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PART A

EARLY MEDIEVAL (ANGLO-SAXON) POETRY

1 ANONYMOUS

Deor's Lament

Weland knew fully affliction and woe,
Hero unflinching enduring distress;
Had for companionship heart-break and longing,
Wintry exile and anguish of soul,
When Nithhad bound him, the better man,
Grimly constrained him with sinewy bonds.

That evil ended. So also may this!

Nor was brother's death to Beadohild
A sorrow as deep as her own sad plight,
When she knew the weight of the child in her womb, But little
could know what her lot might be.

That evil ended. So also may this!

Many have heard of the rape of Hild,
Of her father's affection and infinite love,
Whose nights were sleepless with sorrow and grief.

That evil ended. So also may this!

For thirty winters Theodoric held,
As many have known, the Mring's stronghold.

That evil ended. So also may this!

We have heard of Eormanric's wolf-like ways,
Widely ruling the realm of the Goths;
Grim was his menace, and many a man,
Weighted with sorrow, and presage of woe,
Wished that the end of his kingdom were come.

That evil ended. So also may this!

He who knows sorrow, despoiled of joys,
Sits heavy of mood; to his heart it seemeth
His measure of misery meeteth no end.
Yet well may he think how oft in this world
The wise Lord varies His ways to men,
Granting wealth and honor to many an eorl,
To others awarding a burden of woe.

And so I can sing of my own sad plight
Who long stood high as the Heodenings' bard,
Deor my name, dear to my lord.
Mild was my service for many a winter,
Kindly my king till Heorrenda came
Skillful in song and usurping the land-right
Which once my gracious lord granted to me.

That evil ended. So also may this!
Late 9th century

The Wanderer°

Oft to the Wanderer, weary of exile,
Cometh God's pity, compassionate love,
Though woefully toiling on wintry seas
With churning oar in the icy wave,
Homeless and helpless he fled from Fate.
Thus saith the Wanderer mindful of misery,
Grievous disasters, and death° of kin:
 'Oft when the day broke, oft at the dawning, Lonely and
 wretched I wailed my woe.
10 No man is living, no comrade left,
To whom I dare fully unlock my heart.
I have learned truly the mark of a man
 Is keeping his counsel and locking his lips,
 Let him think what he will! For, woe of heart
Withstandeth not Fate; a failing spirit
Earneth no help. Men eager for honor
Bury their sorrow deep in the breast.
 'So have I also, often in wretchedness
Fettered my feelings, far from my kin,
20 Homeless and hapless, since days of old,
When the dark earth covered my dear lord's face,
And I sailed away with sorrowful heart,
Over wintry seas, seeking a gold-lord,
If far or near lived one to befriend me
With gift in the mead-hall and comfort for
grief.
 'Who bears it, knows what a bitter companion,
Shoulder to shoulder, sorrow can be,
When friends are no more. His fortune is exile, Not gifts of
fine gold; a heart that is frozen,
30 Earth's winsomeness dead. And he dreams the hall-men,
The dealing of treasure, the days of his youth,
When his lord bade welcome to wassail and feast.
But gone is that gladness, and never again

Shall come the loved counsel of comrade and king.
 'Even in slumber his sorrow assaileth,
 and, dreaming he claspeth his dear lord again,
 Head on knee, hand on knee, loyally laying,
Pledging his liege as in days long past.
 Then from his slumber he starts lonely-hearted,
40 Beholding gray stretches of tossing sea,
Sea-birds bathing, with wings outspread,
While hailstorms darken, and driving snow.
Bitterer then is the bane of his wretchedness,
The longing for loved one: his grief is renewed.
The forms of his kinsmen take shape in the silence;
In rapture he greets them; in gladness he scans
Old comrades remembered. But they melt into air
With no word of greeting to gladden his heart. Then
again surges his sorrow upon him;
50 And grimly he spurs his weary soul
Once more to the toil of the tossing sea.
 'No wonder° therefore, in all the world,
If a shadow darkens upon my spirit
When I reflect on the fates of men—
How one by one proud warriors vanish
 From the halls that knew them, and day by day
All this earth ages and droops unto death.
No man may know wisdom till many a winter
Has been his portion. A wise man is patient,
Not swift to anger, nor hasty of speech,
Neither too weak, nor too reckless, in war,
Neither fearful nor fain, nor too wishful of wealth,
Nor too eager in vow— ere he know the event.
A brave man must bide when he speaketh his
boast
Until he know surely the goal of his spirit.
 'A wise man will ponder how dread is that doom
When all this world's wealth shall beattered and waste

As now, over all, through the regions of earth,
 Walls stand rime-covered and swept by the winds.
 The battlements crumble, the wine-halls decay;
 Joyless and silent the heroes are sleeping
 Where the proud host fell by the wall they defended.
 Some battle launched on their long, last journey;
 One a bird bore o'er the billowing sea
 One the gray wolf slew; one a grieving eorl
 Sadly gave to the grave's embrace.
 The Warden of men hath wasted this world
 Till the sound of music and revel is stilled,
 And these giant-built structures stand empty of life.
 'He who shall muse on these mouldering ruins,
 And deeply ponder this darkling life,
 Must brood on old legends of battle and bloodshed,
 And heavy the mood that troubles his heart:
 Where now is the warrior? Where is the war horse?
 Bestowal of treasure, and sharing of feast?
 Alas! the bright ale-cup, the byrny-clad warrior,
 The prince in his splendor —those days are long sped
 In the night of the past, as if they never had been!
 And now remains only, for warriors' memorial,
 A wall wondrous high with serpent shapes carved,
 Storms of ash-spears have smitten the eorls,
 Carnage of weapon, and conquering Fate,
 'Storms now batter these ramparts of
 stone;
 Blowing snow and the blast of winter
 Enfold the earth; night-shadows fall
 Darkly lowering, from the north driving
 Raging hail in wrath upon men.
 Wretchedness fills the realm of earth,
 And Fate's decrees transform the world.
 100 Here wealth is fleeting, friends are fleeting,
 Man is fleeting, maid is fleeting;

All the foundation of earth shall fail!
 Thus spake the sage in solitude pondering.
 Good man is he who guardeth his faith.
 He must never too quickly unburden his breast
 Of its sorrow, but eagerly strive for redress;
 And happy the man who seeketh for mercy
 From his heavenly Father, our Fortress and Strength.
 roth century. (**Anon**)

***Beowulf* (Excerpts)**

Prologue

Hear me! We've heard of Danish heroes,
Ancient kings and the glory they cut
For themselves, swinging mighty swords!

How Shild made slaves of soldiers from every
Land, crowds of captives he'd beaten
Into terror; he'd traveled to Denmark alone,
An abandoned child, but changed his own fate,
Lived to be rich and much honoured. He ruled
Lands on all sides: wherever the sea
Would take them his soldiers sailed, returned
With tribute and obedience. There was a brave
King! And he gave them more than his glory,
Conceived a son for the Danes, a new leader
Allowed them by the race of God. They had lived,
Before his coming, kingless and miserable;
Now the Lord of all life, Ruler
Of glory, blessed them with a prince, Beo,
Whose power and fame soon spread through
the world.

Shild's strong son was the glory of Denmark;
His father's warriors were wound rounds his
heart

With golden rings, bound to their prince
By his father's treasure. So young men build
The future, wisely open-handed in peace,
Protected in war; so warriors earn
Their fame, and wealth is shaped with a sword

When his time was come the old king died,
Still strong but called to the Lord's hands.
His comrades carried him down to the shore,
Bore him as their leader had asked, lord

And companion, while words could move on
his tongue
Shild's reign had been long; he'd ruled them well.
There in the harbor was a ring-prowed fighting
Ship, its timbers icy, waiting,
And there they brought the beloved body
Of their ring-giving lord, and laid him near
The mast. Next to that noble corpse
They heaped up treasures, jeweled helmets,
Hooked swords and coats of mail, armor
Carried from the ends of the earth; no ship
Had ever sailed so brightly fitted
No king sent forth more deeply mourned.
Forced to set him adrift, floating
As far as the tide might run, they refused
To give him loss from their hoards of gold
Than those who'd shipped him away,
an orphan
And a beggar, to cross the waves alone.
High up over his head they flew
His shining banner, then sadly let
The water pull at the ship, watched it
Slowly sliding to where nighters rulers
Nor heroes nor anyone can say whose hands
Opened to take that motionless cargo.

Excerpt

Then Beo was king in that Danish castle,
Child's son ruling as long as his father
And as loved, a famous lord of men.
And he in turn gave his people a son,
The great Healfdane, a fierce fighter
Who led the Danes to the end of his long
Life and left them four children,
Three princes to guide them in battle, Hergar

And Hrothgar and Halga the Good, and one daughter,
Yrs, who was given to Onela, king
Of the Swedes, and became his wife and their queen. Then Hrothgar,
taking the throne, led

The Danes to such glory that comrades and kinsmen
Swore by his sword, and young men swelled
His armies, and he thought of greatness and resolved
To build a hall that would hold his mighty
Band and reach higher toward Heaven than anything
That had ever been known to the sons of men.
And in that hall he'd divide the spoils
Of their victories, to old and young what they'd earned
In battle, but leaving the common pastures
Untouched, and taking no lives. The work
Was ordered, the timbers tied and shaped
6 Beowulf

By the hosts that Hrothgar ruled. It was quickly
Ready, that most beautiful of dwellings, built
As he'd warned, and then he whose word was obeyed
All over the earth named it Herot.
His boast come true he commanded a banquet,
Opened out his treasure-full hands.
That towering place, gabled and huge,
Stood waiting for time to pass, for war
To begin, for flames to leap as high
As the feud that would light them, and for Herot to burn.
A powerful monster, living down
In the darkness, growled in pain, impatient
As day after day the music rang
Loud in that hall, the harp's rejoicing go
Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
Of the ancient beginnings of us all, recalling
The Almighty making the earth, shaping
These beautiful plains marked off by oceans,
Then proudly setting the sun and moon

To glow across the land and light it;
The corners of the earth were made lovely with trees
And leaves, made quick with life, with each
Of the nations who now move on its face. And then
As now warriors sang of their pleasure:
So Hrothgar's men lived happy in his hall
Till the monster stirred, that demon, that fiend,
Grendel, who haunted the moors, the wild
Marshes, and made his home in a hell
Not hell but earth. He was spawned in that slime,
Conceived by a pair of those monsters born
Of Cain, murderous creatures banished
By God, punished forever for the crime
Of Abel's death. The Almighty drove
Those demons out, and their exile was bitter, Shut away from
men; they split Beowulf
Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
A brood forever opposing the Lord's
Will, and again and again defeated.

Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep, suspecting
Nothing, their dreams undisturbed. The monster's
Thoughts were as quick as his greed or his claws:
He slipped through the door and there in the
silence

Snatched up thirty men, smashed them
Unknowing in their beds and ran out with their bodies,
The blood dripping behind him, back
To his liar, delighted with his night's slaughter.

40

At daybreak, with the sun's first light, they saw

How well he had worked, and in that gray morning
 Broke their long feast with tears and laments
 For the dead. Hrothgar, their lord, sat joyless
 In Herot, a mighty prince mourning 45
 The fate of his lost friends and companions,
 Knowing by its tracks that some demon had torn
 His followers apart. He wept, fearing
 The beginning might not be the end. And that night
 Grendel came again, so set 50
 On murder that no crime could ever be enough,
 No savage assault quench his lust
 For evil. Then each warrior tried
 To escape him, searched for rest in different
 Beds, as far from Herot as they could find, 55
 Seeing how Grendel hunted when they slept
 Distance was safely; the only survivors
 Were those who fled him. Hate had triumphed.
 So Grendel ruled, fought with the righteous,
 One against many, and won; so Herot 60
 Stood empty, and stayed deserted for years,
 Twelve winters of grief for Hrothgar, king
 Of the Danes, sorrow heaped at his door
 By hell-forged hands. His misery leaped
 The seas, was told and sung in all
 Men's ear how Grendel's hatred began,
 How the monster relished his savage war
 On the Danes, keeping the bloody feud
 Alive, seeking no peace, offering
 No truce, accepting no settlement, no price 70
 In gold or land, and paying the living
 For one crime only with another. No one
 Waited for reparation from his plundering claws:
 That shadow of death hunted in the darkness,

Stalked Hrothgar's warriors, old 75
 And young, lying in waiting, hidden
 In mist, invisibly following them from the edge.
 Of the marsh, always there, unseen.
 So mankind's enemy continued his crimes,
 Killing as often as he could, coming 80
 Alone, bloodthirsty and horrible. Though he lived
 In Herot, when the night hid him, he never
 Dared to touch king Hrothgar's glorious
 Throne, protected by God - God,
 Whose love Grendel could not know. But Hrothgar's 85
 Heart was bent. The best and most noble
 Of his council debated remedies, sat
 In secret sessions, talking of terror
 And wondering what the bravest of warriors could do.
 And sometimes they sacrificed to the old stone gods. 90
 Made heathen vows, hoping for Hell's
 Support, the Devil's guidance in driving
 Their affliction off. That was their way,
 And the heathen's only hope, Hell
 Always in their hearts, knowing neither God 95
 Nor His passing as He walks through our world, the Lord
 Of Heaven and earth; their ears could not hear
 His praise nor know Hid glory. Let them
 Beware, those who are thrust into danger,
 Clutched at by trouble, yet can carry no solace. 100
 In their hearts, cannot hope to be better! Hail
 To those who will rise to God, drop off
 Their dead bodies and seek our Father's peace!
 So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son
 Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom 105
 Or strength could break it: that agony hung
 On king and people alike, harsh

And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.

In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's
Follower and the strongest of the Greats — greater 110
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world —
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,
Would sail across the sea to hrothgar,
Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: the omens were good,
And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf
Chose the mightiest men he could find, 120
The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen
In all, and led them down to their boat;
He knew the sea, would point the prow
Straight to that distant Danish shore.

Then Wulfgar went to the door and addressed 125
The waiting seafarers with soldier's words:
"My lord, the great king of the Danes, commands me
to tell you that he knows of your noble birth
And that having come to him from over the open
Sea you have come bravely and are welcome. 130
Now go to him as you are, in your armor and helmets,
But leave your battle-shields here, and your spears,
Let them lie waiting for the promises your words
May make."

Beowulf arose, with his men
Around him, ordering a few to remain
With their weapons, leading the others quickly
Along under Herof's steep roof into Hrothgar's
Presence, the silvery metal of his mail shirt
Gleaming with a smith's high art, he greeted
The Dane's great lord:

"Hail, Hrothgar!
Higlac is my cousin and my king; the days

Of my youth have been filled with glory. Now Grendel's
Name has echoed in our land: sailors
Have brought us stories of Herot, the best 145
Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon
Hangs inskies the sun had lit,
Light and life fleeing together.
My people have said, the wisest, most knowing
And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes' 150
Great king. They have seen my strength for themselves,
Have watched me rise from the darkness of war,
Dripping with my chains, chased
All of that race from the earth. I swam 155
In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
Out of the ocean, and killing them one
By one; death was my errand and the fate
They had earned. Now Grendel and I are called
Together, and I've come. Grant me, then, 160
Lord and protector of this noble place,
A single request! I have come so far,
O shelter of warriors and your people's loved friend,
That this one favor you should not refuse me —
That I, alone and with the help of my men, 165
May purge all evil from this hall. I have heard,
Too, that the monster's scorn of men
Is so great that he needs no weapons and fear none.
Nor will I my lord Higlac
Might think less of me if I let my sword 170
Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid
Behind some broad linden shield: my hands
Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life
Against the monster. God must decide
Who will be given to death's cold grip. 175
Grendel's plan, I think, will be
What it has been before, to invade this hall
And gorge his belly with our bodies. If he can,
If he can. And I think, if my time will have come,

There'll be nothing to mourn over, no corpse to prepare 180
 For its grave: Grendel will carry our bloody
 Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones
 And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls
 Of his den. No, I expect no Danes
 Will fret about sewing our shrouds, if he wins. 185
 And if death does take me, send the hammered
 Mail of my armor to Higlac, return
 The inheritance I had from Hrethel, and he
 From Wayland. Fate will unwind as it must!"
 Then Hrothgar's men gave places to the Geats, 190
 Yielded benches to the brave visitors
 And led them to the feast. The keeper of the mead
 Came carrying out the carved flasks,
 And poured that bright sweetness. A poet
 Sang, from time to time, in a clear 195
 Pure voice. Danes and visiting Geats
 Celebrated as one, drank and rejoiced.
 There was the sound of laughter, and the cheerful clanking
 Of cups, and pleasant words. Then Welthow,
 Hrothgar's gold-ringed queen, greeted 200
 The warriors; a noble woman who knew
 What was right, she raised a flowing cup
 To Hrothgar first, holding it high
 For the lord of the Danes to drink, wishing him
 Joy in that feast. The famous king 205
 Drank with pleasure and blessed and blessed their banquet.
 Then Welthow went from warrior to warrior,
 Pouring a portion from the jeweled cup
 For each, till the bracelet-wearing queen
 Had carried the mead-cup among them and it was Beowulfs 210
 Turn to be served. She saluted the Geats'
 Great prince, thanked God for answering her players,
 For allowing her hands the happy duty
 Of offering mead to a hero who would help

Her afflicted people. He drank what she poured, 215
 Edgeth's brave son, then assured the Danish
 Queen that his heart was firm and his hands
 Ready:
 "When we crossed the sea, my comrades
 And, I already knew that all
 My purpose was this: to win the good will 220
 Of your people or die in battle, pressed
 In Grendel's fierce grip. Let me live in greatness-
 And courage, or here in this hall welcome
 My death!"
 Welthow was pleased with his words,
 His bright-tongued boasts; she carried them back 225
 To her lord, walked nobly across to his side.
 The feast went on, laughter and music
 And the brave words of warriors celebrating
 Their delight...
 Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty 230
 Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,
 Grendel came, hoping to kill
 Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Herot.
 He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
 Up from his swampland, sliding silently 235
 Toward that gold-shinning hall. He had visited Hrothgar's
 Home before, knew the way —
 But never, before nor after that night,
 Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
 So harsh. He Journeyed, forever Joyless,
 Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
 Tore its iron fasteners with a touch
 And rushed angrily over the threshold.
 He strode quickly across the inlaid
 Floor, snarling and fierce: his eyes
 Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome
 Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall

Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
 With rows of young soldier resting together.
 And his heart laughed, he relished the sight, 250
 Intended to tear the life from those bodies
 By mourning; the monster's mind was hot
 With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
 Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
 Grendel to gnaw the broken bones 255
 Of his last human supper. Human
 Eyes were watching his evil steps,
 Waiting to see his swift hard claws.
 Grendel snatched at the first Geat
 He came to, ripped him apart, cut 260
 His body to bits with powerful jaws,
 Drank the blood from his veins and bolted
 Him down, hands and feet; death
 And Grendel's great teeth came together,
 Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another 265
 Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
 Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
 - And was instantly seized himself, claws
 Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.
 That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime, 270
 Knew at once that nowhere on earth
 Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
 His mind was flooded with fear - but nothing
 Could take his talons and himself from that tight
 Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run 275
 From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:
 This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied.
 But Higlac's follower remembered his final
 Boast and, standing erect, stopped
 The monster's flight, fastened those claws 280
 In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel
 Closer. The infamous killer fought

For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
 Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
 Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Herot 285
 Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!
 The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed,
 And Danes shook with terror. Down
 The aisles the battle swept, angry
 And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully 290
 Built to withstand the blows the struggling
 Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls;
 Shaped and fastened with iron, inside
 And out, artfully worked, the building
 Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell 295
 To the floor, gold-covered boards grating
 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them.
 Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot
 To stand forever; only fire,
 They had planned, could shatter what such skill had put 300
 Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor
 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly
 The sounds changed, the Danes started
 In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible
 Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang . ' 305
 In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain
 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's
 Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms
 Of him who of all the men on earth
 Was the strongest.
 That mighty protector of men
 Meant to hold the monster till its life
 Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use
 To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's
 Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral
 Swords raised and ready, determined
 To protect their prince if they could. Their courage

Was great but all wasted: they could hack at Grendel
 From every side, trying to open
 A path for his evil soul, but their points
 Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron 320
 Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained demon
 Had bewitched all men's weapons, laid spells
 That blunted every mortal man's blade.
 And yet his time had come, his days
 Were over, his death near, down
 To hell he would go swept groaning and helpless
 To the waiting hands of still worse friends.
 Now he discovered- once the afflictor
 Of men, to memtor of their days- what it meant
 To feud with Almighty God: Grendel
 Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
 Bounded fast, Higlac's brave followers tearing at
 His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
 But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
 And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
 Snapped, muscle and bone split
 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
 Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped,
 But wounded as he was could flee to his den,
 His miserable hoe at the bottom of the marsh,
 Only to die, to wait for the end
 Of all his days. And after that bloody
 Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
 He who had come to them from across the sea
 Bold and strong minded, had driven affliction
 Off, purged Herot clean. He was happy,
 Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
 Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them; Beowulf,
 A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
 Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
 Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people

By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
 The victory, for the proof, hanging high
 From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was the monster's
 Arm claw and shoulder and all.

And then, in the morning, crowds surrounded
 Herot, warriors coming to that hall
 From faraway lands, princes and leaders
 Of men hurrying to behold the monster's
 Great staggering tracks. They gaped with no sense
 Of sorrow, felt no regret for his suffering
 Went tracing his bloody footprints, his beaten
 And lonely flight, to the edge of the lake
 Where he'd dragged his corpselike way, doomed
 And already weary of his vanishing life.
 The water was bloody, steaming and boiling
 In horrible pounding waves, heat
 Sucked from his magic veins; but the swirling
 Surf had covered his death, hidden
 Deep in murky darkness his miserable
 End as hell opened to receive him.

Then old and young rejoice, turned back
 From that happy pilgrimage, mounted their hardhooved
 Horses, high-spirited stallions, and rode them
 Slowly toward Herot again, retelling
 Beowulf's bravery as they jogged along.
 And over and over they swore that nowhere
 On earth or under the spreading sky
 Or between the seas, neither south nor north,
 Was there a warrior worthier to rule over men.
 (But no one meant Beowulf's praise to belittle
 Hrothgar, their kind and gracious king)

2. EARLY MEDIEVAL POETRY

“The General Prologue” (*THE CANTERBURY TALES*)

By Geoffrey Chaucer

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root, and all
The veins are bathed in liquor of such power
As brings about the engendering of the flower,
When also Zephyrus with his sweet breath
Exhales an air in every grove and heath
Upon the tender shoots, and the young sun
His half-course in the sign of the Ram has run,
And the small fowl are making melody
That sleep away the night with open eye 10
(So nature pricks them and their heart engages)
Then people long to go on pilgrimages
And palmers long to seek the stranger strands
Of far-off saints, hallowed in sundry lands,
And specially, from every shire's end
In England, down to Canterbury they wend
To seek the holy blissful martyr, quick
To give hi help to them when they were sick.
It happened in that season that one day
In Southwark, at The Tabard, as I lay 20
Ready to go on pilgrimage and start
For Canterbury, most devout at heart,
At night there came into that hostelry
Some nine and twenty in a company
Of sundry folk happening then to fall
In fellowship, and they were pilgrims all
That towards Canterbury meant to ride.

The rooms and stables of the inn were wide;
They made us easy, all was of the best.
And shortly, when the sun had gone to rest, 30
By speaking to them all upon the trip
I soon was one of them in fellowship
And promised to rise early and take the way
To Canterbury, as you heard me say.
But none the less, while I have time and space,
Before my story takes a further pace,
It seems a reasonable thing to say
What their condition was, the full array
Of each of them, as it appeared to me
According to profession and degree, 40
And what apparel they were riding in;
And at a Knight I therefore will begin.
There was a Knight, a most distinguished man,
Who from the day on which he first began
To ride abroad had followed chivalry,
Truth, honour, generousness and courtesy.
He had done nobly in his sovereign's war
And ridden into battle, no man more,
As well in christian as in heathen places,
And ever honoured for his noble graces. 50
When we took Alexandria, he was there.
He often sat at table in the chair
Of honour, above all nations, when in Prussia.
In Lithuania, he had ridden, and Russia,
No christian man so often, of his rank.
When, in Granada, Algeehras sank
Under assault, he had been there, and in
North Africa, raiding Benamarin;
In Anatolia he had been as well
And fought when Ayas and Attalia fell, 60
For all along the Mediterranean coast
He had embarked with many a noble host.

In fifteen mortal battles he had been
 And jousted for our faith, at Tramissene
 Thrice in the lists, and always killed his man.
 This same distinguished knight had led the van
 Once with the Bey of Balat, doing work
 For him against another heathen Turk;
 He was of sovereign value in all eyes.
 And though so much distinguished, he was wise
 And in his bearing modest as a maid.
 He never yet a boorish thing had said
 In all his life to any, come what might;
 He was a true, a perfect gentle-knight.
 Speaking of his equipment, he possessed
 Fine horses, but he was not gaily dressed.
 He wore a fustian tunic stained and dark
 With smudges where his armour had left mark,
 Just home from service, he had joined our ranks
 To do his pilgrimage and render thanks. 80
 He had his son with him, a fine young Squire,
 A lover and cadet, a lad of fire
 With locks of curly as if they had been pressed.
 He was some twenty years of age, I guessed.
 In stature he was of a moderate length.
 With wonderful agility and strength.
 He'd seen some service with the cavalry
 In Flanders and Artois and Picardy
 And had done valiantly in little space
 Of time, in hope to win his lady's grace. 90
 He was embroidered like a meadow bright
 And full of freshest flowers, red and white.
 Singing he was, or fluting all the day;
 He was as fresh as is the month of May.
 Short was his gown, the sleeves were long and wide;
 He knew the way to sit a horse and ride.
 Knew how to joust and dance, to draw and write.

He loved so hotly that till dawn grew pale
 He slept as little as a nightingale. 100
 Courteous he was, lowly and serviceable,
 And carved to serve his father at the table.
 There was a Yeoman with him at his side,
 No other servant; so he chose to ride.
 This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green,
 And peacock-feathered arrows, bright and keen
 And neatly sheathed, hung at his belt the while
 For he could dress his gear in yeoman style,.
 His arrows never drooped their feathers low —
 And in his hand he bore a mighty bow 110
 His head was like a nut, his face was brown
 He knew the whole of woodcraft up and down.
 A saucy brace was on his arm to ward
 It from the bowstring, and a shield and sword
 Hung at one side, and at the other slipped
 A jaunty dirk, spear-sharp and well-equipped.
 A medal of St Christopher he wore
 Of shining silver on his breast, and bore
 A hunting-horn, well slung and burnished clean,
 That dangled from bararick of bright green. 120
 He was a proper forester I guess.
 There also was a Nun, a Prioress.
 Her way of smiling very simple and coy.
 Her greatest oath was only 'By St Loy!'
 And she was known as Madam Eglantyne.
 And well she sang a service, with a fine
 Intoning through her nose, as was most seemly,
 And she spoke daintily in French, extremely,
 After the school of Stratford-atte-Bowe;
 French in the Paris style she did not know. 130
 At meat her manners were well taught withal;
 No morsel from her lips did she let fall,
 Nor dipped her fingers in the sauce too deep;

But she could carry a morsel up and keep
 The smallest drop from falling on her breast.
 For courti4iness she had a special zest,
 And she would wipe her upper lip so clean
 That not a trace of grease was to be seen
 Upon the cup when she had drunk; to eat,
 She reached a hand sedately for the meat. 140
 She certainly was very entertaining,
 Pleasant and friendly in her ways, and straining
 To counterfeit a courtly kind of grace,
 A stately bearing fitting to her place,
 And to seem dignified in all her dealings.
 As for her sympathies and tender feelings,
 She was so charitably solicitous
 She used to weep if she but saw a mouse
 Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bleeding.
 And she had little dogs she would be feeding 150
 With roasted flesh, or milk, or fine white bread.
 And bitterly she wept if one were dead
 Or song one took a stick and made it smart;
 She was all sentiment and tender heart.
 Her veil was gathered in a seemly way,
 Her nose was elegant, her eyes glass-grey;
 Her mouth was very small, but soft and red,
 Her forehead, certainly, was fair of spread,
 Almost a span across the brows, I own;
 She was indeed by no means undergrown. 160
 Her cloak, I noticed, had a graceful charm.
 She wore a coral tirnket on her arm,
 A set of beads, the gaudies tricked in green,
 Whence hung a golden brooch of brightest sheen
 On which there first was graven a crowned A,
 And lower, *A mor vincit omnia*.
 Another Nun, the chaplain at her cell,
 Was riding with her, and three Priests as well.

A Monk there was, one of the finest sort
 Who rode the country; hunting was his sport. 170
 A manly man, to be an Abbot able;
 Many a dainty horse he had in stable.
 His bridle, when he rode, a man might hear
 Jingling in a whistling wind as clear,
 Aye, and as loud as does the chapel bell
 Where my lord Monk was Prior of the cell.
 The Rule of good St Benet or St Maur:
 As old and strict he tended to ignore;
 He let go by the things of yesterday
 And took the modern world's more spacious way, 180
 He did not rate that text at a plucked hen
 Which says that hunters are not holy men
 And that a monk uncloistered-is a mere
 Fish out of water, flapping on the pier,
 That is to say a monk out of his cloister.
 That was a text he held not worth an oyster;
 And I agreed and said his views were sound;
 Was he to study till his head went round
 Poring over books in cloisters? Must he toil
 As Austin bade and till the very soil? 190
 Was he to leave the world upøn the shelf?
 Let Austin have his labour to. Himself
 This Monk was therefore a-good man to horse;
 Greyhounds he had, as swift as birds, to course.
 Hunting a hare or riding at a force
 Was all his fun, he spared for no expense.
 I saw his sleeves were garnished at the hand
 With fine grey fur, the finest in the land,
 And on his hood, to fasten it at his chin
 He had a wrought-gold cunningly fashioned pin; 200
 Into a lover's knot it seemed to pass.
 His head was bald and shone like looking-glass;
 So did .his face, as if it had been greased.

He was a fat and personable priest;
 His prominent eyeballs never seemed to settle.
 They glittered like the flames beneath a kettle;
 Supple his boots, his horse in fine condition
 He was a prelate fit for exhibition,
 He was not pale like a tormented soul. -
 He liked a fat swan best, and roasted' whole.
 His palfrey was as brown as is a berry. 210
 There was a Friar) a wanton one and merry,
 A Limiter, a very festive fellow.
 In all Four Orders there was none so mellow
 So glib with gallant phrase and well-turned speech.
 He'd fixed up many a marriage, giving each
 Of his young women what he could afford her.
 He was a noble pillar to his Order.
 Highly beloved and intimate was he
 With County folk within his boundary, 220
 And city dames of honour and possessions;
 For he was qualified to hear confessions,
 Or so he said, with more than priestly scope
 He had a special license from the Pope.
 Sweetly he heard his penitents at shrift
 With pleasant absolution, for a gift.
 He was an easy man in penance-giving
 Where he could hope to make a decent living;
 It's a sure sign whenever gifts are given
 'Jo a poor Order that a man's well, shriven, 230
 And should be give enough he knew in verity
 The penitent repented in sincerity.
 ior many a fellow is so hard of heart
 He cannot weep, for all his inward smart.
 Therefore instead of weeping and of prayer
 One should give silver for a poor Friar's care.
 He kept his tippet stuffed with pins for curls,
 And pocket-knives, to give to pretty girls.'

And certainly his voice was gay and sturdy,
 For he sang well and played the hurdy-gurdy. 240
 At sing-songs he was champion of the hour.
 His neck was whiter than a lily.flower
 But strong enough to butt a bruiser down.
 He knew the taverns well in every town
 And every innkeeper and barmaid too
 Better than lepers, beggars and that crew,
 For in so eminent a man as he
 It was not fitting with the dignity
 Of his position, dealing with a scum
 Of wretched lepers; nothing good can come 250
 Of dealings with the slum-and gutter dwellers
 But only with the rich and victual-sellers.
 But anywhere a profit might accrue
 Courteous he was and lowly of service too.
 Natural gifts like his were hard to match.
 'He was the 'finest beggar of his batch,
 and, for his begging-district, payed a rent;
 His brethren did no poaching where he went.
 For though a widow mightn't have a shoe,
 So pleasant was his holy how-d'yc-do 260
 He got his farthing from her just the same
 Before he left, and so his income came
 To more than he laid out. And how he romped,
 Just like a puppy! He was ever prompt
 To arbitrate disputes on settling days
 (For a small fee) in many helpful ways,
 Not then appearing as your cloistered scholar
 With threadbare habit hardly worth a dollar,
 But much more like a Doctor or a Pope.
 Of double-worsted was the semi-cope 270
 Upon his shoulders, and the swelling fold
 About him, like a bell about its mould
 When it is casting, rounded out his dress.

He lisped a little out of wantonness
 To make his English sweet upon his tongue.
 When he had played his harp, or having sung,
 This eyes would twinkle in his head as bright
 As any star upon a frosty night.
 This worthy's name was Hubert, it appeared.
 There was a Merchant with a forking beard 280
 And motley dress; high on his horse he sat,
 Upon his head a Flemish beaver hat.
 And oz his feet daintily buckled boots.
 He told of his opinions and pursuits
 In solemn tones, and how he never lost..
 The sea should be kept free at any cost
 (He thought) upon the Harwich-Holland range,
 He was expert at currency exchange.
 This estimable Merchant so had set
 His wits to work, none knew he was in debt, 290
 He was so stately in negotiation,
 Loan, bargain and commercial obligation.
 He was an excellent fellow all the same;
 To tell the truth I do not know his name.
 An *Oxford Cleric*, still a student though,
 One who had taken logic long ago,
 Was there; his horse was thinner than a rake,
 And he was not too fat, I undertake,
 But had a hollow look, a sober stare;
 The thread upon his overcoat was bare.
 He had found no preferment in the church 300
 And he was too unworldly to make search
 For secular employment. By his bed
 He preferred having twenty books in red
 And black, of Aristotle's philosophy.
 To having fine clothes, fiddle or psalte.ry.
 Though a philosopher, as I have told,
 He had not found the stone for making gold

Whatever money from his friends he took
 He spent on learning or another book 310
 And prayed for them most earnestly, returning
 Thanks to them thus for paying for his learning.
 His only care was study, and indeed
 He never spoke a word more than was need,
 Formal at that, respectful in the extreme,
 Short, to the point, and lofty in his theme.
 The thought of moral virtue filled his speech
 And he would gladly learn, and gladly teach.
 A *Serjant at the Law* who paid his calls, 320
 Wary and wide, for clients at St Paul's
 There also was, of noted excellence.
 Discreet he was, a man to reverence,
 Or so he seemed, his sayings were so wise.
 He often had been Justice of Assize
 By letters patent, and in full commission.
 His fame and learning and his high position
 Had won him many a robe and many a fee.
 There was no such conveyancer as he;
 All was fee-simple to his strong digestion,
 Not one conveyance could be called in question. 330
 Nowhere there was so busy a man as he;
 But was less busy than he seemed to be..
 He knew of every judgement, case and crime
 Recorded, ever since King William's time.
 He could dictate defences or draft deeds;
 No one could pinch a comma from his screeds,
 And he knew every statute off by rote.
 He wore a homely parti-coloured coat
 Girt with a silken belt of pin-stripe stuff;
 Of his appearance I have said enough. 340
 There was a Franklin with him, it appeared;
 White as a daisy-petal was his beard.
 A sanguine man, high-coloured and benign.

He loved a morning sop of cake in wine.
 He lived for pleasure and had always done,
 For he was Epicurus' very son,
 In whose opinion sensual delight
 Was the one true felicity in sight.
 As noted as St. Julian was for bounty
 He made his household free to all the County. 350
 His bread, his ale were finest of the fine
 And no one had a better stock of win
 His house was never short of bake-meat pies,
 Of fish and flesh, and these in such supplies
 It positively snowed with meat and drink
 And all the dainties that a man could think.
 According to the seasons of the year
 Changes of dish were ordered to appear.
 He kept fat partridges in coops, beyond,
 Many a bream and pike were in his pond. 360
 Woe to the cook whose sauces had no sting
 Or who was unprepared in anything!
 And in his hail a table stood arrayed
 And ready all day long, with places laid.
 As Justice at the Sessions none stood higher;
 He often had been Member for the Shire.
 A dagger and a little purse of silk
 Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.
 As Sheriff he checked audit, every entry.
 He was a model among landed gentry. 370
 A Haberdasher, a Dyer, a Carpenter,
 A Weaver and a Carpet-maker were
 Among our ranks, all in the livery
 Of one impressive guild-fraternity.
 They were so trim and fresh their gear would pass
 For new. Their knives were not tricked out with brass
 But wrought with purest silver, which avouches
 A like display on girdles and on pouches.

Each seemed a worthy burgess, fit to grace
 A guild-hall with a seat upon the dais. 380
 Their wisdom would have justified a plan
 To make each one of them an alderman;
 They had the capital and revenue,
 Besides their wives declared it was their due.
 And if they did not think so, then they ought;
 To be called 'Madam' is a glorious thought,
 And so is going to church and being seen
 Having your mantle carried like a queen.
 They had a Cook with them who stood alone
 For boiling chicken with a marrow-bone, 390
 Sharp flavouring-powder and a spice for savour.
 He could distinguish London ale by flavour,
 And he could roast and seethe and broil and fry,
 Make good thick soup and bake a tasty pie.
 But what a pity — so it seemed to me,
 That he should have an ulcer on his knee.
 As for blancmange, he made it with the best.
 There was a Skipper hailing from far west;
 He came from Dartmouth, so I understood.
 He rode a farmer's horse as best he could, 400
 In a woolen gown that reached his knee.
 A dagger on a lanyard falling free
 Hung from his neck under his arm and down.
 The summer heat had tanned his colour brown,
 And certainly he was an excellent fellow.
 Many a draught of vintage, red and yellow,
 He'd drawn at Bordeaux, while the trader snored.
 The nicer rules of conscience he ignored.
 If, when he fought, the enemy vessel sank,
 He sent his prisoners home; they walked the plank. 410
 As for his skill in reckoning his tides,
 Currents and many another risk besides,
 Moons, harbours, pilots, he had such dispatch

That none from Hull to Carthage was his match.
 Hardy he was, prudent in undertaking;
 His beard in many a tempest had its shaking,
 and he knew all the havens as they were
 From Gottland to the Cape of Finisterre,
 And every creek in Brittany and Spain;
 The barge he owned was called *The Maudelayne*. 420
 A Doctor too emerged as we proceeded;
 No one alive could talk as well as he did
 On points of medicine and of surgery,
 For, being grounded in astronomy,
 He watched his patient's favourable star
 And, by his Natural Magic, knew what are
 The lucky hours and planetary degrees
 For making charms and magic effigies.
 The cause of every malady you'd got
 He knew, and whether dry, cold, moist or hot; 430
 He knew their seat, their humour and condition.
 He was a perfect practising physician.
 These causes being known for what they were,
 He gave the man his medicine then and there.
 All his apothecaries in a tribe
 Were ready with the drugs he would prescribe,
 And each made money from the other's guile;
 They had been friendly for a goodish while.
 He was well-versed in Esculapius too
 And what Hippocrates and Rufus knew 440
 And Dioscorides, now dead and gone,
 Galefi and Rhazes, Hali, Serapiori,
 Averroes, Avicenna, Constantine,
 Scotch Bernard, John of Gaddesden, Gilbertine.
 In his own diet he observed some measure.;
 There were no superfluities for pleasure,
 Only digestives, nutritives and such
 He did not read the Bible very much.

In blood-red garments, slashed with blush-grey
 And lined with taffeta, he rode his way; 450
 Yet he was rather close as to expences
 And kept the gold he won in pestilences.
 Gold stimulates the heart, or so we're told.
 He therefore had a special love of gold.
 A worthy woman from beside *Bath city*
 Was with us, somewhat deaf., which was a pity
 In making cloth she showed so great a bent
 She bettered those of Ypres and of Ghent.
 In all the parish not a dame dared stir
 Towards the altar steps in front of her, 460
 And if indeed they did, so wrath was she.
 As to be quite put out of charity.
 Her kerchiefs were of finely woven ground;
 I dared have sworn they weighed a good. ten pound,
 The ones she wore on Sunday, on her head.
 Her hose were of the finest scarlet red
 And gartered tight; her shoes were soft and new.
 Bold was her face, handsome, and red in hue.
 A worthy woman all her life, what's more
 She'd had five husbands, all at the church door, 470
 Apart from other company in youth;
 No need just now to speak of that, forsooth.
 And she had thrice been to Jerusalem,
 Seen many strange rivers and passed over them;
 She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne,
 St James of Compostella and Cologne,
 And she was skilled in wandering by the way.
 She had gap-teeth, set widely, truth to say.
 Easily on an ambling horse she sat
 Well wimpled up, and on her head a hat 480
 As broad as is a buckler or a shield;
 She had a flowing mantle that concealed
 Large hips, her heels spurred sharply under that.

In company she liked to laugh and chat
 And knew the remedies for love's mischances,
 An art in which she knew the oldest dances.
 A holy-minded man of good renown
 There was, and poor, the Parson to a town,
 Yet he was rich in holy thought and work. 490
 He also was a learned man, a clerk,
 Who truly knew Christ's gospel and would preach it
 Devoutly to parishioners, and teach it.
 Benign and wonderfully diligent,
 And patient when adversity was sent
 (For so he proved in great adversity)
 He much disliked extorting tithe or fee,
 Nay rather he preferred beyond a doubt
 Giving to poor parishoners round about
 From his .own goods and Easter offerings.
 He found sufficiency in little things 500
 Wide was his parish, with houses far asunder,
 Yet he neglected not in rain or thunder,
 In sickness or in grief, to pay a call
 On the remotest, whether great or small,
 Upon his feet, and in his hand a stave.
 This noble example to his sheep he gave,
 First following the word before he taught it,
 And it was from the gospel he had caught it.
 This little proverb he would add thereto
 That if gold rust, what then will iron do? 510
 For if a priest be foul in whom we trust
 No wonder that a common man should rust;
 And shame it's to see — let priests take stock —
 A shitten shepherd and a snowy flock
 The true example that a priest should give
 Is one of cleanness, how the sheep should live.
 He did not set his benefice to hire
 And leave his sheep encumbered in the mire

Or run to London to earn easy bread
 By singing masses for the wealthy dead, 520
 Or fmd some Brotherhood and get enrolled.
 He stayed at home and watched over his fold
 So that no wolf should make the sheep miscarry.
 He was a shepherd and no mercenary.
 Holy and virtuous he was, he then
 Never contemptuous of sinful men,
 Never disdainful, never too proud or fine,
 But was discreet in teaching and benign.
 His business was to show a fair behaviour
 And draw men thus to Heaven and their Saviour, 530
 Unless indeed a man were obstinate;
 And such, whether of high or low estate,
 He put to sharp rebuke to say the least.
 I think there never was a better priest.
 He sought no pomp or glory in his dealings,
 No scrupulosity had spiced his feelings.
 Christ and His Twelve Apostles and their lore
 He taught, but followed it himself before.
 There was a Plowman with him there, his brother.
 Many a load of dung one time or other 540
 He must have carted through the morning dew.
 He was an honest worker, good and true,
 Living in peace and perfect charity,
 And, as the gospel bade him, so did he,
 Loving God. best with all his heart and mind
 And then hi neighbour as himself, repined
 At no misfortune, slacked for no content,
 For steadily about his work he went
 To thrash his corn, to dig or to manure
 Or make a ditch; and he would help the poor 550
 For love of Christ and never take a penny
 If he could help it, and, as prompt as any,
 He paid his tithes in full when they were due

On what he owned, and on his earnings too.
 He wore a tabard smock and rode a mare.
 There was a *Reeve*, also a *Miller*, there,
 A College *Manciple* from the Inns of Court,
 A papal *Pardoner* and, in close. consort,
 A Church-Court *Summoner*, riding at a trot,
 And finally myself—that was the lot. 560
 I think there never was a better priest.
 The *Miller* was a chap of sixteen stone,
 A great stout fellow big in brawn and bone.
 He did well out of them,; for he could go
 And win the ram at any wrestling show.
 Broad, knotty and short-shouldered, he would boast
 He could heave any door off hinge and post,
 Or take a run and break it with his head.
 His beard, like any sow or fox, was red
 And broad as well, as though it were a spade;
 And, at its very tip, his nose displayed 570
 A wart on which there stood a tuft of hair
 Red as. the bristles in an old sow's ear.
 His nostrils were as black as they were wide.
 He had a sword and buckler at his side,
 His mighty mouth was like a furnace door.
 A wrangler and buffoon, he had a store
 Of tavern stories, filthy in the main.
 His was a master-hand at stealing grain.
 He felt it with his thumb and thus he knew
 Its quality and took three times his due — 580
 A thumb of gold, by God, to gauge an oat!
 He wore a hood of blue and a white coat.
 He liked to play his bagpipes up and down
 And that was how he brought us out of town.
 The *Manciple* came from the Inner Temple;
 All caterers might follow his example
 In buying victuals; he was never rash

Whether he bought on credit or paid cash.
 He used to watch the market most precisely
 And got in first, and so he did quite nicely. 590
 Now isn't it a marvel of God's grace
 That an illiterate fellow can outpace
 The wisdom of a heap of learned men?
 His masters — he had more than thirty then —
 All versed in the abstrusest legal knowledge,
 Could have produced a dozen from their College
 Fit to be stewards in land and rents and game
 To any Peer in England you could name,
 And show him how to live on what he had
 Debt-free (unless of course the Peer were mad) 600
 Or be as frugal as he might desire,
 And they were fit to help about the Shire
 In any legal case there was to try;
 And yet this *Manciple* could wipe their eye.
 The *Reeve*- was old and choleric and thin;
 His beared was shaven closely to the skin,
 His shorn hair came abruptly to a stop
 Above his ears, and he was docked on top
 Just like a priest in front; his legs were lean,
 Like sticks they were, no calf was to be seen.. 610
 He kept his bins and garners very trim;
 No auditor could gain a point on him.
 And he could judge by watching drought and rain
 The yield he might expect from seed and grain.
 His master's sheep, his animals and hens,
 Pigs, horses, dairies, stores and cattle-pens
 Were wholly trusted to his government.
 And he was under contract to present
 The accounts, right from his master's earliest years.
 No one had ever caught him in arrears.
 No bailiff, serf or herdsman dared to kick, 620
 He knew their dodges, knew their every trick;

Feared like the plague he was, by those beneath.
 He had a lovely dwelling on a heath,
 Shadowed in green by tree above the sward.
 A better hand at bargains than his lord,
 He had grown rich and had a store of treasure
 Well tucked away, yet out it came to pleasure
 His lord with subtle loans or gifts of goods,
 To earn his thanks and even cats and hoods. 630
 When young he'd learnt a useful trade and still
 He was a carpenter of first-rate skill.
 The stallion-cob he rode at a slow trot
 Was dapple-grey and bore the name of Scot
 He wore an overcoat of bluish shade
 And rather long; he had a rusty blade
 Slung at his side. He came, as I heard tell,
 From Norfolk, near a place called Baldeswell.
 His coat was tucked under his belt and splayed.
 He rode. the hindmost of our cavalcade. 640
 There was aummon⁷ with us in the place
 Who had a fire-red cherubmish fact,
 For he had carbuncles. His eyes were narrow,
 He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow.
 Black, scabby brows he had, and a thin beard.
 Children were afraid when he appeared.
 No quicksilver, lead ointments, tartar creams,
 Boracic, no, nor brimstone, so it seems,
 Could make a salve that had the power to bite,
 Clean up or cure his welks of knobby white 650
 Or purge the pimples sitting on his cheeks.
 Garlic he loved, and onions too, and leeks,
 And drinking strong wine till all was hazy.
 Then he would shout and jabber as if crazy,
 And wouldn't speak a word except in Latin
 When he was drunk, such tags as he was pat in;
 He only had a few, say two or three,

That he had mugged up out of some decree;
 No wonder, for he heard them every day.
 And, as you know, a man can teach a jay 660
 To call out 'Walter' better than the Pope.
 But had you tried to test his wits and grope
 For more, you'd have found nothing in the bag.
 Then '*Questio quid juris*' was his tag.
 He was a gentle varlet and a kind one,
 No better fellow if you went to find one.
 He would allow — just for a quart of wine —
 Any good lad to keep a concubine
 A twelvemonth and dispense it altogether!
 Yet he could pluck a finch to leave no feather: 670
 And if he found some rascal with a maid
 He would instruct him not to be afraid
 In such a case of the Archdeacon's curse
 (Unless the rascal's soul were in his purse)
 For in his purse the punishment should be.
 'Purse is the good Archdeacon's Hell,' said he
 But well I know he lied in what he said;
 A curse should put a guilty man in dread,
 For curses kill, as shriving brings, salvation.
 We should beware of excommunication. 680
 Thus, as he pleased, the man could bring duress
 On any young fellow in the diocese.
 He knew their secrets, the did what he said.
 He wore a garland set upon his head
 Large as the holly-bush upon a stake
 Outside an ale-house, and he had a cake,
 A round one, which it was his joke to wield
 As if it were intended for a shield. 690
 He and a gentle Pardoner rode together,
 A bird from Charing Cross of the same feather.
 Just back from visiting the Court of Rome.
 He loudly sang 'Come hither, love, come home!'

The Summoner sang deep seconds to this song,
 No trumpet ever sounded half so strong.
 This Pardoner had hair as yellow as wax,
 Hanging down smoothly like a hank of flax.
 In driblets fell his locks behind his head
 Down to his shoulders which they overspread; 700
 Thinly they fell, like rat-tails, one by one.
 He wore no hood upon his head, for fun;
 The hood inside his wallet had been stowed,
 He aimed at tiding in the latest mode;
 But for a little cap his head was bare
 And he bad bulging eye-balls, like a hare.
 He'd sewed a holy relic on his cap;
 His wallet lay before him on his lap,
 Brimful of pardons come from Rome all hot.
 He had the same small voice a goat has got. 710
 His chin no beared had harboured, nor would harbour
 Smo other than ever chin was left by barber.
 I judge he was a gelding, or a mare.
 As to his trade, from Berwick down to Ware
 There was no pardoner of equal grace,
 For in his trunk he had a pillow-case
 Which he asserted was Our Lady's veil.
 He said he had a gobbet of the sail
 Saint Peter had the time when he made bold
 To walk the waves, till Jesus Christ took hold. 720
 He had across of metal set with stones
 And, in a glass, a rubble of pigs' bones.
 And with these relics, any time he found
 Song poor up-country parson to astound,
 On one short day, in money down, he drew
 More than the parson in a month or two,
 And by his flatteries and-prevarication
 Made monkeys of the priest and congregation.
 But still to do him justice first and last

In church he was a noble ecclesiast. 730
 How well he read a lesson or told a story!
 But best of all he sang an Offertory,
 For well he knew that when that song was sung
 He'd have to preach and tune his honey-tongue
 And (well he could) win silver from the crowd.
 That's why he sang so merrily and loud.
 Now I have told you shortly, in a clause,
 The rank, the array, the number and the cause
 Of our assembly in this company 740
 In Southwark, at that high-class hostelry
 Known as The Tabard, close beside The Bell.
 And now the time has come for me to tell
 How we behaved that evening; I'll begin
 After we had alighted at the Inn,
 Then I'll report our journey, stage by stage,
 All the remainder of our pilgrimage.
 But first I beg of you, in courtesy,
 Not to condemn me as unmannerly
 If I speak plainly and with no concealings
 And give account of all their words and dealings, 750
 Using their very phrases as they fell.
 For certainly, as you. all know so well.
 He who repeats a tale after a man
 Is bound to say, as nearly as he can,
 Each single word, if he remembers it,
 However rudely spoken or unfit,
 Or else the tale he tells will be untrue,
 The things invented and the phrases new.
 He may not flinch although it were his brother.
 If he says one word he must say the other. 760
 And Christ Himself spoke broad in Holy Writ.
 And as you knew there's nothing there unfit,
 And Plato says, for those with power to read,
 'The word should be as cousin to the deed.'

Further I beg you to forgive it me
 If I neglect the order and degree
 And what is due to rank in what I've planned.
 I'm short of wit as you will understand.
 Our Host gave us great welcome; everyone
 Was given a place and supper was begun 770
 He served the finest victuals you could think,
 The wine was strong and we were glad to drink.
 A very striking man our Host withal,
 And fit to be a marshall in a hail.
 His eyes were bright, his girth a little wide;
 There is no finer burgess in Cheapside.
 Bold in his speech yet wise and full of tact,
 There was no manly attribute he lacked,
 What's more he was a merry-hearted man.
 After our meal he jokingly began 780
 To talk of sport and, among other things
 After we'd settled up our reckonings,
 He said as follows: 'Truly, gentlemen
 You're very welcome and I can't think when
 — Upon my word I'm telling you no lie —
 I've seen a gathering here that looked so spry,
 No, not this year, as in this tavern now,
 I'd think you up some fun if I know how,
 And, as it happens, a though has just occurred
 And it will cost you nothing, on my word. 790
 You'er off to Canterbury — well, God speed!
 Blessed St Thomas answer to your need!
 And I don't doubt, before the journey's done
 You mean to while the time iii tales and fun.
 Indeed, there's little pleasure for your bones
 Riding along and all as dumb as stones.
 So let me then propose for your enjoyment,
 Just as I said, a suitable employment.
 And if my notion suits and you agree

And promise to submit yourselves to me 800
 Playing your parts exactly as I say
 Tomorrow as you ride along the way,
 Then by my father's soul (and he is dead)
 If you don't like it you can have my head!
 Hold up your hands, and not another word.'
 Well, our consent of course was not deferred,
 It seemed not worth a serious debate;
 We all agreed to it at any rate
 And bade him issue what commands he would.
 'My lords,' he said, 'now listen for your good, 810
 And please don't treat my notion with disdain.
 This is the point. I'll make it short and plain.
 Each one of you shall help to make things slip
 By telling two stories on the outward trip
 To Canterbury, that's what I intend,
 And, on the homeward way to journey's end
 Another two, tales from 'the days of old;
 And then the man whose story is best told,
 That is to say who gives the fullest measure
 Of good morality and general pleasure, 820
 He shall be given a supper, paid by all,
 Here in this tavern, in this very hail,
 When we come back again from Canterbury.
 And in the hope to keep you bright and merry
 I'll go along with you myself and ride
 All at my own expense and serve as guide.
 All at my own expense and serve as guide.
 I'll be the judge, and those who won't obey
 Shall pay for what we spend upon the way.
 Now if you all agree to what you've heard 830
 Tell me at once without another word,
 And I will make arrangements early for it.'
 Of course we all agreed, In fact we swore it
 Delightedly, and made entreaty too

That he should act as he proposed to do,
 Become our Governor in short, and be
 Judge of our tales and general referee,
 And set the supper at a certain price.
 We promised to be ruled by his advice
 Come high, come low; unanimously thus
 We set him up in judgement over us. 840
 More wine was fetched, the business being done;
 We drank it off and up went everyone
 To bed without a moment of delay.
 Early next morning at the spring of day
 Up rose our Host and roused us like a cock,
 Gathering us together in a flock,
 And off we rode at slightly faster pace
 Than walking to St Thomas' watering-place;
 And there our Host drew up, began to ease
 His horse, and said, 'Now, listen if you please, 850
 My lords! Remember what you promised me.
 If evensong and mattins will agree
 Let's see who shall be first to tell a tale.
 And as I hope to drink good wine and ale
 I'll be your judge. The rebel who disobeys,
 However much the journey costs, he pays.
 Now draw for cut and then we can depart;
 The man who draws the shortest cut shall start.
 My Lord the Knight,' he said, 'step up to me
 And draw your cut, for that is my decree. 860
 And conx you near, my lady Prioress.
 And you, Sir Cleric, drop your shame fashness,
 No studying flow! A hand from every man!'
 Immediately the draw for lots began
 And to tell shortly how the matter went.
 Whether by chance or fate or accident,
 The truth is this, the cut fell to the Knight,
 Which everybody greeted with delight.

And tell his tale he must, as reason was
 Because of our agreement and because 870
 He too had sworn. What more is there to say?
 For when the good man saw how matters lay,
 Being by wisdom and obedience driven
 To keep a promise he had freely given,
 He said, 'Since it's for me to start the game,
 Why, welcome be the cut in God's good name!
 Now let us ride, and listen to what I say.'
 And at the word we started on our way
 And in a cheerful style he then began
 At once to tell his tale, and thus it ran. 880

LATE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

THE BALLAD

“Sir Patrick Spence” - Anonymous

The king sits in Dunferline toune,
- Drinking the blude-reid wine:
‘O quhar will I get a guid sailor
To sail this schip of mine?’

Up and spak an eldern knight, **spoken, ancient right**
Sat at the King’s richt knee
“Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
That sails upon the see.”

The king has written a braid⁰ letter, **broad**
And signed it wi’his hand;
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.

The first line that sir Patrick red,
A loud lauch lauched he: **laugh**
The next line that Sir Patrick red,
The teir blinded his e’e. **tear/eye**

“O quha is this has don this deid **who/deed**
This ill deid don to me;
To send me out this time o’ the yeir, **year**
To sail upon the see?

‘Mak haste, mak haste, my mirry men all, **merry**
Our guid schip sails the morne.’
‘O say na sea, °my -master deir, **not so/dear**
For I feir a deadlier storrne.
“Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone **last evening**

Wi’ the auld moone in hir arme;
And I feir, I feir my deir master,
That we will come to harme.’

old

O our scots nobles were rich laith
To weet their cork-heeled shoon,
But lang owre a’ the play were played
Their hats they swarm aboon

**loath
wet/shoes
long, after
above**

O our Scots nobleswer richt laith
To weet their cork-heil’d schooner;
Bot lang owre a the. play. wer played,
Thair hats they swam aboone.
Olang, lang may thair ladies sit
Wi’ thair fars into thair hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Come sailing to the land.

**loath
wet
ere all**

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

**combs
own
Them/more**

Half owre, half owre to Aberdour
It’s iiftie fadom deip
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi’ the Scots lords at his feet,

**half-way over
deep
feet**

4. ELIZABETHAN PERIOD

SIR THOMAS WYATT

“And Wilt Thou Leave Me Thus?”

And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay, for shame
To save thee from the blame
Of all my grief and grame;
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath loved thee so long
In wealth and woe among?
And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath given thee my heart
Never for to depart,
Nother for pain nor smart;
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

And wilt thou leave me thus
And have no more pity
Of him that loveth thee?
Helas, thy cruelty!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say nay, say nay!

“I Find No Peace”

I find no peace and all my war is done;
I fear and hope, I burn and freeze like ice;
I fly above the wind, yet can I not arise,
And nought I have, and all the world I season;
That looseth nor locketh holdeth me in prison,
And holdeth, me not yet can I scape nowise;
Nor letteth me live nor die at my devise,
And yet of death it giveth none occasion.
Without eye I see, and without tongue I plain;
I desire to perish, and yet I ask health;
I love another, and thus I hate myself
I feed me in sorrow, and laugh in all my pain.
Likewise displeaseth me both death and life,
And my delight is causer of this strife.

From ms. 1913

“Farewell, Love”

Farewell, Love, and all thy laws forever,—
Thy baited hooks shall tangle me no more;
Senec and Plato call me from thy lore,
To perfect wealth my wit for to endeavour.
In blind error when I did persever,
Thy sharp repulse, that pricketh aye so sore,
Hath taught me to set in trifles no store
And scape forth since liberty is lever.
Therefore farewell—go trouble younger hearts,
And in me claim no more authority;
With idle youth go use thy prooerty,
And thereon spend thy many brittle darts.
For hitherto though I have lost all my time,
Me lusteth no longer rotten boughs to ctimb.

From ms. 1913

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

“To Sleep”

COME, Sleep, O Sleep, the certain knot of peace,
The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoners release,
The indifferent judge between the high and low;

With shield of proof shield me from out the press
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw:
O make in me those civil wars to cease;
I will good tribute pay, if thou do so

Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland and a weary head;
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me,
Livelier than elsewhere, Stella's image see.

PASTORAL POETRY -

CHRISTOPHER MALOWE

“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 mountain yields.

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

And I will make thee beds of roses
With 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.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

“Sonnet 18”

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 dimmed,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course
 untrimmed;
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.

“Sonnet 19”

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws,
And make the earth devour her own sweet brood;
Pluck the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws,
And burn the long-liv'd Phoenix in her blood.
Make glad and sorry seasons as thou fleet'st,
And do whate'er thou wilt, swift-footed Time,
To the wide world and all her fading sweets.
But I forbid thee one most heinous crime:
O, carve not with thy hours my love's fair brow,
Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen.
Him in thy course untainted do allow
For beauty's pattern to succeeding men.
Yet do thy worst, old Time; despite thy wrong
My love shall in my verse ever live young.

“Sonnet 66”

Tired with all these, for restful death I cry:
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed 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 miscalled 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.

5. METAPHYSICAL POETRY

JOHN DONNE

“Holy Sonnet XIV” (Batter My Heart)

Batter my heart, three-person'd God; for, you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise, and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurped town, to another due,
Labour to admit you, but oh, to no end,
Reason your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captured, and proves weak or untrue,
Yet dearly I love you, and would be loved fain,
But am bethrothed 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 called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so,
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me;
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee, much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art 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.

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”

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

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

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

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

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

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet

A breach, but an expansion
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

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

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

ANDREW MARVEL

“To His Coy Mistress”

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness. Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day
Thou by the Indian Ganges side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Hunter would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;

An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two-hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, Lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear
Times winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave s a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life;
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

GEORGE HERBERT

“Easter Wings”

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Through foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poor;
With thee
Oh, let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.
My tender age in sorrow did begin:
And still with sicknesses and shame
Thou didst so punish sin,
That I became
Most thin
With thee
Let me combine
And feel this day thy victory
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.

“Redemption”

HAVING been tenant long to a rich Lord,
Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,
And make a suit unto him, to afford
A new small-rented lease, and .cancel the old.
In heaven at his manor I him sought.
They told me there that he was lately gone
About some land, which he had dearly bought
Long since on earth, to take possession.
I straight returned, and knowing his great birth.
Sought him accordingly in great resorts:
In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts.
At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth
Of thieves and murderers: there I him espied,
Who straight, your suit is granted, said, and died.

6. THE PURITAN AGE

JOHN MILTON

Paradise Lost (Excerpt)

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death Into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, tilt one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos; or, If Sion bill
Delight thee more, and Shew's brook that flowed.
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Anian mount, while it pursues
Things un-attempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
I And justify the ways of God to men.
Say first-for Heaven hides nothing from thy view,

Nor the deep tract of Hell-say first what cause
Moved our grand Parents, in that happy state,
Favoured of Heaven so highly, to fall off
From theft Creator and transgress his will,
For one restraint, lords of the world besides?
Who first seduced them to that foul revolt?
The infernal Serpent; he it was whose guile,
Stirred up with envy and revenge, deceived
The mother of mankind, what time his pride
Had cast him out from Heaven, with nil
his host
Of rebel Angels, by whose aid aspiring
To set himself in glory above his peers,
He trusted to have equalled the Most High,
If he opposed, and with ambitious aim
Against the throne and monarchy of God
Raised impious war in Heaven and baffle proud,
With vain attempt. Him the Almighty Power
Hurled headlong flaming from the ethereal sky,
With hideous rain and combustion down
To bottomless perdition, there to dwell
In adamant chains and penal fire,
Who durst defy the Omnipotent to arms,
Nine times the space that measures day and night
To mortal men, he with his horrid crew
Lay vanquished, rolling in the fiery gulf,
Confounded, though immortal; but his doom
Reserved him to more wrath, for now the thought
Doth of lost happiness and lasting pain
Torments him: round he throws his baleful eyes,
That witnessed huge affliction and dismay,
Mixed with obdurate pride and steadfast hate;
At once, as far as angel's ken, he views
The dismal situation waste and wild;
A dungeon horrible, on all sides round,

As one great furnace flamed, yet from those flames
 No light but rather darkness visible
 Served only to discover sights of woe.
 Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace
 And rest can never dwell, hope never comes
 That comes to all, but torture without end
 Still urges, and a fiery deluge, fed
 With ever-burning sulphur unconsumed.
 Such place Eternal Justice had prepared
 For those rebeffious, here their prison ordained In utter
 darkness, and their portion set,
 As far removed from God and light of Heaven As from the
 centre thrice to the utmost pole.
 Oh, how unlike the place from whence they fell!
 There the companions of his fall, overwhelmed With floods
 and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire,
 He soon discerns, and, weltering by his side, One next
 himself In power, and next In crime,
 Long after known In Palestine, and named
 Bellizebub. To whom the Arch-Enemy,
 And thence In Heaven called Satan, with bold words
 Breaking the horrid silence, thus began:
 'If thou best he-but oh, how fallen! how changed
 From him who, in the happy realms of light,
 Clothed with transcendent brightness, didst outshine
 Myriads, though bright-if he whom mutual league,
 United thoughts and counsels, equal hope
 And hazard in the glorious enterprise,
 Joined with me once, now misery hath joined
 In equal ruin; into what pit thou see at
 Prom what height fallen: so much the stronger proved
 He with his thunder-and till then who knew
 The force of those dire arms? Yet not for those, Nor what the
 potent Victor in his rage
 Can else inflict, do I repent or change.

Though changed In outward lustre, that fixed mind,
 And high disdain from sense of injured merit,
 That with the Mightiest raised me to contend,
 And to the fierce contention brought along
 Innumerable force of Spirits armed
 That thirst dislike his reign, and, me preferring,
 His utmost power with adverse power opposed
 In dubious battle on the plains of Heaven,
 And shook his throne.
 What though the field be lost?
 All is not lost-the unconquerable will,
 And study of revenge, immortal hate,
 And courage never to submit or yield-
 And what is else not to be overcome.
 That glory never shall his wrath or might
 Extort from me. To bow and sue for grace
 With suppliant knee, and deify his power
 Who, from the terror of this arm, so late
 Doubted his empire-that were low Indeed;
 That were an ignominy and shame beneath
 This downfall; since by fate the strength of Gods
 And this empyreal substance cannot fail;
 Since, through experience of this great event.
 In arms not worse,
 In foresight much advanced,
 We may with more successful hope resolve
 To wage by force or guile eternal war
 Irreconcilable, to our grand Foe,
 Who now triumphs, and in the excess of joy
 Sole reigning holds the tyranny of Heaven.'

7. NEO-CLASSICAL POETRY TRADITION 18TH CENTURY (AUGUSTAN) AGE

JOHN DRYDEN

“Mac Flecknoe” (Excerpts)

All human things are subject to decay,
And when fate summons, monarchs must obey.
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augusts, young
Was called to empire, and had governed long:
In prose and verse, was owned, without dispute,
Through all the realms of Nonsense, absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace,
And blest with issue of a large increase;
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state;
And, pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried: Tis resolved, for nature pleads, that he
Should only rule, who most resembles me.
Sh--, alone, my perfect image bears,
Mature in dullness from his tender years:
Sh—alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirmed in fully stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning triake pretence,
But Sh--, never deviates into sense
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
Strike though, arid make a lucid interval;
But Sh—’s genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye,
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty;
Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain,

And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology.
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was but the prelude to that glorious day,
When thou on silver Thames did cut thy way,
With well-timed oars before the royal barge,
Swelled with the pride of thy celestial charge;
And big with hymn, commander of a host,
The like was ne’er in Epsom blankets tossed.
Methinks I see the new Anon sail, The lute still
trembling underneath thy nail.
At thy well-sharpened thumb from shore to shore
The treble squeaks for fear, the basses roar;
Echoes from Pissing Alley Sh—call,
And Sh—they resumed from Aston Hall.
About thy boat the little fishes throng,
As at the morning toast that floatalong.

“Vox Populi”

HE preachers to the crowd that power is lent,
But not conveyed, to kingly government;
That claims successive bear no binding force;
That Coronation Oaths are things of coin-se;
Maintains the multitude can never err,
And sets the people in the papal chair.
The reason’s obvious: interest never lips;
The most have still their interest in their eyes;
The power is always theirs, and power is ever wise.
Almighty Crowd, thou shortenest all dispute;
Power is thy essence, Wit they attribute!
Nor faith nor reason make thee at a stay, -
Thou leap’st o’er all eternal truths, in thy Pindaric way!
Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,

When Phocion and when Socrates were tried:
 As righteously they did those dooms repent;
 Still they were wise whatever may they went
 Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run,
 To kill the Father, and recall the Son..
 Some think the fools were most as times went then,
 But now the world's o'er stocked with prudent men.
 The common cry is even religion's test;
 The Turk's is, at Constantinople, best,
 Idols in India, Popery at Rome;
 And our own worship only true at home.
 And true but for the time; 'tis hard to know
 How long we please it shall continue so.
 This side today, and that tomorrow bums;
 So all are God a mighties in their turns.
 A tempting doctrine, plausible and new;
 What fools our fathers were, if this be true!

And the first clouds and mountains seem the last:
 But those attained, we tremble to survey
 The growing labour of the lengthened way,
 The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
 Hills peep o'er hills and Alps on Alps arise!

ALEXANDER POPE

“An Essay On Criticism” (Excerpts)

A little learning is a dangerous thing;
 Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:
 There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
 And drinking largely sobers us again.
 Fired at first sight with what the muse imparts,
 In fearless youth we tempt the heights of arts,
 While from the bounded level of our mind,
 Short views we take, nor see the lengths behind,
 But more advanced, behold with strange surprise
 New, distant scenes of endless science rise!
 So pleased at first, the towering Alps we try,
 Mount o'er the vales, and seem to tread the sky;
 The eternal snows appear already past,

8. LATER 18TH CENTURY PERIOD

THOMAS GRAY

“Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard”

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

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

Save that form yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain
Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree’s shade,
Where heave the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock’s shrill clarion or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

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

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

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

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

Nor you, ye proud impute to these the fault,
If memory o’er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long drawn aisle and fretted vault,
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
Can Honour’s voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery sooth the dull cold ear of Death?

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

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne’er unroll;
Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

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

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

The applause of listening senates of command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes,

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

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

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
Along the cool sequestered value of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

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

Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply;
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey,
This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of the unhonoured dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquired thy fate,

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

There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would be stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.
'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or craze with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

'One morn I missed him on the customed hill,

Along the heath and near his favourite tree,
Another came; nor yet beside the nil,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

The next, with dirges due, in sad array,
Slow though the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Craved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn.

“The Epitaph”

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth,
A youth to fortune and to fame unknown;
Fair Science frowned not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy marked him for her own.

Large was his bounty and his soul sincere;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Misery all he had, a tear,
He gained from heavert (‘twas all he wished) afriend.

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

ROBERT BURNS

“A Red, Red Rose”

O my luvcs like a red, red rose,
That’s newly sprung in June;
O my luv’s like the melodie
That’s sweetly played in tune.

As fair art thou, my bonie lass,
So deep in luv am I;
And I will luv thee still, my dear,
Till a’ the seas gang dry.

Till a’ the seas gang dry, my dear
And the rocks melt wi the sun;
And I will luv thee still, my dear,
While the sands o’life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luv!
And fare thee weel a while!
And I will come again, my luv,
Tho’ it were ten thousand mile!

9. THE ROMANTIC AGE

WILLIAM BLAKE

“The Lamb”

Little Lamb who made thee

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

10 Dost thou know who made thee
Little Lamb Ill tell thee,
Little Lamb I’ll tell thee!
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb:
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child:
I a child & thou a iamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee.
Little Lamb God bless thee.

“The Chimney Sweeper”

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

There’s little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl’d like a lamb’s head, was shav’d, so I said.

Hush Tom never mind it, for when your head’s bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.

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

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

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

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

“The Sick Rose”

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

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

“The Tyger”

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetr?

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

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

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

When the stars threw own their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger Burning bright,
In the forest of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

“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 he margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

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

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fill
And dances with the daffodils.

“The Solitary Reaper”

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

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands.
A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides,

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

Whate’er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o’er the sickle bending—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,

The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

“London”

I WANDER through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe

In every cry of every man,
In every infan’t’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear

How the chimney-sweeper’s cry
Every blackning church appalls,
And 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 newborn infan’t’s tear
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse

“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,
Ship, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air. ,

Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne’er say I, never felt, a calm to deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! ‘Iiie every houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

“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 re&,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry lied

The wingled seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corps 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, oh, hear! 39

II

Thou on whose, stream, mid the steep, sky’s commotion,
Loose clouds like earth’s decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of heaven and ocean,

Angles of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine eary surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the Zenith’s height
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

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

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, heart!

III

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

Beside a ‘pumice isle in Bafae’s bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave’s intengr 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

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

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even I
Were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarcely seemed a vision I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! -
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

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

JOHN KEATS

“Ode On A Grecian Urn”

I

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed length haunts about thy shape

Of deities of mortals, or of both
In temple or in the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

II

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter, therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd,
Pipe to the sprit 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,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

III

Ah, happy, happy boughs! That cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! More happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be: enjoyed,
Forever panting, and for ever young;

All breathing human passion for above,
That leaves a hart high- sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea shore

Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

V

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form dost tease us out of thought
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.'

10. THE VICTORIAN AGE

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

“Ulysses”

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with an aged kvith an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep and feed and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the less: all times I have enjoyed
Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore , and when
Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vexed the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments
Myself not least, but honoured of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part call that I have met
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that unraveled world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make and end,
To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought,

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

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toiled, and wrought, and thought with me..
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads----you and I are-old
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something re the end, -
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
“Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

20TH CENTURY MODERN POETRY PERIOD

ROBERT BROWNING

“Meeting at Night”

The gray sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voiceless loud, through its joys and fears,
Till the two hearts beating each to each!

“Parting at Morning”

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

“My Last Duchess”

That's my last duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst;
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or, Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:' such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on. and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but
thanked
Some how—I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then, I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir, Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!
 Robert Browning (1812-1889)

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

“Adam’s Curse”

We sat together at one summer's end,
 That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
 And you and I, and talked of poetry.
 I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
 Ye if it does not seem a moment's thought,
 Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
 Better go down upon your marrow-bones
 And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
 Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
 10 For to articulate sweet sounds together
 Is to work harder than all these, and yet
 Be thought an idler by the noisy set
 Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
 The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon

That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
 There's many a one shall find out all heartache
 On finding that her voice is sweet and low
 Replied, To be born woman is to know—
 Although they do not talk of it at school—
 20 That we must labour to be beautiful.'

I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing
 Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
 There have been lovers who thought love should be
 So much compounded of high courtesy
 That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
 Precedents out of beautiful old books;
 Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'
 We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
 We saw the last embers of daylight die,
 30 And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
 A moon, worn as if it had been a shell
 Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
 About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
 That you were beautiful, and that I strove
 To love you in the old high way of love;
 That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
 As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

“Easter 1916”

I HAVE met them at close of day
Coming with vivid faces
From counter or desk among grey
Eighteenth-century houses.
I have passed with a nod of the head
Or polite meaningless words,

Or have lingered a while and said
Polite meaningless words,
And though before I had done
Of a mocking tale or a gibe
To please a companion
Around the fire at the club.
Being certain that they and I
But lived where motley is worn:
All changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent
In ignorant good-will,
Her nights in argument
Until her voice grew shrill.
What voice more sweet than hers
When, young and beautiful,
She rode to harriers?
This man had kept a school
And rode our winged horse;
This other his helper and friend
Was coming into his force;
He might have won fame in the end,
So sensitive his nature seemed,
So daring and sweet his thought.
This other man I had dreamed

A drunken, vain glorious lout.
He had done most bitter wrong
To some who are near my heart,
Yet number him in the song;
He, too has resigned his part
In the causal comedy,
He, too, has resigned his part
In the casual comedy;
He, too, has been changed in his turn,
Transformed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone
Though summer and winter seem
Enchanted to a stone
To trouble the living stream.
The horse that comes from the road,
The rider, the birds that range
From cloud to tumbling cloud
Minute by minute they change;
A shadow of cloud on the stream
Changes minutes by minute;
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,
And a horse plashes within it;
The long-legged moor-hens dive,
And hens to moor-cocks call;
Minutes by minute they live:
The stone in the midst of all.
Too long a sacrifice
Can make a stone of the heart.
O when may it suffice?
That is Heaven's part, our part
To murmur name upon name,
As a mother names her child
When sleep at last he come

On limbs that had run wild.
 What is it but, nightfall?
 No, no, not night but death;
 Was it needless death after all?
 For England may keep faith
 For all that is done and said.
 We know their dream; enough
 To know they dreamed and are dead;
 And what if excess of love
 Bewildered them till they died?
 I write it out in a verse-
 MacDonagh and MacBride
 And Connolly and Pearse
 Now and in time to be,
 Wherever green is worn,
 Are changed, changed utterly:
 A terrible beauty is born.

“The Second Coming”

Turning and turning in the widening re
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
 Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst
 Are full of passionate intensity.
 Surely some revelation is at hand;
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
 When a vast image out of *Spiritus Miundi*
 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?

D. H. LAWRENCE

“Snake”

A snake came to my water-trough
 On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
 To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great
 dark carob tree
 I came down the steps with my pitcher
 And must -waits must stand and wait, for there
 He was at the trough before me

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall
 in the gloom
 And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-
 bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough

And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
 10 And where the water had dripped from the tap,
 in a small clearness,
 He sipped with his straight mouth,
 Softly drank through his straight gums, into his.
 slack long body,
 Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second corner, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, like cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his
lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
20 Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of
the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me He must be killed, For in
Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are old are
venomous.

And voices in me said, if you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and
finish him off.
But I must confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in
quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
30 Into the burning bowels of this earth.

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel så hbnöüred?
I felt so hononred

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,

But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
40 From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so
black, Seeming to lick his lips,
And looking around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice a dream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

50 And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and
entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing
into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing
himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked around, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think I did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left
behind convulsed in undignified haste,
60 Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in
the wall-front,
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with
fascinatiöri.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed
human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.
For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,

70 Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.

And I have something to expiate; A pettiness.

THOMAS STERN ELIOT

“The Waste Land” (Excerpts)

1. *The Burial of the Dead*

April is the cruelest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Stambergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, starm’ aus Litauen, echt

deutsch.

And when we were children, staying at the archdukes,
My cousins, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight And down we went
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of mart,
You cannot say, or guess for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the thy stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock,
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you,
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

Friach weht der Wind
Der’ Heimat zu
Meifrlisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?

‘You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me’ the hyacinth girl’.
---Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
‘Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I as neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Oed’und leer das Meer.

Madame Sosostris, famous clairvoyante,
Had a bad cold, nevertheless

Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe,
With a wicked pack of cards. Here, said she,
Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
(Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,
The lady of situations.

Here is the man with three staves, and here the Wheel,
And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card,
Which is blank, is something he carries on his back,
Which I am forbidden to see. I do not find
The Handged Man. Fear death by water.
I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.
Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone, -
Tell her I bring the horoscope myself:
One must be so careful these days.

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Fowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.
There I saw one I knew, and stopped him crying: Stetson!
You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
You hypocrite lecteur! - mon semblable, - mon frere!

WILFRED OWEN

“Anthem For Doomed Youth”

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

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

W. H. AUDEN

“Song”

‘O where are you going?’ said reader to rider,
That valley is fatal when furnaces burn,
Yonder's the midden whose odours will madden,
That gap is the grave where the tall return.’

‘O do you imagine,’ said fearer to farer,
That dusk will delay on your path to the pass,
Your diligent looking discover the lacking
Your footsteps feel from granite to grass?’

10 ‘O what was that bird,’ said horror to hearer
 ‘Did you see that shape in the twisted trees?
 Behind you swiftly the figure comes softly,
 The spot on your skin is a shocking disease?’

 ‘Out of this house’—said rider to reader,
 ‘Yours never will’—said farer to fearer,
 ‘They’re looking for you’—said hearer to horror,
 As he left them there, as he left them there.

1932

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

ROBERT FROST

“The Road Not Taken”

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
Arid 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

PART B

AFRICAN POETRY

1. ORAL (INDIGENOUS) POETRY

“To Palm Wine”

Alimotu of the gourd
Lall- lihun in the fibrous dump
Dawn it is that heralds your, approach
When evening comes, the drum crooks taps
Taps, taps in gladness
Mistress of tuppence only
Yet chased the millionaire into the forest.

You are that which the horse drank
Drank, drank and forgot his horns
You are that which the cock drank
Drank, drank and forgot to urinate
You are that which the guinea fowl drank
Drank, till a cry pierced his throat
And he took to the wilds...

IZIBONGO: Zulu Praise-Poems.

“Shaka”

Dlungwana son of Ndabal
Ferocious one of the Mbelebele bridge,
Who raged among the kraals,
So that until dawn the huts were being turned
upside down.
He who beats but is not beaten, unlike water,
Axe that surpasses other axes in sharpness;

Shaka, I fear to Say he is Shaka,
He is the chief of the Mashobas. -
he of the shrill whistle, the lion;
He who armed in the forest, who
Armed in the forest, who is like a madman,
The madman who is in full view of the men.
He who trudge wearily the plain going. to Mfene;
The voracious one of Senzangakhona,
Spear that ; red even on the handle..
The open-handed one, they have matched the regiments,
They were matched by Noju and Ngqengenyane,
The one belonging to Ntombazi and the other to Nandi;
Brought out by the white one of Nandi.
They called him to Mthandeni despising him, they said
We cannot compete in dancing with this Ntungwa. from up
country,
Whereas he was going to annihilate Phakathwayo in the return
competition.
The small beast of consent flying like a flag,
Why did the ferocious one consent?
Why has he accepted Godolozu,
Thinking that he was on this side at Nandis place?
Whereas he was far away at little Ntombazi's place?
The sun that eclipsed another with its rays,
For the present it eclipse the one of Mthandeni.
There are two words for which I am grateful,
I am grateful for that of Mpandaba and that of
Ndungenkotno.
Saying The string of beads does not fit the neck
Please inquire from the people of Zinkondeni,
They said he who is frustrated they would stab at Hlohloko,
The curdled milk got spilt and dish got broken.
The joke of the women of Nomgabhi,
Joking as they sat in a sheltered spot,
Saying that Shaka would not rule, he would not become

chief,
 Whereas it was the year. in which Shaka was about to prosper.
 The beast that lowed at Mthonjanent,
 And all the ridges heard its walling,
 it was hard by Dunjwa of the Yengwemkraal,
 It was heard by Manggcengeza of Khalls kraai
 Fire of the long dry grass, son of Njokwane
 Fire of the long grass of scorching force,
 That burned the owls on the Dlebe hill,
 And eventually those on Mabedlana also burned.
 He who travelled across to Ndimma and Mgovu,
 And women who were with child gave birth easily;
 The newly planted crops they left still short,
 The seed they left amongst the. maize-stalks,
 The .old women were left in the abandoned sites,
 The old men were left along the tracks,
 The roots of the trees looked up at the sky.
 He who reached . the top-of the Bhuzane mountain,
 He came across a long line of bush,
 He passed by Mcombo as the cattle were leaving
 He whose routes they inquired from Dunjwa,
 Whereas they should have asked Mbozane about them,
 As for him he was hurrying to go to at Nomagaga,
 A cock came and prevented-him.
 He who is only the adults who will flee by themselves,
 Dunjwa alone it has crushed
 He who went and erected temporary huts at the Thukela.
 Where a leopard was ensnared in a trap,
 He defeated Khungwayo by means of the Ngobizernbes.
 He who moved slowly along one ridge and returned on another,
 Attacking Bhoyiya son of Mdakuda;
 Ndaba did not intend to go there
 He was going to fetch Macingwane of the Ngonyameni kraal.
 He who moved slowly along a long ridge,

He traversed the bones of the people of Tayj
 Who were cold going to Macingeane at Ngonyameni.
 The people of Zihlandilo... I criticized them, the evil dowers,
 They did not tell the king the ford,
 Which was recently vacated by Ntubé of the Majolas:

They made him cross at the one with hippos and crocodiles,
 The hippos and crocodiles gaped with mouths wide- open
 He who looked down towards Hadungela,
 The cattle of Sihayo returned,
 And then there followed those of agfongosi,
 That were mildred by an hysterical person at Mavela's place.
 He who was a pile of rocks at Nkandla,
 Which was a shelter for the elephants in bad weather,
 Which sheltered Phungashe of the Butheloziclan.
 And Zihlandilo of the Mkhize clan,
 And the elephants ran away from the place;
 Feather that bobbed down on the side of Nkanla,
 Bobbing down always and devouring men.
 He who panted up to the top of Nomangoi mountain,
 Going to give judgment in the contention at the Nyuswa s
 They were not contending over castor-oil seeds in deserted sites,
 They said just a moment, wait for the pigeons,
 And he came and killed them both.
 Pursuer of a pursued Zwide son of Langa,
 Talking him from where the sun rises
 And sending him to where it sets;
 As for Zwide he folded his two little shoulders together.
 It was then the elder was startled by the younger.
 Fierce animal in the homes of people;
 Wild animal that was in charge at Dibandlelas –
 He who dressed late was eventually overtaken,
 He who puts on his finery at the waters edge.
 His things will be washed away.
 Trickster, abstain from enemies, it is summer,

The grass is long, it will get the better of you.
 Buffalo that stood glaring with a spear on the
 banks of the Nzimvubu
 And the Pondos feared to come down to it;
 You Gambushe and you Faku,
 Do not stab him,
 If you do stab him,
 You will not be stabbing him,
 You will then be stabbing him, Phunga and Mageba.
 You will then be stabbing the unborn Ngqungqushu;
 The attacker has long been attacking them:
 He attacked Phunga she of the Buthelezi clan,
 He attacked Sondaba of Mthanda as
 He sat in council,
 He attacked Macingwane of Ngonyan'ieni.
 He attacked Macingwane
 Of the Mbathadan,
 He attacked Diadlama of the Majolas
 He attacked Gambushe in Pondoland,
 He attacked Faku in Pondoland.
 The young viper grown as it sits,
 Always in a great rage, with shield on its knees.
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more,
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devoured some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more;
 He who while devouring some devoured others,
 And as he devoured others he devoured some more.
 Painful stabber; they will exhort one another,
 Those who are with the enemy and those who are at home.

He who is dark as the bile of a goat,
 Butterfly of Phunga,
 With colours in circle as if they had been painted on,
 He who is hazy as the shadows of the mountains,
 When it is dark the evil-doers move about,
 The rival of Phunga and Mageba
 which looked at me until I got accustomed to it,
 Powerful limbs, calf of a beast,
 The kicking of this beast puzzled me,
 It inched the milker and left the one holding it.
 Hawk that I saw descending from the hills of Mangengeza,
 And from those of Phungashe he disappeared;
 They said Hawk, here he is, there he is,
 Whereas he was silent in the forest
 Like the leopards and lions.
 Shaka went and erected temporary huts
 Between the Nsuze and the Thukela, -.
 In the country of Nyanya
 Son of Manzawane,
 He ate up Mantondo son of Tayi,
 He devoured Sihavo.
 He who came dancing on the hillside of the Phuthies,
 And overcame Msikazi among the Ndimoshes.
 He met a long time oh haha-dedahs (ibis birds)
 When he was going to destroy the
 Foolish Pondos,
 Shaka did not raid herds of cattle,
 He raided herds of buck, He who gets stiff!
 He who was cooked in the deep pot of Ntombazi,
 He was cooked and got stiff.
 He who goes about making fires and leaving behind
 conflagrations.
 Who when he who rubbed flared like a fire
 There was no longer a beast lowing at little
 Ntombazi's

It was now lowing at our place at Bulawayo.
 Our own bringer of poverty, at Bulawayo,
 Who made Zwides destitute by great strides?
 The sky that rumbled, the sky of Mageba,
 That thundered above Nomange mountain,
 It thundered behind the kraal at Kughobeken and struck
 It took the shields of Maphela and the Mankayiya,
 And the little melons of the Zam paka were left on the vines.
 He devoured Nomahlahjana son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He ate up Nphepha son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He killed Nombengula son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He destroyed Dayingubo son of Zwide of the Maphelas,
 He ate up Sonsukwana son of Zwide of the Maphelas;
 He devoured the chief wife, daughter of Lubongo,
 He ate up Mtimona son of Gaqa of the Maphelas,
 He killed Npondo phumelakwezinde of the Maphelas,
 He devoured Sikloloba singambele of Zwies people,
 He ate up Sihla-mthini-munye of Zwides people.
 He devoured Sjhla-mthni-munre of Zwide people
 He destroyed Nqwangube son. of Lundayae,
 He belonged to our sides having turned round his shield
 Return, Tricksters, indeed you have finished this matter,
 As for Zwide, you have made him into a homeless criminal.
 And now today you ha done the same to the son.
 The people of Zwide, Slaka, you have kept over them
 Sikhunyana is a girl, h has married you,
 He found you sitting n council in the cattle-fold at Nkandla,
 Not knowing that :our soldiers had a cross questioning.
 Bearer of the homed viper, they have beaten you!

TONGUE TWISTER

“Betty Botter”

Betty Botter bought some bitter,
 But, she said, this butter’s bitter;
 If I put it in my batter,
 It will make my batter bitter,
 But a bit of bitter butter
 Will make my bitter better.
 So she bought bit of butter
 Better than her bitter butter
 And she put it ii her batter,
 And it made he batter better
 So ‘twas better Betty Botter
 Bought a bit of better butter

- Anon

Hausa Poet and Society

Farming is the (most important)
 Work of northerners
 Buying and selling, trading,
 Farming is the most important occupation
 It is the traditional occupation of a northerner.
 All our respected leaders farm
 How much less, we the subject, let us all bend
 and farm,
 The most important occupation of northerners
 Farming is the - (most important) work of
 northerners -
 Fighting the heart is the more important was
 Let everybody take up an occupation
 If you have no handicraft or you don’t do portorage,
 Go back to the farm and work,
 For farming is the work of northerners,
 Farming is the (most important) work of

northerners

See an example from Shat of Yalwa
After going round the world singing,
I return home, take a short rest,
And at the beginning of rainy season,
I go to clear my farm.
I sow the seeds, and hoe
I then hoe the farm for the second time, and make ridges.
After harvesting and storing,
Farming is the traditional occupation of a northerner.
Farming is the (most important) work of northerners we
Our grandparents and parents,
Our senior brothers, our junior brothers, and
Our sons down to our grandchildren,
Slaves, servants and all people,
Warn everybody to take to
Farming, a war of today (O.F.N)

From Hausa oral poetry

This poem addresses salient issues about Hausa society and values, which are vital to the life of the society.

“Naira Power of Politics”

Naira Power is Magic Power,
In the power politics of the jungle
The hot and cold winds from Naira power,
The campaign weapons and strategies,
Employed by fighters for Naira power,
All set the stage for inglorious reigns,
And the sad misdeeds of power seekers!

Naira power is Greedy power.
In the power politics of the jungle.
It entails the power to seek and keep:
Unlimited wealth with limited work,

Unlimited property with limited income,
Unlimited votes with limited voters,
Unlimited posts with limited sense,
Unlimited power with limited service.

Naira power is senseless power,
In the power politics of our fatherland.
It entails the power to win applause,
For political victories that weren't won,
For campaigns that were lost but won,
For staying in power without performing,
For ruling through poor patronage,
For getting rewarded for gross misrule!
From S. Unoh: war against indiscipline and one

“Song of a Young Girl”

The young man who lives down there
beside the threshing floor for rice;
like two banana-roots
on either side the village ditch,
we gaze on each other,
we are lovers,
but he wont marry me.
Jealous
His mistress I saw two days since at the washhouse
Coming down the path against the wind.
She was proud;
Was it because she wore a lamba thick?
And studded with coral
Or because they are newly bedded?
However it isn't the storm
that will flatten the delicate reed,
nor the great sudden shower

at the passage of a cloud
that will startle our of his wits
the blue bull.
I am amazed;
the big sterile rock
survived the rain of the flood
and it's the fire that crackles
the bad grains of maize
Such this famous smoker
who took tobacco?
When there was no more hemp to burn.
A foot of hemp?
spent in ankaratra,
no more than cinders to us.

MODERN AFRICAN POETRY

Pioneer Poets

GLADYS CASELY-HAYFORD

“Rejoice”

Rejoice and shout with laughter
Throw all your burdens down,
As to make you black or brown.

For you are the great nation,
For where would spring the flower
If god took away the earth?
Rejoice and shout with laughter.
Throw all your burdens down
Yours is a glorious heritage
If you are black, or brown.

“Freetown”

Freetown, when God made thee, he made thy soil alone
The threw the rich remainder in the sea.
Small inlets cradled He, in jet black stone.
Small bays of transient blue he lulled to sleep
With jet rock, filled from the Atlantic deep,
Then God let loose wee harbingers of song.
He scattered palms profusely o’er the ground.
Then grew tall grasses, who in happy mirth
Reached up to kiss each palm tree that they found.
This is my gem! God whispered, ‘this shall be
To me a jewel in blue turquoise set
Thus spake the mouth of life’s Eternity;
There, tranquilly lies Freetown, even yet.

Then God couched, lion-like, each mighty hill.
Silent, they keep their watch o’er Freetown still
Silent -

R.E.G. ARMATTOE

Africa

(Dedicated to Mme. Leony Armattoo)

I once saw a maiden dark and comely,
Sitting by the wayside, sad and lonely.
Oh! Pretty maiden, so dark and comely,
Why sit by the wayside, sad and lonely?
‘I am neither sad nor lonely,’ she said,
But living, sir, among the deaf and dumb;
Relentlessly watching these shameless deed,
Make my warm heart grow very cold and numb.

Servant- kings

Leave them alone,
Leave them to be
Men lost to shame,
To honour lost!
Servant kinglets,
Riding to war
Against their own
Watched by their foes
Who urge them on,
And laugh at them!
Leave them alone,
Men lost to shame,
To honour lost.

DENNIS OSADEBAY

Young Africa's Plea

Don't preserve my customs
As some fine curios
To suit some white historian's tastes.
There's nothing artificial
That beats the natural way
In culture and ideals of life.
Let me play with the whiteman's ways
Let me work with the blackman's brains
Let my affairs themselves sort out.
Then in sweet rebirth
I'll rise a better man
Not ashamed to face the world.
Those who doubt my talents
In secret fear my strength
They know I am no less a man.
Let them bury their prejudice,
Let them show their noble sides,
Let them have untrammelled growth,
My friends will never know regret
And I, I never once forget.

MICHEAL DEI-ANANG

Dear Africa

Awake, thou sleeping heart!
Awake, and kiss
The love-lorn brow
Of this ebon lass,
Dear Africa,

Whose virgin charms
Ensure the love-lit hearts
Of venturing youth
From other lands.

Awake, sweet Africa
Demand thy love,
Thou sleeping hearts!

When the all-summer sun
Paint the leafy boughs
With golden rays,
Know then, thou sleeping heart,
Dear Africa stands
Knocking at thy door.

FRANCOPHONE (NEGRITUDE) MOVEMENT

LEOPOLD SEDAR SENGHOR

“Long, long you have held between your hands”

(For khalam)

Long, long you have held between your hands the black face of
the warrior
Held as if already there fell on it a twilight of death
From the hill I have seen the sun set in the bays of your eyes.
When shall I see again, my country, the pure horizon of your
face?
5 when shall I sit down once more at the dark table of your
breast?
Hidden in the half-darkness, the nest of gentle words
I shall see other skies and other eyes
I shall drink at the spring of other mouths cooler than lemons
I shall sleep under the roof of other head of hair in shelter from
storms.
10 But every year, when the rum of springtime sets my memory
ablaze
I shall be full of regret for my Fiomeland and the rain from
your eyes on the thirsty savannahs.

“In Memoriam”

Sunday.
The crowding stony faces of my fellows make me afraid.
Out of my tower of glass haunted by headaches and my
restless Ancestors
I watch the roofs and hills wrapped in mist -
Wrapped in peace.. the chimneys are heavy
dead are sleeping, all my dreams made dust
All my dreams, blood freely spilt along the streets,

mingled with blood from butcheries.

And now, from this observatory, as if from the outskirts of the
town -

I watch my dreams listless along the streets, sleeping at the foot
of the hills

Like the forerunners of my race on the banks of the Gambia and
the hills

Now of the Seine, at the foot of the hills. Let my mind turn to my
dead!

Yesterday was All Saints, the solemn anniversary of the sun

In all the cemeteries, there was no one to remember.

O dead who have always refused to die, who have resisted death

From the Sine to the Seine, and in my fragile veins you my
unyielding blood

Guard my dreams as you have guarded your sons, your slender,
limbed wanderers

O dead, defend the roofs of Paris in this Sabbath mist

Roofs that guard my dead

That from the dangerous safety of my tower, I may go down
into the street

To my brothers whose eyes are blue

Whose hands are hard.

BARIGO DIOP

“Viaticum”

In one of the three jugs
Three jugs where on certain evenings return
the tranquil souls,
the breaths of the ancestors,
5 the ancestors who were men,
the ancestors who were sages,
Mother has dipped three fingers three
fingers of her left hand:
thumb, forefinger and middle finger
10 I have dipped three fingers
three fingers of my right hand:
thumb, forefinger and middle finger.
With her three fingers red with blood,
with dog's blood,
15 with bull's blood,
with goat's blood,
Mother has touched me three times.
She touched my fur head with her thumb,
with her forefinger my left breast
20 and my navel with her middle finger.
I have held out my fingers red with blood,
with dog's blood,
with bull's blood,
with goat's blood,
25 I have held my three fingers to the winds the north
wind, the east wind, the south wind, the west wind; and I have
raised my three fingers towards the Moon towards the full
Moon, the full, naked Moon
30 when she was at the bottom of the biggest jug. I have thrust my
three fingers into the sand, into the sand which had grown cool.
Mother said: 'Go through the World, go in Life. They will
follow thy traces.'

35 Since then I go, I go by the tracks, by the tracks and on the
roads, beyond the seas and further still beyond the sea and
further, further still,
40 beyond the sea and beyond the place beyond. And when I
come to the wicked men, the black-hearted men, when I
come to the envious, the black-hearted men,
45 before me advance the breaths of the forefathers.

DAVID DIOP

“Africa”

Africa my Africa,
Africa of proud warriors in the ancestral savannahs,
Africa my grandmother sings of
Beside her distant river
I have never seen you
But my gaze is full of your blood
Your black blood spilt over the fields.
The blood of your sweat
The sweat of your toil
The toil of slavery
The slavery of your children.
Africa, tell me Africa,
Are you the back that bends
Lies down under the weight of humbleness?
The trembling back striped red
That, says yes to the sjambok on the roads of noon?
Solemnly a voice answers me
Impetuous child, that young and sturdy tree
That tree that grows
There splendidly alone among white and faded flowers
Is Africa, your Africa. It puts forth new shoots
With patience and stubbornness puts forth new shoots
Slowly its fruits grow to have
The bitter taste of liberty.'

**PRE-INDEPENDENCE ANGLOPHONE AFRICAN
POETRY**

BERNARD DADIE

“Dry Your Tears, Africa!”

Dry your tears, Africa!
Your children comb back to you . .
Out of the storm and squalls of fruitless journeys
Through the crest of the wave and the babbling of the
breeze
5 Over the gold of the east
and the purple of the setting sun,
the peaks of the proud mountains
and the grasslands drenched with light
They return to you
10 out of the storm and squalls of fruitless journeys.
Dry your tears, Africa!
We have drunk .
From all the springs of ill fortune
and of glory
And our senses are now opened to the splendour of
your beauty to the smell of your forests to the charm of your
waters .,
20 to the clearness of your skies
to the caress of your sun
And to the charm of your foliage pearled by the dew.
Dry your tears, Africa!
Your children come back to you
25 their hands full of playthings
and their hearts full of love.
They return to clothe you
in their dreams and their hopes.

DENNIS OSADEBAY

“Young Africa’s Plea”

Don’t preserve my Customs
As some fine Curious
To suit some white historian’s tastes.
There’s nothing artificial
5 That beats the natural way
In culture and ideals of life
Let me play with the white men’s brains.
Let me work with the Black man’s brains
Let my affairs themselves sort out
10 Then in sweet rebirth
I’ll rise a better n-ian
Not ashamed to face the world.
Those who doubt my talents I
In secret my strength
15 They know I am no less a man.
Let them bury their prejudice.
Let them show their noble sides,
Let me have untrammelled growth,
My friends will never know regret
20 And I, I never once forget.

POST-INDEPENDENCE ANGLOPHONE POETRY

WOLE SOYINKA

“Death in the dawn”

Traveller, you must set out
At dawn. And wipe your feet upon
The dog-nose wetness of the earth.
Let sunrise quench your lamps. And watch
5 Faint brush pricklings in the sky light
Cottoned feet to break the early earhwormr
On the hoe. And shadows stretch with.
sap
Not twilight’s death and sad prostration.
This soft kindling, soft receding breeds
10 Racing joys and apprehensions for
A naked day. Burdened hulks retract.
Stoop to the mist in faceless throng
To wake the silent markets— swift, mute
Processions on grey byways.
15 On this
Counterpane, it was —
Sudden winter at the death
Of dawn’s lone trumpeter. Cascades
Of white feather-flakes. . . but it proved
20 A futile rite. Propitiation. sped
Grimly on, before
The right foot for joy, the left, dread
And the mother, prayed, Child
May you never walk
25 When the road waits, famished
Traveller, you must set forth
At dawn

I promise marvels of the holy hour
Presages as the white cock’s flapped
30 Perverse impalement — as who would
dare
The wrathful wings of man’s
Progression...

But such another Wraith! Brother,
Silenced in the startled hug of
Your invention — is this mocked grimace
This closed contortion —

JOHN PEPPER CLARK

“Night Rain”

What time of night it is
I do not know
Except that like, some fish.
Doped out of the deep
5 I have bobbed up bellywise
From stream of sleep
And no cocks crow.
It is drumming hard here
And I suppose every-there
10 Droning with insistent ardour upon
Our roof thatch and shed
And thro sheaves slit open
To lightning and rafters
I cannot quite make out overhead
15 Great water drops are dribbling
Failing like orange or mango
Fruits showered forth in the wind
Or perhaps I should say so
Much like beads I could in prayer tell

20 Them on string as they break
 In wooden bowls and earthenware
 Mother is busy now deploying
 About our roomlet and floor.
 Although it is so dark
 25 I know her practised step as
 She moves her bins, bags and vats
 Out of the run of water
 That like ants filing out of the wood
 Will scatter and gain possession
 30 Of the floor. Do not tremble then
 But turn, brothers, turn upon your side
 Of the loosening mats
 To where the others lie.
 We have drunk tonight of a spell
 35 Deeper than the owl's or bat's
 That wet of wings may not fly
 Bedraggled up on the iroko, they stand
 Emptied of hearts, and
 Therefore will not stir, no, not
 40 Even at dawn for then
 They must scurry in to hide.
 So let us roll over on our back
 And again roll to the beat
 Of drumming all over the land
 45 And under its ample soothing hand
 Joined to that of the sea
 We will settle to sleep of the innocent and free.

CHRISTOPHER OKIGBO

Hurray For Thunder

WHATEVER happened to the elephant—
 Hurray for thunder—

The elephant, tetrarch of the jungle:
 With a wave of the hand
 He could pull four trees to the ground;
 His four mortar legs pounded the earth:
 Wherever they treaded,
 The grass was forbidden to be there.

Alas! the elephant has fellen—
 Hurray for thunder—

But already the hunters are talking about pumpkins:
 If they share the meet let them remember thunder.

The eye that looks down will surely see the nose;
 The finger that fits should be used to pick the nose

Today—for tomorrow, today becomes yesterday:
 How many million promises can ever fill a basket..
 If I don't learn to shut my mouth I'll go to hell,
 I, Okigbo, town-crier, together with my iron bell.

GABRIEL OKARA

“The Fisherman’s Invocation”

The celebration is now ended
but the echoes are all around
whirling like a harmattan
whirl-wind throwing dust around
5 and hands coyer forces and feet grope.

The celebration is new ended
The drums lay quiet, silent, waiting
And the dancers disperse, walking
with feet that have known many dances
10. waiting for the next; walking

with their hearts climbing up their feet
to their places and the palmine descending
from their heads to settle in their bellies
and their bodies turn cold. For the spirit

15 of the dance has left and their facbecomnal

But the child-Front is now lying on laps
feeding from measureless breasts of the back-.
Singing green lullabys which tingle our heads.
And we learn to sing half familiar half
strange songs
20 We learn to dance to half familiar half strange
rhythms fashioned in dreams as the child-Front
lies sleeping with breasts in his mouth.

ODIA OFEIMUM

“How Can I Sing?”

I cannot blind myself
to putrefying carcasses in the market place
pulling giant vultures
Nor to those flywisks:
how can I escape these mind-ripping scorpion-tails
deployed in the dark
with ignominious licence
by those who should buttress faith in living, faith
in lamplights. And how can I sing
when they stuff cobwebs in my mouth
spit the rheum of their blank sense
of direction in my eyes
who will open the portals of
my hope in this desultory walk?
But I cannot blunt my feelers
to cheapen my ingrained sorrow
I cannot refuse to drink from
the gourd you hold to my lips
A garland of subversive litanies..
Should answer these morbid landscape
my land, my woman.

TANURE OJAIDE

“The Horn-Blower”

It’s only indirect songs
We must sing aloud
To escape the whip & incubus
Of power. Lest a mighty staff
Would knock out our brains
And toast peace with our skull

The elders lived with it,
 Never told the Oba shit
 To his face
 For there's an arcane belief
 That even the reign of the lion
 Ends with age
 And those who fought
 For the ruler
 Are become his offerings
 Fresh and dry leaves Burn together
 In the world we know;
 Only the exile trumpets
 His savage convictions
 And still sleeps
 Closing in on him
 To violate his humanity
 For now the horn-blasts
 That can tremble the lion
 Vibrate within the free cave
 Of the mind
 And I, sole occupant
 Enjoy this sweet savagery

NIYI OSUNDARE

“Invocation of the Word”

(To be performed with musical accompaniment)

In the Beginning was not the Word
 In the Word was the Beginning

Unwind the wind
 Give rapid legs to the crouching leaf;
 The horse of words has galloped
 Through clouds, through thundei through roaring waters....

Throw open the door of your ears

Aràbà ponmbé ponmbé ponmbé
 Aràbà ponmbè ponmbè ponmbè

The Word, the Word, is an egg
 From the nest of hawk and dove
 Its shell the sheath of anger's sword
 Its yolk compost bed of bile and boon

The Word, the Word, is the woodpecker's beak
 Which rattles the jungle of silence
 The cat's eye which pierces the garment of night

The Word, the Word, is the fearless symmetry of zebra heights.
 The fiery hoofball of eloquent horses
 The Word, the Word, is the armpit of stone
 the groin of nodding marble

Word, the Word, is the madness of the moon canine fury of
 barking tides
 Word, the Word, is the milky teeth of coconut mountains joyful
 tears of dawn

Aràbà ponmbé ponmbé ponmbé

“Can-do”

I have seen rain-clouds gather
 At the instance of a word

I have seen rivers walk up-hill
 On the order of a proverb

I have seen a sentence hand out
 Penalties stiff as a rod -

I have seen lovers sigh pale
On the humour of a sonnet

I have seen mountains move
To the promptings of a dithyramb

I have seen stones stammer
On their first vowel

I have heard melodies which re-
Turn the sword to its scabbard

I have seen a well-appointed alamo
Turn needles in the guilty ear

I have seen well-aimed songs
Uncrown the emperor

Arabà ponmbé ppnmbé ponmbé ponmbé**
Only those who live
In certain regions of the moon

Know the mortal danger of little nouns
The unspoken thunder of needling ballads

ADEMOLA DASYLVA

“Plant a Tree”

The other day
The whole Abuja’ was agog —
‘Plant a tree’, the radio jingles,
‘Plant a tree’, the television, in rainbow beams,
Plant a tree’, screamed the dailies,
The network, news and all —
The planting General under a frying
July sun stooped, sweating to conquer
Bore in his royal palms a tree-let for planting
lucky tree it was, must be —.
The following morning
The tree-let had multiplied
On the pages of national papers,
A miracle! two fishes and five loaves
With one tree-let, the President-General had fed
The eyes, not our rumbling stomachs -
Of eighty — IMP million Nigerians,
A miracle!
Peter, Paul and Uncle James must perform
Same miracles as master Jesus did
Like President-General did,
State Administrators, Chairmen local
governments
Planted a tree-let each,
Fed many Nigerian eyes too,
A miracle!

APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

OSWALD MBUYISENI MTSHALI

“An Abandoned Bundle”

The morning mist
and chimney smoke
of White City jabavu
flowed thick yellow
as pus oozing
from a gigantic sore
It smothered our little houses
like fish caught in a net.
Scavenging dogs
draped in red bandano of blood
fought fiercely
for a squirming bundle.
I threw a brick;
they bared fangs
flicked velvet tongues of scarlet
and scurried away,
leaving a mutilated corpse-
an infant dumped on a rubbish heap-
“Oh! Baby in the Manger
sleep well
on human dung.”
Its mother
had melted into the rays of the rising sun,
her face glitteriig with innocence
her heart as pure as untrampled dew.

“Nightfall in Soweto”

Nightfall comes like
a dread disease
seeping through the pores
of a healthy body
and ravaging it beyond repair

A murderer’s hand,
Lurking in the shadows,
Clasping the dagger,
Strikes down the helpless victim

I am the victim,
I am slaughtered
Every night in the streets
I am cornered by the fear
Gnawing at my timid heart;
In my helplessness I languish

Man has ceased to be man
Man has become beast
Man has become prey

I am the prey
I am the quarry to be run down
By the marauding beast
Let loose by cruel nightfall,
From his cage of death

Where is my refuge?
Where am I safe?
Not in my matchbox house
Where I barricade myself against
Nightfall,

I tremble at his crunching footsteps,
I quake at his deafening knock at the door
“Open up!” he barked like a rabid dog
Thirsty for my blood

Nightfall! Nightfall!
You are my mortal enemy
But why were you ever created?
Why can't it be daytime?
Daytime forever more?

DENNIS BRUTUS

“Letter To Martha” (Excerpt)

One learns quite soon
that nails and screws
and other sizeable bits of metal
must be handed in:
and seeing them shaped and sharpened
one is chilled, appalled
to see how vicious it can be
-this simple, useful bit of steel;
and when these knives suddenly flash.
-produced perhaps from some disciplines anus
one grasps at one the steel-bright horror in the
morning air
and how soft and vulnerable is naked flesh.
Particularly, in a single cell
but even in sections
the religions sense asserts itself,
perhaps a childhood habit of nightly prayers
the accessibility of Bibles,
or awareness of the proximity of death;

and of course, it is a currency-
pietistic expressions can purchase favours
and it is a way of suggesting reformation
(which can procure promotion);

and the resort of the weak
is to invoke divine revenge
against a rampaging injustice;
but in the grey silence of the empty afternoons
it is not uncommon
to find oneself talking to God.
In the greyness of isolated time
which shafts down into the echoing mind,
wraiths appear, and whispers of horrors
that people the labyrinth of self.

Corprophilism; necrophilism; fellatic; penis-
amputation;
and in this gibbering society
hooting for recognition as one's other selves
suicide, self-damnation, walks -
if not a companionable ghost
then a familiar, familiar
a drop pelganger
not to be shaken off.

Two men I knew specifically
among many cases:
their reactions were enormously different
but a tense thought lay at the bottom of each
and for both there was danger and fear and prindrama
One simply gave up smoking
knowing he could be bribed
and hedged his mind with romantic fantasies

of beautiful marriageable daughters;

the other sought escape
in fainting fits and asthmas
finally fled into insanity:

so great the pressures of enforce
sodomy.

“So now they bum the roof
above her head (for Winnie)
So now they bum the roof above her head?
Well, what’s new? Retarded minds, like infants,
Play with fire. Bright things attract them.
Colour obsessed, did not these newling agents
once
Arrest your bed spread?...

“Zimbabwe”

for Josiah Tangogara
for every guerilla who fought the war
that turned Rhodesia into Zimbabwe.

The cock has crowed
ushering in a free dawn.
Iroko has sprouted
in a lot begrudged
to elephant grass.
Here we are
after ship wrecked talks
and jungles of blood
after countless treacheries
by men collared out of our fold
by the folly of ghostly power.

The cock has crowed
Here the end
of those who pillage
others huts
to mend their own the end
of those
who build liberty statues
on a pillar of torture

The cock has crowed

Not in vain
have guns boomed
Not in vain
are children orphans
Not in vain
are wises widows
before they are
five and twenty.
The cock has crowed
Those who vowed
there will be no freedom
in their lifetime
encountered freedom
in the graveyard of their dream
Yet another milepost
on the sizzling roads
from Cairo to Cape