which thence did spring;
Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes upon one double string;
So t' entergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one;
And pictures in our eyes to get
Was all our propagation.
As, 'twixt two equal armies, Fate
Suspends uncertain victory,
Our souls (which to advance their state
Were gone out) hung 'twixt her, and me.
And whilst our souls negotiate there,
We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.
If any, so by love refin'd,
That he soul's language understood,
And by good love were grown all mind,
Within convenient distance stood,
He (though he knew not which soul spake,
Because both meant, both spake the same)
Might thence a new concoction take,
And part far purer than he came.
This ecstasy doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love;
We see by this, it was not sex;
We see, we saw not what did move:
But as all several souls contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love, these mix'd souls, doth mix again,

And makes both one, each this and that.
A single violet transplant,
The strength, the colour, and the size
(All which before was poor and scant)
Redoubles still, and multiplies.
When love with one another so
Interanimates two souls,
That abler soul, which thence doth flow,
Defects of loneliness controls.
We then, who are this new soul, know,
Of what we are compos'd, and made,
For th'atomies of which we grow,
Are souls, whom no change can invade.
But, O alas! so long, so far
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They are ours, though not we; we are
Th'intelligences, they the sphere.
We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their senses' force to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay.
On man heaven's influence works not so,
But that it first imprints the air;
For soul into the soul may flow,
Though it to body first repair.
As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtle knot, which makes us man;
So must pure lovers' souls descend
To affections, and to faculties,
Which sense may reach and apprehend,
Else a great prince in prison lies.
To our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book.

And if some lover, such as we,
 Have heard this dialogue of one,
 Let him still mark us, he shall see
 Small change when we're to bodies gone.

Batter My Heart

Batter my heart, three personed God; for you
 As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
 That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me and bend
 Your force to break, blow, burn and make me new.
 I, like an usurped town, to another due,
 Labour to admit you, but Oh, to no end;
 Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
 But is captived and proves weak or untrue.

Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain,
 But am betrothed unto your enemy:
 Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
 Take me to you, imprison me, for I
 Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Death, Be Not Proud

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

It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.

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

The Will

Before I sigh my last gasp, let me breathe,
Great Love, some legacies: here I bequeath
Mine eyes to Argus, if mine eyes can see;
If they be blind, then, Love, I give them thee;
My tongue to Fame; to ambassadors mine ears;
 To women or the sea, my tears;
 Thou, Love, hast taught me heretofore
 By making me serve her who had twenty more
That I should give to none, but such as had too much before.

My constancy I to the planets give;
My truth to them who at the court do live;
Mine ingenuity and openness,
To Jesuits; to buffoons my pensiveness;
My silence to any, who abroad have been;
 My money to a Capuchin:
 Thou, Love, taught'st me, by appointing me
 To love there, where no love received can be,
Only to give to such as have an incapacity.

My faith I give to Roman Catholics;
All my good works unto the schismatics
Of Amsterdam; my best civility
And courtship to an University;
My modesty I give to shoulders bare;

My patience let gamesters share:
 Thou, Love, taught'st me, by making me
 Love her that holds my love disparity,
 Only to give to such as have an incapacity.

I give my reputation to those
 Which were my friends; mine industry to foes;
 To schoolmen I bequeath my doubtfulness;
 My sickness to physicians, or excess;
 To Nature all that I in rhyme have writ;
 And to my company my wit:
 Thou, Love, by making me adore
 Her, who begot this love in me before,
 Taught'st me to make, as though I gave, when I do but restore.

To him, for whom the passing-bell next tolls,
 I give my physic-books; my written rolls
 Of moral counsels I to Bedlam give;
 My brazen medals unto them which live
 In want of bread; to them which pass among
 All foreigners, mine English tongue:
 Thou, Love, by making me love one
 Who thinks her friendship a fit portion
 For younger lovers, dost my gifts thus disproportion.

Therefore I'll give no more, but I'll undo
 The world by dying; because Love dies too.
 Then all your beauties will be no more worth
 Than gold in mines, where none doth draw it forth;
 And all your graces no more use shall have,
 Than a sun-dial in a grave:
 Thou, Love, taught'st me, by making me
 Love her, who doth neglect both me and thee,
 To invent & practice this one way to annihilate all three.

If Poisonous Minerals

If poisonous minerals, and if that tree
 Whose fruit threw death on else immortal us,
 If lecherous goats, if serpents envious
 Cannot be damned, Alas! why should I be?
 Why should intent or reason, born in me,
 Make sins, else equal, in me more heinous?
 And mercy being easy, and glorious
 To God, in his stern wrath why threatens he?

But who am I, that dare dispute with thee,
 O God? O! of thine only worthy blood,
 And my tears, make a heavenly Lethæan flood,
 And drown in it my sin's black memory;
 That thou remember them, some claim as debt,
 I think it mercy, if thou wilt forget.

What If This Present

What if this present were the world's last night?
 Mark in my heart, O Soul, where thou dost dwell,
 The picture of Christ crucified, and tell
 Whether that countenance can thee affright:
 Tears in his eyes quench the amazing light,
 Blood fills his frowns, which from his pierc'd head fell.
 And can that tongue adjudge thee unto hell,
 Which pray'd forgiveness for his foes' fierce spite?

No, no; but as in my idolatry
 I said to all my profane mistresses,
 Beauty, of pity, foulness only is
 A sign of rigour: so I say to thee,
 To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
 This beauteous form assures a piteous mind.

At the Round Earth's Imagined Corners

At the round earth's imagined corners, blow
 Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise
 From death, you numberless infinities
 Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go;
 All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow;
 All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,
 Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you whose eyes
 Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.

But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,
 For, if above all these, my sins abound,
 'Tis late to ask abundance of Thy grace,
 When we are there; here on this lowly ground,
 Teach me how to repent; for that's as good
 As if Thou hadst sealed my pardon with Thy blood.

The Flea

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

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
 Where we almost, yea, more than married are.
 This flea is you and I, and this
 Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
 Though parents grudge, and you, w' are met,

And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
 Though use make you apt to kill me,
 Let not to that, self-murder added be,
 And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

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

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JOHN WEBSTER

1580? — 1630?

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All the Flowers of the Spring

All the flowers of the spring
 Meet to perfume our burying;
 These have but their growing prime,
 And man doth flourish but his time:
 Survey our progress from our birth;
 We are set, we grow, we turn to earth.
 Courts adieu, and all delights,
 All bewitching appetites.
 Sweetest breath and clearest eye,
 Like perfumes, go out and die;
 And consequently this is done
 As shadows wait upon the sun.
 Vain the ambition of kings
 Who seek by trophies and dead things
 To leave a living name behind,
 And weave but nets to catch the wind.