

Gerb's Anthology of Poetry

David Gerber

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Edited by David Gerber

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Theme, Voice, Persona, Tone and Irony



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Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

Robert Browning

Gr-r-r--there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
5 What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims--
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together;
10 Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt;
15 What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for "swine's snout"?

Whew! We'll have our platter burnished,
Laid with care on our own shelf!
With a fire-new spoon we're furnished,
20 And a goblet for ourself,
Rinsed like something sacrificial
Ere 'tis fit to touch our chaps--
Marked with L. for our initial!
(He-he! There his lily snaps!)

25 Saint, forsooth! While Brown Dolores
Squats outside the Convent bank
With Sanchicha, telling stories,
Steeping tresses in the tank,

Blue-black, lustrous, thick like horsehairs,
30 --Can't I see his dead eye glow,
Bright as 'twere a Barbary corsair's?
(That is, if he'd let it show!)

When he finishes refection,
Knife and fork he never lays
35 Cross-wise, to my recollection,
As do I, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
Drinking watered orange pulp--
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
40 While he drains his at one gulp!

Oh, those melons! if he's able
We're to have a feast; so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
45 How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!--And I, too, at such trouble,
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
50 Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine district damnations,
One sure, if another fails;
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
55 Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

Or, my scrofulous French novel
On grey paper with blunt type!
Simply glance at it, you grovel
60 Hand and foot in Belial's gripe;

If I double down its pages
At the woeful sixteenth print,
When he gathers his greengages,
Ope a sieve and slip it in't?

65 Or, there's Satan!--one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
70 We're so proud of! Hy, Zy, Hine...
'St, there's Vespers! Plena gratia
Ave, Virgo! Gr-r-r--you swine!

To His Coy Mistress

Andrew Marvell

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.
5 Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find: I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
10 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;
15 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,
20 Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
25 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,
30 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,
35 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
40 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:
45 Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

I Have a Rendezvous With Life

Countee Cullen

I have a rendezvous with Life,
In days I hope will come,
Ere youth has sped, and strength of mind,
Ere voices sweet grow dumb.
5 I have a rendezvous with Life,
When Spring's first heralds hum.
Sure some would cry it's better far
To crown their days with sleep
Than face the road, the wind and rain,
10 To heed the calling deep.
Though wet nor blow nor space I fear,
Yet fear I deeply, too,
Lest Death should meet and claim me ere
I keep Life's rendezvous.

The Author to Her Book

Anne Bradstreet

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
Who after birth didst by my side remain,
Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than
true,
Who thee abroad, exposed to public view,
5 Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).
At thy return my blushing was not small,
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
10 The visage was so irksome in my sight;
Yet being mine own, at length affection would
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.
I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw.
15 I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet,
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet;
In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
But nought save homespun cloth i' th' house I find.
In this array 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam.
20 In critic's hands beware thou dost not come,
And take thy way where yet thou art not known;
If for thy father asked, say thou hadst none;
And for thy mother, she alas is poor,
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

Fra Lippo Lippi

Robert Browning

I am poor brother Lippo, by your leave!
You need not clap your torches to my face.
Zooks, what's to blame? you think you see a monk!
What, 'tis past midnight, and you go the rounds,
5 And here you catch me at an alley's end
Where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar?
The Carmine's my cloister: hunt it up,
Do,—harry out, if you must show your zeal,
Whatever rat, there, haps on his wrong hole,
10 And nip each softling of a wee white mouse,
Weke, weke, that's crept to keep him company!
Aha, you know your betters! Then, you'll take
Your hand away that's fiddling on my throat,
And please to know me likewise. Who am I?
15 Why, one, sir, who is lodging with a friend
Three streets off—he's a certain . . . how d'ye call?
Master—a ...Cosimo of the Medici,
I' the house that caps the corner. Boh! you were
best!
Remember and tell me, the day you're hanged,
20 How you affected such a gullet's-gripe!
But you, sir, it concerns you that your knaves
Pick up a manner nor discredit you:
Zooks, are we pilchards, that they sweep the streets
And count fair price what comes into their net?
25 He's Judas to a tittle, that man is!
Just such a face! Why, sir, you make amends.
Lord, I'm not angry! Bid your hang-dogs go
Drink out this quarter-florin to the health
Of the munificent House that harbours me
30 (And many more beside, lads! more beside!)

And all's come square again. I'd like his face—
His, elbowing on his comrade in the door
With the pike and lantern,—for the slave that holds
John Baptist's head a-dangle by the hair
35 With one hand ("Look you, now," as who should say)
And his weapon in the other, yet unwiped!
It's not your chance to have a bit of chalk,
A wood-coal or the like? or you should see!
Yes, I'm the painter, since you style me so.
40 What, brother Lippo's doings, up and down,
You know them and they take you? like enough!
I saw the proper twinkle in your eye—
Tell you, I liked your looks at very first.
Let's sit and set things straight now, hip to haunch.
45 Here's spring come, and the nights one makes up
bands
To roam the town and sing out carnival,
And I've been three weeks shut within my mew,
A-painting for the great man, saints and saints
And saints again. I could not paint all night—
50 Ouf! I leaned out of window for fresh air.
There came a hurry of feet and little feet,
A sweep of lute strings, laughs, and whiffs of song,
—
Flower o' the broom,
Take away love, and our earth is a tomb!
55 Flower o' the quince,
I let Lisa go, and what good in life since?
Flower o' the thyme—and so on. Round they went.
Scarce had they turned the corner when a titter
Like the skipping of rabbits by moonlight,—three
slim shapes,
60 And a face that looked up . . . zooks, sir, flesh and
blood,
That's all I'm made of! Into shreds it went,
Curtain and counterpane and coverlet,

All the bed-furniture—a dozen knots,
There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
65 Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so
dropped,
And after them. I came up with the fun
Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,—
Flower o' the rose,
If I've been merry, what matter who knows?
70 And so as I was stealing back again
To get to bed and have a bit of sleep
Ere I rise up to-morrow and go work
On Jerome knocking at his poor old breast
With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,
75 You snap me of the sudden. Ah, I see!
Though your eye twinkles still, you shake your head
—
Mine's shaved—a monk, you say—the sting 's in
that!
If Master Cosimo announced himself,
Mum's the word naturally; but a monk!
80 Come, what am I a beast for? tell us, now!
I was a baby when my mother died
And father died and left me in the street.
I starved there, God knows how, a year or two
On fig-skins, melon-parings, rinds and shucks,
85 Refuse and rubbish. One fine frosty day,
My stomach being empty as your hat,
The wind doubled me up and down I went.
Old Aunt Lapaccia trussed me with one hand,
(Its fellow was a stinger as I knew)
90 And so along the wall, over the bridge,
By the straight cut to the convent. Six words there,
While I stood munching my first bread that month:
"So, boy, you're minded," quoth the good fat father
Wiping his own mouth, 'twas refection-time,—
95 "To quit this very miserable world?"

Will you renounce" . . . "the mouthful of bread?"
thought I;
By no means! Brief, they made a monk of me;
I did renounce the world, its pride and greed,
Palace, farm, villa, shop, and banking-house,
100 Trash, such as these poor devils of Medici
Have given their hearts to—all at eight years old.
Well, sir, I found in time, you may be sure,
Twas not for nothing—the good bellyful,
The warm serge and the rope that goes all round,
105 And day-long blessed idleness beside!
"Let's see what the urchin's fit for"—that came next.
Not overmuch their way, I must confess.
Such a to-do! They tried me with their books:
Lord, they'd have taught me Latin in pure waste!
110 Flower o' the clove.
All the Latin I construe is, "amo" I love!
But, mind you, when a boy starves in the streets
Eight years together, as my fortune was,
Watching folk's faces to know who will fling
115 The bit of half-stripped grape-bunch he desires,
And who will curse or kick him for his pains,—
Which gentleman processional and fine,
Holding a candle to the Sacrament,
Will wink and let him lift a plate and catch
120 The droppings of the wax to sell again,
Or holla for the Eight and have him whipped,—
How say I?—nay, which dog bites, which lets drop
His bone from the heap of offal in the street,—
Why, soul and sense of him grow sharp alike,
125 He learns the look of things, and none the less
For admonition from the hunger-pinch.
I had a store of such remarks, be sure,
Which, after I found leisure, turned to use.
I drew men's faces on my copy-books,
130 Scrawled them within the antiphonary's marge,

Joined legs and arms to the long music-notes,
Found eyes and nose and chin for A's and B's,
And made a string of pictures of the world
Betwixt the ins and outs of verb and noun,
135 On the wall, the bench, the door. The monks looked
black.
"Nay," quoth the Prior, "turn him out, d'ye say?
In no wise. Lose a crow and catch a lark.
What if at last we get our man of parts,
We Carmelites, like those Camaldolese
140 And Preaching Friars, to do our church up fine
And put the front on it that ought to be!"
And hereupon he bade me daub away.
Thank you! my head being crammed, the walls a
blank,
Never was such prompt disemburdening.
145 First, every sort of monk, the black and white,
I drew them, fat and lean: then, folk at church,
From good old gossips waiting to confess
Their cribs of barrel-droppings, candle-ends,—
To the breathless fellow at the altar-foot,
150 Fresh from his murder, safe and sitting there
With the little children round him in a row
Of admiration, half for his beard and half
For that white anger of his victim's son
Shaking a fist at him with one fierce arm,
155 Signing himself with the other because of Christ
(Whose sad face on the cross sees only this
After the passion of a thousand years)
Till some poor girl, her apron o'er her head,
(Which the intense eyes looked through) came at
eve
160 On tiptoe, said a word, dropped in a loaf,
Her pair of earrings and a bunch of flowers
(The brute took growling), prayed, and so was gone.
I painted all, then cried "'Tis ask and have;

Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
165 And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
Being simple bodies,— "That's the very man!
Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
170 That woman's like the Prior's niece who comes
To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funk'd;
Their betters took their turn to see and say:
The Prior and the learned pulled a face
175 And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true
As much as pea and pea! it's devil's-game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
180 With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
185 It's vapour done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
Here's Giotto, with his Saint a-praising God,
190 That sets us praising—why not stop with him?
Why put all thoughts of praise out of our head
With wonder at lines, colours, and what not?
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time.
195 Oh, that white smallish female with the breasts,
She's just my niece . . . Herodias, I would say,—
Who went and danced and got men's heads cut off!
Have it all out!" Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body

200 So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! Thus, yellow does for white
When what you put for yellow's simply black,
And any sort of meaning looks intense
When all beside itself means and looks nought.
205 Why can't a painter lift each foot in turn,
Left foot and right foot, go a double step,
Make his flesh liker and his soul more like,
Both in their order? Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
210 You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them three-fold?
215 Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have
missed,
220 Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
225 And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
Having a friend, you see, in the Corner-house!
Lord, it's fast holding by the rings in front—
Those great rings serve more purposes than just
230 To plant a flag in, or tie up a horse!
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;

235 Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"
Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr ... manners, and I'll stick to
mine!

240 I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do and sometimes
don't;

245 For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(Flower o' the peach
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)

250 And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass

255 After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.
What would men have? Do they like grass or no—
May they or mayn't they? all I want's the thing

260 Settled for ever one way. As it is,
You tell too many lies and hurt yourself:
You don't like what you only like too much,
You do like what, if given you at your word,
You find abundantly detestable.

265 For me, I think I speak as I was taught;
I always see the garden and God there
A-making man's wife: and, my lesson learned,
The value and significance of flesh,

I can't unlearn ten minutes afterwards.
270 You understand me: I'm a beast, I know.
But see, now—why, I see as certainly
As that the morning-star's about to shine,
What will hap some day. We've a youngster here
275 Comes to our convent, studies what I do,
Slouches and stares and lets no atom drop:
His name is Guidi—he'll not mind the monks—
They call him Hulking Tom, he lets them talk—
He picks my practice up—he'll paint apace.
280 I hope so—though I never live so long,
I know what's sure to follow. You be judge!
You speak no Latin more than I, belike;
However, you're my man, you've seen the world
—The beauty and the wonder and the power,
285 The shapes of things, their colours, lights and
shades,
Changes, surprises,—and God made it all!
—For what? Do you feel thankful, ay or no,
For this fair town's face, yonder river's line,
The mountain round it and the sky above,
290 Much more the figures of man, woman, child,
These are the frame to? What's it all about?
To be passed over, despised? or dwelt upon,
Wondered at? oh, this last of course!—you say.
But why not do as well as say,—paint these
295 Just as they are, careless what comes of it?
God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
300 There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have
passed
Perhaps a hundred times nor cared to see;

And so they are better, painted—better to us,
305 Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out. Have you noticed, now,
Your cullion's hanging face? A bit of chalk,
And trust me but you should, though! How much
more,
310 If I drew higher things with the same truth!
That were to take the Prior's pulpit-place,
Interpret God to all of you! Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
315 Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.
"Ay, but you don't so instigate to prayer!"
Strikes in the Prior: "when your meaning's plain
It does not say to folk—remember matins,
320 Or, mind you fast next Friday!" Why, for this
What need of art at all? A skull and bones,
Two bits of stick nailed crosswise, or, what's best,
A bell to chime the hour with, does as well.
I painted a Saint Laurence six months since
325 At Prato, splashed the fresco in fine style:
"How looks my painting, now the scaffold's down?"
I ask a brother: "Hugely," he returns—
"Already not one phiz of your three slaves
Who turn the Deacon off his toasted side,
330 But's scratched and prodded to our heart's content,
The pious people have so eased their own
With coming to say prayers there in a rage:
We get on fast to see the bricks beneath.
Expect another job this time next year,
335 For pity and religion grow i' the crowd—
Your painting serves its purpose!" Hang the fools!
—That is—you'll not mistake an idle word
Spoke in a huff by a poor monk, God wot,

340 Tasting the air this spicy night which turns
The unaccustomed head like Chianti wine!
Oh, the church knows! don't misreport me, now!
It's natural a poor monk out of bounds
Should have his apt word to excuse himself:
345 And hearken how I plot to make amends.
I have bethought me: I shall paint a piece
... There's for you! Give me six months, then go, see
Something in Sant' Ambrogio's! Bless the nuns!
They want a cast o' my office. I shall paint
350 God in the midst, Madonna and her babe,
Ringed by a bowery, flowery angel-brood,
Lilies and vestments and white faces, sweet
As puff on puff of grated orris-root
When ladies crowd to Church at midsummer.
355 And then i' the front, of course a saint or two—
Saint John' because he saves the Florentines,
Saint Ambrose, who puts down in black and white
The convent's friends and gives them a long day,
And Job, I must have him there past mistake,
360 The man of Uz (and Us without the z,
Painters who need his patience). Well, all these
Secured at their devotion, up shall come
Out of a corner when you least expect,
As one by a dark stair into a great light,
365 Music and talking, who but Lippo! I!—
Mazed, motionless, and moonstruck—I'm the man!
Back I shrink—what is this I see and hear?
I, caught up with my monk's-things by mistake,
My old serge gown and rope that goes all round,
370 I, in this presence, this pure company!
Where's a hole, where's a corner for escape?
Then steps a sweet angelic slip of a thing
Forward, puts out a soft palm—"Not so fast!"
—Addresses the celestial presence, "nay—
375 He made you and devised you, after all,

Though he's none of you! Could Saint John there
draw—

His camel-hair make up a painting brush?

We come to brother Lippo for all that,

Iste perfectit opus! So, all smile—

380 I shuffle sideways with my blushing face

Under the cover of a hundred wings

Thrown like a spread of kirtles when you're gay

And play hot cockles, all the doors being shut,

Till, wholly unexpected, in there pops

385 The hothead husband! Thus I scuttle off

To some safe bench behind, not letting go

The palm of her, the little lily thing

That spoke the good word for me in the nick,

Like the Prior's niece . . . Saint Lucy, I would say.

390 And so all's saved for me, and for the church

A pretty picture gained. Go, six months hence!

Your hand, sir, and good-bye: no lights, no lights!

The street's hushed, and I know my own way back,

Don't fear me! There's the grey beginning. Zooks!

I like to see it lap the Miles (43)

Emily Dickinson

I like to see it lap the Miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

5 Around a pile of mountains,
 And, supercilious, peer
 In shanties by the sides of roads;
 And then a quarry pare

10 To fit its sides, and crawl between,
 Complaining all the while
 In horrid, hooting stanza;
 Then chase itself down hill

15 And neigh like Boanerges;
 Then, punctual as a star,
 Stop—docile and omnipotent—
 At its own stable door.

I wandered lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

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;
5 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
10 Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:—
15 A Poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the shew to me had brought:

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

Diction, Syntax, Denotation, and Connotation.



Holy Sonnet 14: Batter my heart, three-person'd God

[John Donne](#)

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.
5 I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
10 But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

Jabberwocky

Lewis Carroll

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

5 "Beware the Jabberwock, my son
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

10 He took his vorpal sword in hand;
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

15 And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

20 One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

25 'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

Grass

Carl Sandburg

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work—
I am the grass; I cover all.

5 And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the
conductor:

What place is this?
Where are we now?

10

I am the grass.
Let me work.

The Ruined Maid

[Thomas Hardy](#)

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in
Town?

And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"

—

"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

5 — "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers
three!" —

"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said
she.

10 — "At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,'
And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!" —

"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

— "Your hands were like paws then, your face blue
and bleak

15 But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!" —

"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

— "You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you
seem

To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!" —

20 "True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

— "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" —
"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Fire and Ice

Robert Frost

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.

From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.

5 But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To know that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Imagery, Figurative Language, and Symbolism



Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18)

William Shakespeare

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.
5 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,
10 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest 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.

Hope.

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all,

5 And sweetest in the gale is heard;
 And sore must be the storm
 That could abash the little bird
 That kept so many warm.

10 I 've heard it in the chillest land,
 And on the strangest sea;
 Yet, never, in extremity,
 It asked a crumb of me.

The Pulley

George Herbert

When God at first made man,
Having a glass of blessings standing by,
"Let us," said he, "pour on him all we can.
Let the world's riches, which disperséd lie,
5 Contract into a span."

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

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

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

Sweeney among the Nightingales

T. S. Eliot

Apeneck Sweeney spread his knees
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,
The zebra stripes along his jaw
Swelling to maculate giraffe.

5 The circles of the stormy moon
Slide westward toward the River Plate,
Death and the Raven drift above
And Sweeney guards the hornèd gate.

10 Gloomy Orion and the Dog
Are veiled; and hushed the shrunken seas;
The person in the Spanish cape
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

15 Slips and pulls the table cloth
Overturns a coffee-cup,
Reorganised upon the floor
She yawns and draws a stocking up;

20 The silent man in mocha brown
Sprawls at the window-sill and gapes;
The waiter brings in oranges
Bananas figs and hothouse grapes;

The silent vertebrate in brown
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
Rachel née Rabinovitch
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

25 She and the lady in the cape
Are suspect, thought to be in league;

Therefore the man with heavy eyes
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

30 Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wistaria
Circumscribe a golden grin;

35 The host with someone indistinct
Converses at the door apart,
The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

40 And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamemnon cried aloud
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.

1918, 1919

Ah! Sun-flower

William Blake

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the Sun:
Seeking after that sweet golden clime
Where the travellers journey is done.

- 5 Where the Youth pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:
Arise from their graves and aspire,
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go.

Sound, Meter, and Form



An Essay on Criticism: Part 1

Alexander Pope

Si quid novisti rectius istis,

*Candidus imperti; si non, his utere
mecum*

*[If you have come to know any precept
more correct than these, share it with
me, brilliant one; if not, use these with
me] (Horace, Epistle 1.6.67)*

PART 1

1 Tis hard to say, if greater want of skill
2 Appear in writing or in judging ill;
3 But, of the two, less dang'rous is th' offence
4 To tire our patience, than mislead our sense.
5 Some few in that, but numbers err in this,
6 Ten censure wrong for one who writes amiss;
7 A fool might once himself alone expose,
8 Now one in verse makes many more in prose.

9 Tis with our judgments as our watches, none
10 Go just alike, yet each believes his own.
11 In poets as true genius is but rare,
12 True taste as seldom is the critic's share;
13 Both must alike from Heav'n derive their light,
14 These born to judge, as well as those to write.
15 Let such teach others who themselves excel,
16 And censure freely who have written well.
17 Authors are partial to their wit, 'tis true,
18 But are not critics to their judgment too?

19 Yet if we look more closely we shall find
20 Most have the seeds of judgment in their mind;
21 Nature affords at least a glimm'ring light;
22 The lines, tho' touch'd but faintly, are drawn right.
23 But as the slightest sketch, if justly trac'd,
24 Is by ill colouring but the more disgrac'd,
25 So by false learning is good sense defac'd;
26 Some are bewilder'd in the maze of schools,
27 And some made coxcombs Nature meant but fools.
28 In search of wit these lose their common sense,
29 And then turn critics in their own defence:
30 Each burns alike, who can, or cannot write,
31 Or with a rival's, or an eunuch's spite.
32 All fools have still an itching to deride,
33 And fain would be upon the laughing side.
34 If Mævius scribble in Apollo's spite,
35 There are, who judge still worse than he can write.

36 Some have at first for wits, then poets pass'd,
37 Turn'd critics next, and prov'd plain fools at last;
38 Some neither can for wits nor critics pass,
39 As heavy mules are neither horse nor ass.
40 Those half-learn'd witlings, num'rous in our isle
41 As half-form'd insects on the banks of Nile;
42 Unfinish'd things, one knows not what to call,
43 Their generation's so equivocal:
44 To tell 'em, would a hundred tongues require,
45 Or one vain wit's, that might a hundred tire.

46 But you who seek to give and merit fame,
47 And justly bear a critic's noble name,
48 Be sure your self and your own reach to know,
49 How far your genius, taste, and learning go;
50 Launch not beyond your depth, but be discreet,
51 And mark that point where sense and dulness meet.

52 Nature to all things fix'd the limits fit,
53 And wisely curb'd proud man's pretending wit:
54 As on the land while here the ocean gains,
55 In other parts it leaves wide sandy plains;
56 Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
57 The solid pow'r of understanding fails;
58 Where beams of warm imagination play,
59 The memory's soft figures melt away.
60 One science only will one genius fit;
61 So vast is art, so narrow human wit:
62 Not only bounded to peculiar arts,
63 But oft in those, confin'd to single parts.
64 Like kings we lose the conquests gain'd before,
65 By vain ambition still to make them more;
66 Each might his sev'ral province well command,
67 Would all but stoop to what they understand.

68 First follow NATURE, and your judgment frame
69 By her just standard, which is still the same:
70 Unerring Nature, still divinely bright,
71 One clear, unchang'd, and universal light,
72 Life, force, and beauty, must to all impart,
73 At once the source, and end, and test of art.
74 Art from that fund each just supply provides,
75 Works without show, and without pomp presides:
76 In some fair body thus th' informing soul
77 With spirits feeds, with vigour fills the whole,
78 Each motion guides, and ev'ry nerve sustains;
79 Itself unseen, but in th' effects, remains.
80 Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
81 Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
82 For wit and judgment often are at strife,
83 Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
84 Tis more to guide, than spur the Muse's steed;
85 Restrain his fury, than provoke his speed;
86 The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,

87 Shows most true mettle when you check his course.

88 Those RULES of old discover'd, not devis'd,
89 Are Nature still, but Nature methodis'd;
90 Nature, like liberty, is but restrain'd
91 By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

92 Hear how learn'd Greece her useful rules indites,
93 When to repress, and when indulge our flights:
94 High on Parnassus' top her sons she show'd,
95 And pointed out those arduous paths they trod;
96 Held from afar, aloft, th' immortal prize,
97 And urg'd the rest by equal steps to rise.
98 Just precepts thus from great examples giv'n,
99 She drew from them what they deriv'd from Heav'n.
100 The gen'rous critic fann'd the poet's fire,
101 And taught the world with reason to admire.
102 Then criticism the Muse's handmaid prov'd,
103 To dress her charms, and make her more belov'd;
104 But following wits from that intention stray'd;
105 Who could not win the mistress, woo'd the maid;
106 Against the poets their own arms they turn'd,
107 Sure to hate most the men from whom they learn'd.
108 So modern 'pothecaries, taught the art
109 By doctor's bills to play the doctor's part,
110 Bold in the practice of mistaken rules,
111 Prescribe, apply, and call their masters fools.
112 Some on the leaves of ancient authors prey,
113 Nor time nor moths e'er spoil'd so much as they:
114 Some drily plain, without invention's aid,
115 Write dull receipts how poems may be made:
116 These leave the sense, their learning to display,
117 And those explain the meaning quite away.

118 You then whose judgment the right course would
steer,

119 Know well each ANCIENT'S proper character;
120 His fable, subject, scope in ev'ry page;
121 Religion, country, genius of his age:
122 Without all these at once before your eyes,
123 Cavil you may, but never criticise.
124 Be Homer's works your study and delight,
125 Read them by day, and meditate by night;
126 Thence form your judgment, thence your maxims
bring,
127 And trace the Muses upward to their spring;
128 Still with itself compar'd, his text peruse;
129 And let your comment be the Mantuan Muse.

130 When first young Maro in his boundless mind
131 A work t' outlast immortal Rome design'd,
132 Perhaps he seem'd above the critic's law,
133 And but from Nature's fountains scorn'd to draw:
134 But when t' examine ev'ry part he came,
135 Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.
136 Convinc'd, amaz'd, he checks the bold design,
137 And rules as strict his labour'd work confine,
138 As if the Stagirite o'erlook'd each line.
139 Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem;
140 To copy nature is to copy them.

141 Some beauties yet, no precepts can declare,
142 For there's a happiness as well as care.
143 Music resembles poetry, in each
144 Are nameless graces which no methods teach,
145 And which a master-hand alone can reach.
146 If, where the rules not far enough extend,
147 (Since rules were made but to promote their end)
148 Some lucky LICENCE answers to the full
149 Th' intent propos'd, that licence is a rule.
150 Thus Pegasus, a nearer way to take,
151 May boldly deviate from the common track.

152 Great wits sometimes may gloriously offend,
153 And rise to faults true critics dare not mend;
154 From vulgar bounds with brave disorder part,
155 And snatch a grace beyond the reach of art,
156 Which, without passing through the judgment, gains
157 The heart, and all its end at once attains.
158 In prospects, thus, some objects please our eyes,
159 Which out of nature's common order rise,
160 The shapeless rock, or hanging precipice.
161 But tho' the ancients thus their rules invade,
162 (As kings dispense with laws themselves have
made)

163 Moderns, beware! or if you must offend
164 Against the precept, ne'er transgress its end;
165 Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need,
166 And have, at least, their precedent to plead.
167 The critic else proceeds without remorse,
168 Seizes your fame, and puts his laws in force.

169 I know there are, to whose presumptuous thoughts
170 Those freer beauties, ev'n in them, seem faults.
171 Some figures monstrous and misshap'd appear,
172 Consider'd singly, or beheld too near,
173 Which, but proportion'd to their light, or place,
174 Due distance reconciles to form and grace.
175 A prudent chief not always must display
176 His pow'rs in equal ranks, and fair array,
177 But with th' occasion and the place comply,
178 Conceal his force, nay seem sometimes to fly.
179 Those oft are stratagems which errors seem,
180 Nor is it Homer nods, but we that dream.

181 Still green with bays each ancient altar stands,
182 Above the reach of sacrilegious hands,
183 Secure from flames, from envy's fiercer rage,
184 Destructive war, and all-involving age.

185 See, from each clime the learn'd their incense bring!
186 Hear, in all tongues consenting pæans ring!
187 In praise so just let ev'ry voice be join'd,
188 And fill the gen'ral chorus of mankind!
189 Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days;
190 Immortal heirs of universal praise!
191 Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
192 As streams roll down, enlarging as they flow!
193 Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
194 And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
195 Oh may some spark of your celestial fire
196 The last, the meanest of your sons inspire,
197 (That on weak wings, from far, pursues your flights;
198 Glows while he reads, but trembles as he writes)
199 To teach vain wits a science little known,
200 T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own!

Eight O'clock

Alfred Edward Housman

He stood, and heard the steeple
Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people
It tossed them down.

- 5 Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,
He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;
And then the clock collected in the tower
Its strength, and struck.

The Splendor Falls

Alfred Lord Tennyson

The splendor falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story;
The long light shakes across the lakes,
And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
5 Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O, hark, O, hear! how thin and clear,
And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O, sweet and far from cliff and scar
10 The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying,
Blow, bugles; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
They faint on hill or field or river;
15 Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
And grow forever and forever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

The Coming of War: Actaeon

Ezra Pound

An image of Lethe,
 and the fields
Full of faint light
 but golden,
5 Gray cliffs,
 and beneath them
A sea
Harsher than granite,
 unstill, never ceasing;
10 High forms
 with the movement of gods,
Perilous aspect;
 And one said:
"This is Actæon."
15 Actaeon of golden greaves!

Over fair meadows,
Over the cool face of that field,
Unstill, ever moving,
Host of an ancient people,
20 The silent cortège.