21
Poems for Further Reading

The manuscript of John Donne’s sonnet, “Death be not proud” (page 445)
Anonymous (traditional Scottish ballad)

Lord Randall

“O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son?
And where ha you been, my handsome young man?”
“I ha been at the greenwood; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

“An wha° met ye there, Lord Randal, my son?
An wha met you there, my handsome young man?”
“O I met wi my true-love; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

“And what did she give you, Lord Randal, my son?
And what did she give you, my handsome young man?”
“Eels fried in a pan; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

“And wha° gat° your leavins,° Lord Randal, my son?
And wha gat your leavins, my handsome young man?”
“My hawks and my hounds; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

“And what becam of them, Lord Randal, my son?
And what becam of them, my handsome young man?”
“They stretched their legs out an died; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down.”

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

“What d’ ye leave to your mother, Lord Randal, my son?
What d’ ye leave to your mother, my handsome young man?”
“Four and twenty milk kye;° mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

“What d’ ye leave to your sister, Lord Randal, my son?
What d’ ye leave to your sister, my handsome young man?”
“My gold and my silver; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

“What d’ ye leave to your brother, Lord Randal, my son?
What d’ ye leave to your brother, my handsome young man?”
“My house and my lands; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”

“What d’ ye leave to your true-love, Lord Randal, my son?
What d’ ye leave to your true-love, my handsome young man?”
“I leave her hell and fire; mother, mak my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wad lie down.”
COMPARE

“Lord Randall” with a modern ballad such as “Ballad of Birmingham” by Dudley Randall (page 140).

Anonymous (traditional English ballad)

The Three Ravens

There were three ravens sat on a tree,
Down a down, hay down, hay down,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
With a down,
There were three ravens sat on a tree,
They were as black as they might be.
With a down derry, derry, derry, down, down.

The one of them said to his mate,
“Where shall we our breakfast take?”

“Down in yonder greene field,
There lies a knight slain under his shield.
“His hounds they lie down at his feet,
So well they can their master keep.
“His hawks they fly so eagerly,
There’s no fowl dare him come nigh.”

Down there comes a fallow doe,
As great with young as she might go.
She lifted up his bloody head,
And kist his wounds that were so red.
She got him up upon her back,
And carried him to earthen lake.
The grave
She buried him before the prime,
The grave
dawn
She was dead herself ere evensong time.

God send every gentleman
Such hawks, such hounds, and such a leman.

The Three Ravens. The lines of refrain are repeated in each stanza. “Perhaps in the folk mind the doe is the form the soul of a human mistress, now dead, has taken,” Albert B. Friedman has suggested (in The Viking Book of Folk Ballads). “Most probably the knight’s beloved was understood to be an enchanted woman who was metamorphosed at certain times into an animal.” In lines 22 and 23, prime and evensong are two of the canonical hours set aside for prayer and worship. Prime is at dawn, evensong at dusk.
Anonymous (traditional Scottish ballad)

The Twa Corbies

As I was walking all alane,
I heard twa corbies° making a mane;°
The tane° unto the t’other say,
“Where sall we gang° and dine today?”

“In behint yon auld fail dyke,°
I wot° there lies a new slain knight;
And naebody kens° that he lies there,
But his hawk, his hound, and lady fair.

“His hound is to the hunting gane,
His hawk to fetch the wild-fowl hame,
His lady’s ta’en another mate,
So we may mak our dinner sweet.

“Ye’ll sit on his white hause-bane,°
And I’ll pike out his bonny blue een;
Wi’ ae° lock o’ his gowden hair
We’ll theek° our nest when it grows bare.

“Mony a one for him makes mane,
But nane sall ken where he is gane;
O’er his white banes, when they are bare,
The wind sall blaw for evermair.”

The Twa Corbies. Sir Walter Scott, the first to print this ballad in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802–1803), calls it “rather a counterpart than a copy” of “The Three Ravens.” M. J. C. Hodgart and other scholars think he may have written most of it himself.

Anonymous (Navajo mountain chant)

Last Words of the Prophet

Farewell, my younger brother!
From the holy places the gods come for me.
You will never see me again; but when the showers pass and the thunders peal,
“There,” you will say, “is the voice of my elder brother.”
And when the harvest comes, of the beautiful birds and grasshoppers you will say,
“There is the ordering of my elder brother!”
—Translated by Washington Matthews

Compare

“Last Words of the Prophet” with “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” by William Wordsworth (page 156).
Matthew Arnold (1822–1888)

Dover Beach

1867

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanced land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles° of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling° plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

COMPARE

“Dover Beach” with “Hap” by Thomas Hardy (page 460).
John Ashbery (b. 1927)*

At North Farm

1984

Somewhere someone is traveling furiously toward you,
At incredible speed, traveling day and night,
Through blizzards and desert heat, across torrents, through narrow passes.

But will he know where to find you,
Recognize you when he sees you,
Give you the thing he has for you?

Hardly anything grows here,
Yet the granaries are bursting with meal,
The sacks of meal piled to the rafters.
The streams run with sweetness, fattening fish;
Birds darken the sky. Is it enough
That the dish of milk is set out at night,
That we think of him sometimes,
Sometimes and always, with mixed feelings?

COMPARE

“At North Farm” with “Uphill” by Christina Rossetti (page 246).

Margaret Atwood (b. 1939)*

Siren Song

1974

This is the one song everyone would like to learn: the song that is irresistible:
the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can’t remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?

I don’t enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,
I don’t enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

SIREN SONG. In Greek mythology, sirens were half-woman, half-bird nymphs who lured sailors to their deaths by singing hypnotically beautiful songs.

COMPARE
“Siren Song” with “Her Kind” by Anne Sexton (page 31).
W. H. Auden (1907–1973)*

As I Walked Out One Evening

As I walked out one evening,
  Walking down Bristol Street,
The crowds upon the pavement
  Were fields of harvest wheat.

And down by the brimming river
  I heard a lover sing
Under an arch of the railway:
  “Love has no ending.

“I’ll love you, dear, I’ll love you
  Till China and Africa meet,
And the river jumps over the mountain
  And the salmon sing in the street,

“I’ll love you till the ocean
  Is folded and hung up to dry
And the seven stars go squawking
  Like geese about the sky.

“The years shall run like rabbits,
  For in my arms I hold
The Flower of the Ages,
  And the first love of the world.”

But all the clocks in the city
  Began to whirr and chime:
“O let not Time deceive you,
  You cannot conquer Time.
“In the burrows of the Nightmare
   Where Justice naked is,
Time watches from the shadow
   And coughs when you would kiss.

“In headaches and in worry
   Vaguely life leaks away,
And Time will have his fancy
   Tomorrow or today.

“Into many a green valley
   Drifts the appalling snow;
Time breaks the threaded dances
   And the diver’s brilliant bow.

“O plunge your hands in water,
   Plunge them in up to the wrist;
Stare, stare in the basin
   And wonder what you’ve missed.

“The glacier knocks in the cupboard,
   The desert sighs in the bed,
And the crack in the teacup opens
   A lane to the land of the dead.

“Where the beggars raffle the banknotes
   And the Giant is enchanting to Jack,
And the Lily-white Boy is a Roarer,
   And Jill goes down on her back.

“O look, look in the mirror,
   O look in your distress;
Life remains a blessing
   Although you cannot bless.

“O stand, stand at the window
   As the tears scald and start;
You shall love your crooked neighbor
   With your crooked heart.”

It was late, late in the evening,
   The lovers they were gone;
The clocks had ceased their chiming,
   And the deep river ran on.

**COMPARE**

“As I Walked Out One Evening” with “Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold (page 422) and “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by E. E. Cummings (page 66).
W. H. Auden (1907–1973)*

Musée des Beaux Arts

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

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

The Fall of Icarus by Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1520?–1569)
Poems for Further Reading

Elizabeth Bishop (1911–1979)*

Filling Station 1965

Oh, but it is dirty!
—this little filling station,
oil-soaked, oil-permeated
to a disturbing, over-all
black translucency.
Be careful with that match!

Father wears a dirty,
oil-soaked monkey suit
that cuts him under the arms,
and several quick and saucy
and greasy sons assist him
(it’s a family filling station),
all quite thoroughly dirty.

Do they live in the station?
It has a cement porch
behind the pumps, and on it
a set of crushed and grease-
impregnated wickerwork;
on the wicker sofa
a dirty dog, quite comfy.

COMPARE
“Musée des Beaux Arts” with “The Dance” by William Carlos Williams (page 222) and the painting by Pieter Brueghel to which each poem refers.
Some comic books provide
the only note of color—
of certain color. They lie
upon a big dim doily
draping a taboret°
(part of the set), beside
a big hirsute begonia.

Why the extraneous plant?
Why the taboret?
Why, oh why, the doily?
(Embroidered in daisy stitch
with marguerites, I think,
and heavy with gray crochet.)

Somebody embroidered the doily.
Somebody waters the plant,
or oils it, maybe. Somebody
arranges the rows of cans
so that they softly say:
ESSO—SO—SO—SO
to high-strung automobiles.
Somebody loves us all.

**COMPARE**

"Filling Station" with "The splendor falls on castle walls" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (page 159).
William Blake (1757–1827)*

The Tyger 1794

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

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

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and 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 down their spears,
And watered 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 forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

**COMPARE**


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**William Blake** (1757–1827)*

**The Sick Rose**

1794

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.

**COMPARE**

“The Sick Rose” with “The Man with Night Sweats” by Thom Gunn (page 455).
Eavan Boland (b. 1944)

Anorexic  1980

Flesh is heretic.
My body is a witch.
I am burning it.

Yes I am torching
her curves and paps and wiles.
They scorch in my self denials.

How she meshed my head
in the half-truths
of her fevers

till I renounced
milk and honey
and the taste of lunch.

I vomited
her hungers.
Now the bitch is burning.

I am starved and curveless.
I am skin and bone.
She has learned her lesson.

Thin as a rib
I turn in sleep.
My dreams probe

a claustrophobia
a sensuous enclosure.
How warm it was and wide

once by a warm drum,
once by the song of his breath
and in his sleeping side.
Only a little more, 
only a few more days 
sinless, foodless, 

I will slip 
back into him again 
as if I had never been away. 

Caged so 
I will grow 
angular and holy 
past pain, 
Keeping his heart 
such company 
as will make me forget 
in a small space 
the fall 
into forked dark, 
into python needs 
heaving to hips and breasts 
and lips and heat 
and sweat and fat and greed. 

**COMPARE**

"Anorexic" with "Her Kind" by Anne Sexton (page 31).


**The Mother** 1945

Abortions will not let you forget. 
You remember the children you got that you did not get, 
The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair, 
The singers and workers that never handled the air. 
You will never neglect or beat 
Them, or silence or buy with a sweet. 
You will never wind up the sucking-thumb 
Or scuttle off ghosts that come. 
You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh, 
Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye. 

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed children. 
I have contracted. I have eased 
My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck. 
I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized 
Your luck 
And your lives from your unfinished reach,
If I stole your births and your names,
Your straight baby tears and your games,
Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches, and your deaths,
If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,
Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.
Though why should I whine,
Whine that the crime was other than mine?—
Since anyhow you are dead.
Or rather, or instead,
You were never made.
But that too, I am afraid,
Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?
You were born, you had body, you died.
It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.
Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you All.

**COMPARE**

“The Mother” with “Metaphors” by Sylvia Plath (page 115) and “The Victory” by Anne Stevenson (page 92).

**Gwendolyn Brooks** (1917–2000)*

**the preacher: ruminates**

**behind the sermon**

I think it must be lonely to be God.
Nobody loves a master. No. Despite
The bright hosannas, bright dear-Lords, and bright
Determined reverence of Sunday eyes.

Picture Jehovah striding through the hall
Of His importance, creatures running out
From servant-corners to acclaim, to shout
Appreciation of His merit’s glare.

But who walks with Him?—dares to take His arm,
To slap Him on the shoulder, tweak His ear,
Buy Him a Coca-Cola or a beer,
Pooh-pooh His politics, call Him a fool?

Perhaps—who knows?—He tires of looking down.
Those eyes are never lifted. Never straight.
Perhaps sometimes He tires of being great
In solitude. Without a hand to hold.
COMPARE

“the preacher: ruminates behind the sermon” with “Death be not proud” by John Donne (page 445).

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861)*

How Do I Love Thee?
Let Me Count the Ways

1850

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of being and ideal grace.
I love thee to the level of every day's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

COMPARE

“How Do I Love Thee?” with “What lips my lips have kissed” by Edna St. Vincent Millay (page 202).

Robert Browning (1812–1889)*

Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister

1842

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!
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;
   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;
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,
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!)

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,
  —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
Cross-wise, to my recollection,
  As I do, in Jesu's praise.
I the Trinity illustrate,
  Drinking watered orange-pulp—
In three sips the Arian frustrate;
  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.
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,
  Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
  One sure, if another fails;
If I trip him just a-dying,
  Sure of heaven as sure can be,
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
  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!
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
We're so proud of! 'Hy, Zy, Hine...'
'St, there's Vespers! Plena gratia
Ave, Virgo!® Gr-r-r—you swine!

SOLILOQUY OF THE SPANISH CLOISTER. 3 Brother Lawrence: one of the speaker's fellow monks. 31 Barbary corsair: a pirate operating off the Barbary coast of Africa. 39 Arian: a follower of Arius, heretic who denied the doctrine of the Trinity. 49 a great text in Galatians: a difficult verse in this book of the Bible. Brother Lawrence will be damned as a heretic if he wrongly interprets it. 56 Manichee: another kind of heretic, one who (after the Persian philosopher Mani) sees in the world a constant struggle between good and evil, neither able to win. 60 Belial: here, not specifically Satan but (as used in the Old Testament) a name for wickedness. 70 Hy, Zy, Hine: possibly the sound of a bell to announce evening devotions.

COMPARE
“Solioloquy of the Spanish Cloister” with “In Westminster Abbey” by John Betjeman (page 36).

Geoffrey Chaucer (1340?–1400)

Merciless Beauty (late 14th century)

Your ðen® two wol slee® me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem® not sustene,®
So woundeth hit thourghout my herte kene.

And but® your word wol helen® hastily
My hertes wounde, while that hit is grene®,
Your ðen two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene.

Upon my trouthe® I sey you feithfully
That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene;
For with my deeth the trouthe® shal be sene.

Your ðen two wol slee me sodenly;
I may the beautee of hem not sustene,
So woundeth it thourghout my herte kene.

MERCILESS BEAUTY. This poem is one of a group of three roundels, collectively titled “Merciles Beaute.” A roundel (or rondel) is an English form consisting of 11 lines in 3 stanzas rimed with a refrain. 3 So woundeth...kene: “So deeply does it wound me through the heart.”

COMPARE
“Merciless Beauty” with “My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun” by William Shakespeare (page 508).
G. K. Chesterton (1874–1936)

The Donkey

When fishes flew and forests walked
   And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
   Then surely I was born;

With monstrous head and sickening cry
   And ears like errant wings,
The devil’s walking parody
   On all four-footed things.

The tattered outlaw of the earth,
   Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
   I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
   One far fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
   And palms before my feet.

THE DONKEY. For more details of the donkey’s hour of triumph see Matthew 21:1–8.

COMPARE

“The Donkey” with “The Tyger” by William Blake (page 430).
LUCILLE CLIFTON

Lucille Clifton (b. 1936)

Homage to my hips 1991

these hips are big hips
they need space to
move around in.
they don’t fit into little
petty places, these hips
are free hips.
they don’t like to be held back.
these hips have never been enslaved,
they go where they want to go
they do what they want to do.
these hips are mighty hips.
these hips are magic hips.
i have known them
to put a spell on a man and
spin him like a top!

COMPARE

“Homage to my hips” with “Anorexic” by Eavan Boland (page 432).
Poems for Further Reading

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834)

Kubla Khan (1797–1798)

Or, a Vision in a Dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
    Down to a sunless sea. 5
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
It flung up momently the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sunk in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

KUBLA KHAN. There was an actual Kublai Khan, a thirteenth-century Mongol emperor, and a Chinese city of Xanadu; but Coleridge's dream vision also borrows from travelers' descriptions of such other exotic places as Abyssinia and America. 51 circle: a magic circle drawn to keep away evil spirits.

COMPARE

Billy Collins (b. 1941)*

Care and Feeding 2003

Because I will turn 420 tomorrow
in dog years
I will take myself for a long walk
along the green shore of the lake,

and when I walk in the door,
I will jump up on my chest
and lick my nose and ears and eyelids
while I tell myself again and again to get down.

I will fill my metal bowl at the sink
with cold fresh water,
and lift a biscuit from the jar
and hold it gingerly with my teeth.

Then I will make three circles
and lie down at my feet on the wood floor
and close my eyes
while I type all morning and into the afternoon,
checking every once in a while
to make sure I am still there,
reaching down
to stroke my furry, venerable head.

**COMPARE**

“Care and Feeding” with “For the Anniversary of My Death” by W. S. Merwin (page 221).

**Hart Crane** (1899–1932)

My Grandmother’s Love Letters

There are no stars tonight
But those of memory.
Yet how much room for memory there is
In the loose girdle of soft rain.

There is even room enough
For the letters of my mother’s mother,
Elizabeth,
That have been pressed so long
Into a corner of the roof
That they are brown and soft,
And liable to melt as snow.

Over the greatness of such space
Steps must be gentle.
It is all hung by an invisible white hair.
It trembles as birch limbs webbing the air.

And I ask myself:

“Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes:
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again
As though to her?”

Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
Through much of what she would not understand;
And so I stumble. And the rain continues on the roof
With such a sound of gently pitying laughter.

**COMPARE**

“My Grandmother’s Love Letters” with “When You Are Old” by William Butler Yeats
(page 534).
somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

somewhere i have never travelled, glad beyond any experience, your eyes have their silence:
in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,
or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me
though i have closed myself as fingers,
you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens
(touching skilfully, mysteriously) her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and
my life will shut very beautifully, suddenly,
as when the heart of this flower imagines
the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals
the power of your intense fragility; whose texture compels me with the colour of its countries,
rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes and opens; only something in me understands
the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)

nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands

COMPARE

“somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond” with “Merciless Beauty” by Geoffrey Chaucer (page 437) or “Elegy for Jane” by Theodore Roethke (page 503).
Marisa de los Santos (b. 1966)

**Perfect Dress**

2000

It’s here in a student’s journal, a blue confession in smudged, erasable ink: “I can’t stop hoping I’ll wake up, suddenly beautiful,” and isn’t it strange how we want it, despite all we know? To be at last the girl in the photograph, cobalt-eyed, hair puddling like cognac, or the one stretched at the ocean’s edge, curved and light-drenched, more like a beach than the beach. I confess I have longed to stalk runways, leggy, otherworldly as a mantis, to balance a head like a Fabergé egg on the longest, most elegant neck.

Today in the checkout line, I saw a magazine claiming to know “How to Find the Perfect Dress for that Perfect Evening,” and I felt the old pull, flare of the pilgrim’s twin flames, desire and faith. At fifteen, I spent weeks at the search. Going from store to store, hands thirsty for shine, I reached for polyester satin, machine-made lace, petunia- and Easter egg-colored, brilliant and flammable. Nothing haute about this couture but my hopes for it, as I tug it on and waited for my one, true body to emerge.

(Picture the angel inside uncut marble, articulation of wings and robes poised in expectation of release.) What I wanted was ordinary miracle, the falling away of everything wrong. Silly maybe or maybe
I was right, that there’s no limit to the ways eternity suggests itself, that one day I’ll slip into it, say
floor-length plum charmeuse. Someone will murmur,
“She is sublime,” will be precisely right, and I will step,
with incandescent shoulders, into my perfect evening.

**PERFECT DRESS. 10 Fabergé**. Peter Carl Fabergé (1846–1920) was a Russian jeweler renowned for his elaborately decorated, golden, jeweled eggs.

**COMPARE**

“Perfect Dress” with “Anorexic” by Eavan Boland (page 432).

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**John Donne** (1572–1631)*

**Death be not proud** (about 1610)

Death be not proud, though some have callèd thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think’st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and 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.
COMPARE

Compare Donne’s personification of Death in “Death be not proud” with Emily Dickinson’s in “Because I could not stop for Death” (page 363).

**John Donne (1572–1631)*

*The Flea* 1633

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

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, yea more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, we’re met
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.

Though use° make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

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

**COMPARE**

“The Flea” with “To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell (page 483).

**John Donne (1572–1631)*

*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* (1611)

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° brings 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 ourselves know not what it is,  
Inter-assurèd 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 expansiôn,  
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 center sit,  
Yet when the other far doth roam,  
It leans and harkens after it,  
And grows erect as that comes home.

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

A VALEDICTION: FORBIDDING MOURNING. According to Donne’s biographer Izaak Walton, Donne’s wife received this poem as a gift before the poet departed on a journey to France. 11 spheres: in Ptolemaic astronomy, the concentric spheres surrounding the earth. The trepidation or motion of the ninth sphere was thought to change the date of the equinox. 19 Inter-assurèd of the mind: each sure in mind that the other is faithful. 24 gold to airy thinness: gold is so malleable that, if beaten to the thickness of gold leaf (1/250,000 of one inch), one ounce of gold would cover 250 square feet.

COMPARE

“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” with “To Lucasta” by Richard Lovelace (page 42).
John Dryden (1631–1700)

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham 1684

Farewell, too little and too lately known,
Whom I began to think and call my own;
For sure our souls were near allied, and thine
Cast in the same poetic mold with mine.
One common note on either lyre did strike,
And knaves and fools we both abhorred alike.
To the same goal did both our studies drive:
The last set out the soonest did arrive.
Thus Nisus fell upon the slippery place,
While his young friend performed and won the race.
O early ripe! to thy abundant store
What could advancing age have added more?
It might (what Nature never gives the young)
Have taught the numbers\(^\text{\textdegree}\) of thy native tongue.
But satire needs not those, and wit will shine
Through the harsh cadence of a rugged line.
A noble error, and but seldom made,
When poets are by too much force betrayed.
Thy gen'rous fruits, though gathered ere their prime,
Still showed a quickness; and maturing time
But mellows what we write to the dull sweets of rhyme.
Once more, hail, and farewell! farewell, thou young
But ah! too short, Marcellus of our tongue!
Thy brows with ivy and with laurels bound;
But fate and gloomy night encompass thee around.

To the Memory of Mr. Oldham. John Oldham, poet best remembered for his Satires upon the Jesuits, had died at thirty. 9–10 Nisus; his young friend: these two close friends, as Virgil tells us in the Aeneid, ran a race for the prize of an olive crown. 23 Marcellus: had he not died in his twentieth year, he would have succeeded the Roman emperor Augustus. 25 This line echoes the Aeneid (VI, 886), in which Marcellus is seen walking under the black cloud of his impending doom.

COMPARE

“To the Memory of Mr. Oldham” with “Elegy for Jane” by Theodore Roethke (page 503).

T. S. Eliot (1888–1965)*

Journey of the Magi 1927

“A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter.”
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

JOURNEY OF THE MAGI. The story of the Magi, the three wise men who traveled to Bethlehem to behold the baby Jesus, is told in Matthew 2:1–12. That the three were kings is a later tradition. 1–5 A coming . . . winter: Eliot quotes with slight changes from a sermon preached on Christmas Day, 1622, by Bishop Lancelot Andrewes. 24 three trees: foreshadowing the three crosses on Calvary (see Luke 23:32–33). 25 white horse: perhaps the steed that carried the conquering Christ in the vision of St. John the Divine (Revelation 19:11–16). 41 old dispensation: older, pagan religion about to be displaced by Christianity.

COMPARE

Home’s the place we head for in our sleep.
Boxcars stumbling north in dreams
don’t wait for us. We catch them on the run.
The rails, old lacerations that we love,
shoot parallel across the face and break
just under Turtle Mountains. Riding scars
you can’t get lost. Home is the place they cross.

The lame guard strikes a match and makes the dark
less tolerant. We watch through cracks in boards
as the land starts rolling, rolling till it hurts
to be here, cold in regulation clothes.
We know the sheriff’s waiting at midrun
to take us back. His car is dumb and warm.
The highway doesn’t rock, it only hums
like a wing of long insults. The worn-down welts
of ancient punishments lead back and forth.

All runaways wear dresses, long green ones,
the color you would think shame was. We scrub
the sidewalks down because it’s shameful work.
Our brushes cut the stone in watered arcs
and in the soak frail outlines shiver clear
a moment, things us kids pressed on the dark
face before it hardened, pale, remembering
delicate old injuries, the spines of names and leaves.

Louise Erdrich (b. 1954)

Indian Boarding School: The Runaways 1984

Indian Boarding School: The Runaways. 6. Turtle Mountains: in North Dakota and Manitoba. The poet, of German and Native American descent, belongs to the Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippewa.
COMPARE

B. H. Fairchild  (b. 1942)

A Starlit Night  2003

All over America at this hour men are standing
by an open closet door, slacks slung over one arm,
staring at wire hangers, thinking of taxes
or a broken faucet or their first sex: the smell
of back-seat Naugahyde, the hush of a maize field
like breathing, the stars rushing, rushing away.

And a woman lies in an unmade bed watching
the man she has known twenty-one, no,
could it be? twenty-two years, and she is listening
to the polonaise climbing up through radio static
from the kitchen where dishes are piled
and the linoleum floor is a great, gray sea.

It’s the A-flat polonaise she practiced endlessly,
never quite getting it right, though her father,
calling from the darkened TV room, always said,
“Beautiful, kiddo!” and the moon would slide across
the lacquered piano top as if it were something
that lived underwater, something from far below.

They both came from houses with photographs,
the smell of camphor in closets, board games
with missing pieces, sunburst clocks in the kitchen
that made them, each morning, a little sad.
They didn’t know what they wanted, every night,
every starlit night of their lives, and now they have it.

COMPARE
“A Starlit Night” with Wallace Stevens’s “Disillusionment of Ten O’Clock” (page 79).

Robert Frost  (1874–1963)*

Birches  1916

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy’s been swinging them.
But swinging doesn’t bend them down to stay
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow crust—
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,  
But dipped its top and set me down again.  
That would be good both going and coming back.  
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

**COMPARE**

“Birches” with “Sailing to Byzantium” by William Butler Yeats (page 338).

**Robert Frost** (1874–1963)*

*Mending Wall* 1914

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

**COMPARE**  
"Mending Wall" with “Digging” by Seamus Heaney (page 462).

**Robert Frost** (1874–1963)*

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**  

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

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

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

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

**COMPARE**  

**Allen Ginsberg** (1926–1997)

**A Supermarket in California**  

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.
In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!— and you, García Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

A Supermarket in California. 2 enumerations: many of Whitman’s poems contain lists of observed details. 3 García Lorca: modern Spanish poet who wrote an “Ode to Walt Whitman” in his book-length sequence Poet in New York. 12 Charon . . . Lethe: Is the poet confusing two underworld rivers? Charon, in Greek and Roman mythology, is the boatman who ferries the souls of the dead across the River Styx. The River Lethe also flows through Hades, and a drink of its waters makes the dead lose their painful memories of loved ones they have left behind.

COMPARE

“A Supermarket in California” with Walt Whitman’s “To a Locomotive in Winter” (page 21).

Thom Gunn (1929–2004)

The Man with Night Sweats

I wake up cold, I who
Prospered through dreams of heat
Wake to their residue,
Sweat, and a clinging sheet.

My flesh was its own shield:
Where it was gashed, it healed.
I grew as I explored
The body I could trust
Even while I adored
The risk that made robust,

A world of wonders in
Each challenge to the skin.

I cannot but be sorry
The given shield was cracked,
My mind reduced to hurry,
My flesh reduced and wrecked.

I have to change the bed,
But catch myself instead

Stopped upright where I am
Hugging my body to me
As if to shield it from
The pains that will go through me,

As if hands were enough
To hold an avalanche off.

**COMPARE**

“The Man with Night Sweats” with “When I have fears that I may cease to be” by John Keats (page 473).

**Donald Hall** (b. 1928)

**Names of Horses** 1978

All winter your brute shoulders strained against collars, padding and steerhide over the ash hames, to haul sledges of cordwood for drying through spring and summer, for the Glenwood stove next winter, and for the simmering range.

In April you pulled cartloads of manure to spread on the fields, dark manure of Holsteins, and knobs of your own clustered with oats. All summer you mowed the grass in meadow and hayfield, the mowing machine clacketing beside you, while the sun walked high in the morning; and after noon’s heat, you pulled a clawed rake through the same acres, gathering stacks, and dragged the wagon from stack to stack, and the built hayrack back, uphill to the chaffy barn, three loads of hay a day from standing grass in the morning.

Sundays you trotted the two miles to church with the light load of a leather quartertop buggy, and grazed in the sound of hymns. Generation on generation, your neck rubbed the windowsill of the stall, smoothing the wood as the sea smooths glass.
When you were old and lame, when your shoulders hurt bending to graze,
one October the man, who fed you and kept you, and harnessed you every
morning,
led you through corn stubble to sandy ground above Eagle Pond,
and dug a hole beside you where you stood shuddering in your skin,
and lay the shotgun’s muzzle in the boneless hollow behind your ear,
and fired the slug into your brain, and felled you into your grave,
shoveling sand to cover you, setting goldenrod upright above you,
where by next summer a dent in the ground made your monument.

For a hundred and fifty years, in the pasture of dead horses,
roots of pine trees pushed through the pale curves of your ribs,
yellow blossoms flourished above you in autumn, and in winter
frost heaved your bones in the ground—old toilers, soil makers:
O Roger, Mackerel, Riley, Ned, Nellie, Chester, Lady Ghost.

COMPARE
“Names of Horses” with “The Bull Calf” by Irving Layton (page 478).

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)*

The Convergence of the Twain

I
In a solitude of the sea
Deep from human vanity,
And the Pride of life that planned her, stilly couches she.

II
Steel chambers, late the pyres
Of her salamandrine fires,
Cold currents thrid,° and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.

III
Over the mirrors meant
To glass the opulent
The sea-worm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.

IV
Jewels In joy designed
To ravish the sensuous mind
Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.
V
Dim moon-eyed fishes near
Gaze at the gilded gear
And query: “What does this vaingloriousness down here?” . . .

VI
Well: while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

VII
Prepared a sinister mate
For her—so gaily great—
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

VIII
And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

IX
Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

X
Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

XI
Till the Spinner of the Years
Said “Now!” And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres.

THE CONVERGENCE OF THE TWAIN. The luxury liner Titanic, supposedly unsinkable, went down in 1912 after striking an iceberg on its first Atlantic voyage. 5 salamandrine: like the salamander, a lizard that supposedly thrives in fires, or like a spirit of the same name that inhabits fire (according to alchemists).

COMPARE
“The Convergence of the Twain” with “Titanic” by David R. Slavitt (page 508).
Poems for Further Reading

Thomas Hardy  (1840–1928)*

The Darkling Thrush  

I leant upon a coppice gate 
 When Frost was spectre-gray,  
 And Winter’s dregs made desolate  
 The weakening eye of day.  

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
 Like strings of broken lyres,  
 And all mankind that haunted nigh  
 Had sought their household fires.  

The land’s sharp features seemed to be  
 The Century’s corpse outleant,  
 His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
 The wind his death-lament.  

The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
 Was shrunken hard and dry,  
 And every spirit upon earth  
 Seemed fervourless as I.  

At once a voice arose among  
 The bleak twigs overhead  
 In a full-hearted evensong  
 Of joy illimited;  

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
 In blast-beruffled plume,  
 Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
 Upon the growing gloom.
So little cause for carolings
   Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
   Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
   His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
   And I was unaware.

THE DARKLING THRUSH. Hardy set this poem on December 31, 1900, the last day of the nineteenth century.

COMPARE


Thomas Hardy (1840–1928)*

Hap (1866)

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: “Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love’s loss is my hate’s profiting!”

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

COMPARE

“Hap” with the Roman poet Horace’s *carpe diem* ode on pages 300–302. Choose any of the three translations there of Horace’s work or use the literal translation provided below the Latin original.
Robert Hayden (1913–1980)*

Those Winter Sundays

1962

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I’d wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he’d call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love’s austere and lonely offices?

COMPARE

“Those Winter Sundays” with “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath (page 494).
Seamus Heaney  (b. 1939)*

Digging

1966

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests; snug as a gun.

Under my window, a clean rasping sound
When the spade sinks into gravelly ground:
My father, digging. I look down

Till his straining rump among the flowerbeds
Bends low, comes up twenty years away
Stooping in rhythm through potato drills
Where he was digging.

The coarse boot nestled on the lug, the shaft
Against the inside knee was levered firmly.
He rooted out tall tops, buried the bright edge deep
To scatter new potatoes that we picked
Loving their cool hardness in our hands.

By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.

My grandfather cut more turf in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
Corked sloppily with paper. He straightened up
To drink it, then fell to right away

Nicking and slicing neatly, heaving sods
Over his shoulder, going down and down
For the good turf. Digging.

The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap
Of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge
Through living roots awaken in my head.
But I've no spade to follow men like them.

Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

COMPARE

"Digging" with "The Writer" by Richard Wilbur (page 525).
Adam

Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of dew?

“Adam, my child, my son,
These very words you hear
Compose the fish and starlight
Of your untroubled dream.
When you awake, my child,
It shall all come true.
Know that it was for you
That all things were begun.”

Adam, my child, my son,
Thus spoke Our Father in heaven
To his first, fabled child,
The father of us all.
And I, your father, tell
The words over again
As innumerable men
From ancient times have done.

Tell them again in pain,
And to the empty air.
Where you are men speak
A different mother tongue.
Will you forget our games,
Our hide-and-seek and song?
Child, it will be long
Before I see you again.
Adam, there will be
Many hard hours,
As an old poem says,
Hours of loneliness.
I cannot ease them for you;
They are our common lot.
During them, like as not,
You will dream of me.

When you are crouched away
In a strange clothes closet
Hiding from one who’s “It”
And the dark crowds in,
Do not be afraid—
O, if you can, believe
In a father’s love
That you shall know some day.

Think of the summer rain
Or seedpearls of the mist;
Seeing the beaded leaf,
Try to remember me.
From far away
I send my blessing out
To circle the great globe.
It shall reach you yet.

ADAM. According to Genesis 2:6–7, God created Adam, the first man, from the dust of the earth; Adam is also the name of Anthony Hecht’s first son. Epigraph: “Hath the rain a father . . . ?”: These words are spoken to Job by the voice of God in Job 38:28.

COMPARE

“Adam” with “For My Daughter” by Weldon Kees (page 23).
George Herbert  (1593–1633)*

Love  1633

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
   Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
   From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
   If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”;
   Love said, “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
   I cannot look on Thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
   “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
   Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
   “My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste My meat.”
   So I did sit and eat.

COMPARE

“Love” with “Batter my heart, three-personed God” by John Donne (page 5353).
Robert Herrick (1591–1674)*

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time 1648

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

COMPARE

“To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” with “To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell (page 483) and “Go, Lovely Rose” by Edmund Waller (page 523).

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)*

Spring and Fall (1880)

To a young child
Márgarét, áre you gírieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Áh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you wíll weep and know why.

Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrow’s spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost° guessed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It ís Margaret you mourn for.

COMPARE

“Spring and Fall” with “Aftermath” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (page 55).
Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)*

No worst, there is none (1884–1885)

No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief,
More pangs will, schooled at forepangs, wilder wring.
Comforter, where, where is your comforting?
Mary, mother of us, where is your relief?
My cries heave, herds-long; huddle in a main, a chief
Woe, world-sorrow; on an age-old anvil wince and sing—
Then lull, then leave off. Fury had shrieked “No lingering! Let me be fell: force I must be brief.”

O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall
Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap
May who ne’er hung there. Nor does long our small
Durance deal with that steep or deep. Here! creep,
Wretch, under a comfort serves in a whirlwind: all
Life death does end and each day dies with sleep.

COMPARE
“No worst, there is none” with “Hap” by Thomas Hardy (page 460).

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889)*

The Windhover (1877)

To Christ Our Lord
I caught this morning morning’s minion, kingdom of daylight’s dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his riding
Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,
As a skate’s heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and gliding
Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird,—the achieve of, the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valor and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: sheér plód makes plow down sillion°
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

THE WINDHOVER. A windhover is a kestrel, or small falcon, so called because it can hover upon the wind. 4 rung . . . wing: A horse is “rung upon the rein” when its trainer holds the end of a long rein and has the horse circle him. The possible meanings of wimpling include: (1) curving; (2) pleated, arranged in many little folds one on top of another; (3) rippling or undulating like the surface of a flowing stream.
**COMPARE**

“The Windhover” with “Batter my heart, three-personed God” by John Donne (page 53) and “Easter Wings” by George Herbert (page 228).

**A. E. Housman** (1859–1936)*

**Loveliest of trees, the cherry now** 1896

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

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

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

**COMPARE**

“Loveliest of trees, the cherry now” with “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick (page 466) and “Spring and Fall” by Gerard Manley Hopkins (page 466).

**A. E. Housman** (1859–1936)*

**To an Athlete Dying Young** 1896

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the market-place;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsman of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay,
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut,
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears.
Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that wore their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laureled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

COMPARE

“To an Athlete Dying Young” with “Ex-Basketball Player” by John Updike (page 521).

Randall Jarrell (1914–1965)

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner. Jarrell has written: “A ball turret was a plexiglass sphere set into the belly of a B-17 or B-24, and inhabited by two .50 caliber machine-guns and one man, a short small man. When this gunner tracked with his machine-guns a fighter attacking his bomber from below, he revolved with the turret; hunched in his little sphere, he looked like the fetus in the womb. The fighters which attacked him were armed with cannon firing explosive shells. The hose was a steam hose.”
COMPARE
“"The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner" with "Dulce et Decorum Est" by Wilfred Owen (page 42).

Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962)*

To the Stone-Cutters
1925
Stone-cutters fighting time with marble, you foredefeated
Challengers of oblivion
Eat cynical earnings, knowing rock splits, records fall down,
The square-limbed Roman letters
Scale in the thaws, wear in the rain. The poet as well
Builds his monument mockingly;
For man will be blotted out, the blithe earth die, the brave sun
Die blind, his heart blackening:
Yet stones have stood for a thousand years, and pained thoughts found
The honey peace in old poems.

COMPARE
“"To the Stone-Cutters" with "Not marble nor the gilded monuments" by William Shakespeare (page 507).

Ben Jonson (1573?–1637)*

On My First Son
(1603)
Farewell, thou child of my right hand, and joy.
My sin was too much hope of thee, loved boy;
Seven years thou wert lent to me, and I thee pay,
Exacted by thy fate, on the just day.
Oh, could I lose all father° now. For why
Will man lament the state he should envy—
To have so soon 'scaped world's and flesh's rage,
And, if no other misery, yet age!
Rest in soft peace, and asked, say, "Here doth lie
Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry,"
For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such
As what he loves may never like° too much.

On My First Son. 1 child of my right hand: Jonson's son was named Benjamin; this phrase translates the Hebrew name. 4 the just day: the very day. The boy had died on his seventh birthday. 10 poetry: Jonson uses the word poetry here reflecting its Greek root poiesis, which means creation.
**Donald Justice** *(1925–2004)*

*On the Death of Friends in Childhood* 1960

We shall not ever meet them bearded in heaven,  
Nor sunning themselves among the bald of hell;  
If anywhere, in the deserted schoolyard at twilight,  
Forming a ring, perhaps, or joining hands  
In games whose very names we have forgotten.  
Come, memory, let us seek them there in the shadows.

**COMPARE**

“On the Death of Friends in Childhood” with “Dark house, by which once more I stand” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (page 517).

**John Keats** *(1795–1821)*

*Ode on a Grecian Urn* 1820

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,  
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape  
Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?  
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
Not to the sensual° ear, but, more endeared,  
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;  
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
For ever warm and still to be enjoyed,
For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
    That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.  

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

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

Ode on a Grecian Urn. 7 Tempe, dales of Arcady: valleys in Greece. 41 Attic: Athenian, possessing a classical simplicity and grace. 49–50: if Keats had put the urn's words in quotation marks, critics might have been spared much ink. Does the urn say just “beauty is truth, truth beauty,” or does its statement take in the whole of the last two lines?

COMPARE
“Ode on a Grecian Urn” with “Musée des Beaux Arts” by W. H. Auden (page 427).
John Keats (1795–1821)*

When I have fears that I may cease to be (1818)

When I have fears that I may cease to be
    Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charact'ry,°
    Hold like rich garners° the full-ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night’s starred face,
    Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
    Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
    That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the fairy° power
    Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
    Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

When I have fears that I may cease to be. 12 unreflecting: thoughtless and spontaneous, rather than deliberate.

COMPARE

“When I have fears that I may cease to be” with any of the three translations of Horace’s carpe diem ode (pages 300–302) or Philip Larkin’s “Aubade” (page 292).
John Keats (1795–1821)*

To Autumn 1820

I
Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the mossed cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimmed their clammy cells.

II
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reaped furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook°
Sparces the next swath and all its twinned flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

III
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river willows,° borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft°
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

To Autumn. 12 thee: Autumn personified. 15 Thy hair . . . winnowing wind: Autumn’s hair is a billowing cloud of straw. In winnowing, whole blades of grain were laid on a granary floor and beaten with wooden flails, then the beaten mass was tossed in a blanket until the yellow straw (or chaff) drifted away on the air, leaving kernels of grain. 30 bourn: perhaps meaning a brook. In current English, the word is a cousin of burn, as in the first line of Gerard Manley Hopkins’s “Inversnaid”; but in archaic English, which Keats sometimes liked to use, a bourn can also be a boundary, or a destination. What possible meaning makes most sense to you?
COMPARE
“To Autumn” with “Spring and Fall” by Gerard Manley Hopkins (page 466).

Ted Kooser (b. 1939)*

Abandoned Farmhouse 1969/1974

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes on a pile of broken dishes by the house; a tall man too, says the length of the bed in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man, says the Bible with a broken back on the floor below the window, dusty with sun; but not a man for farming, say the fields cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves covered with oilcloth, and they had a child, says the sandbox made from a tractor tire. Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole. And the winters cold, say the rags in the window frames. It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, says the empty house in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste. And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard like branches after a storm—a rubber cow, a rusty tractor with a broken plow, a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

COMPARE
“Abandoned Farmhouse” with “The Farm on the Great Plains” by William Stafford (page 513).
Philip Larkin (1922–1985)*

Home is so Sad 1964

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left, 
Shaped to the comfort of the last to go 
As if to win them back. Instead, bereft 
Of anyone to please, it withers so, 
Having no heart to put aside the theft 

And turn again to what it started as, 
A joyous shot at how things ought to be, 
Long fallen wide. You can see how it was: 
Look at the pictures and the cutlery. 
The music in the piano stool. That vase.

COMPARE

“Home is so Sad” with “Dark house, by which once more I stand” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (page 517) and “Piano” by D. H. Lawrence (page 8).
Philip Larkin (1922–1985)*

Poetry of Departures 1955

Sometimes you hear, fifth-hand,
As epitaph:
*He chucked up everything
And just cleared off,*
And always the voice will sound
Certain you approve
This audacious, purifying,
Elemental move.

And they are right, I think.
We all hate home
And having to be there:
I detest my room,
Its specially-chosen junk,
The good books, the good bed,
And my life, in perfect order:
So to hear it said

*He walked out on the whole crowd*
Leaves me flushed and stirred,
Like *Then she undid her dress*
Or *Take that you bastard;*
Surely I can, if he did?
And that helps me stay
Sober and industrious.
But I’d go today,

Yes, swagger the nut-strewn roads,
Crouch in the fo’c’s’le
Stubbly with goodness, if
It weren’t so artificial,
Such a deliberate step backwards
To create an object:
Books; china; a life
Reprehensibly perfect.

**COMPAR E**

“Poetry of Departures" with “I started Early – Took my Dog" by Emily Dickinson (page 362).
Irving Layton (1912–2006)

The Bull Calf

The thing could barely stand. Yet taken
from his mother and the barn smells
he still impressed with his pride,
with the promise of sovereignty in the way
his head moved to take us in.

The fierce sunlight tugging the maize from the ground
licked at his shapely flanks.
He was too young for all that pride.
I thought of the deposed Richard II.

“No money in bull calves,” Freeman had said.
The visiting clergyman rubbed the nostrils
now snuffling pathetically at the windless day.
“A pity,” he sighed.

My gaze slipped off his hat toward the empty sky
that circled over the black knot of men,
over us and the calf waiting for the first blow.

Struck,
the bull calf drew in his thin forelegs
as if gathering strength for a mad rush . . .
tottered . . . raised his darkening eyes to us,
and I saw we were at the far end
of his frightened look, growing smaller and smaller
till we were only the ponderous mallet
that flicked his bleeding ear
and pushed him over on his side, stiffly,
like a block of wood.

Below the hill’s crest
the river snuffled on the improvised beach.
We dug a deep pit and threw the dead calf into it.
It made a wet sound, a sepulchral gurgle,
as the warm sides bulged and flattened.
Settled, the bull calf lay as if asleep,
one foreleg over the other,
beef of pride and so beautiful now,
without movement, perfectly still in the cool pit,
I turned away and wept.

COMPARE

“The Bull Calf” with “Names of Horses” by Donald Hall (page 456).
Denise Levertov (1923–1997)*

The Ache of Marriage 1964

The ache of marriage:
thigh and tongue, beloved,
are heavy with it,
it throbs in the teeth
We look for communion
and are turned away, beloved,
each and each
It is leviathan and we
in its belly
looking for joy, some joy
not to be known outside it
two by two in the ark of
the ache of it.

THE ACHE OF MARRIAGE. 8 leviathan: a monstrous sea creature mentioned in the Book of Job.

COMPARE

“The Ache of Marriage” with “Tired Sex” by Chana Bloch (page 99) and “Let me not to the marriage of true minds” by William Shakespeare (page 201).
Philip Levine  (b. 1928)

They Feed They Lion

Out of burlap sacks, out of bearing butter,
Out of black bean and wet slate bread,
Out of the acids of rage, the candor of tar,
Out of creosote, gasoline, drive shafts, wooden dollies,
They Lion grow.

Out of the grey hills
Of industrial barns, out of rain, out of bus ride,
West Virginia to Kiss My Ass, out of buried aunties,
Mothers hardening like pounded stumps, out of stumps,
Out of the bones’ need to sharpen and the muscles’ to stretch,
They Lion grow.

Earth is eating trees, fence posts,
Gutted cars, earth is calling her little ones,
“Come home, Come home!” From pig balls,
From the ferocity of pig driven to holiness,
From the furred ear and the full jowl come
The repose of the hung belly, from the purpose
They Lion grow.

From the sweet glues of the trotters°
Cooked pigs’ feet
Come the sweet kinks of the fist, from the full flower
Of the hams the thorax of caves,
From “Bow Down” come “Rise Up,”
Come they Lion from the reeds of shovels,
The grained arm that pulls the hands,
They Lion grow.

From my five arms and all my hands,
From all my white sins forgiven, they feed,
From my car passing under the stars,
They Lion, from my children inherit,
From the oak turned to a wall, they Lion,
From they sack and they belly opened
And all that was hidden burning on the oil-stained earth
They feed they Lion and he comes.

COMPARE

“They Feed They Lion” with “Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio” by James Wright (page 530).
If you come to a land with no ancestors to bless you, you have to be your own ancestor. The veterans in the mobile home park don’t want to be there. It isn’t easy. Oil rigs litter the land like giant frozen birds. Ghosts welcome us to a new life, and an immigrant without home ghosts cannot believe the land is real. So you’re grateful for familiarity, and Bruce Lee becomes your hero. Coming into Fullerton, everyone waiting at the station is white. The good thing about being Chinese on Amtrak is no one sits next to you. The bad thing is you sit alone all the way to Irvine.

**Shirley Geok-lin Lim (b. 1944)**

**Riding into California**

If you come to a land with no ancestors to bless you, you have to be your own ancestor. The veterans in the mobile home park don’t want to be there. It isn’t easy. Oil rigs litter the land like giant frozen birds.

Ghosts welcome us to a new life, and an immigrant without home ghosts cannot believe the land is real. So you’re grateful for familiarity, and Bruce Lee becomes your hero. Coming into Fullerton, everyone waiting at the station is white. The good thing about being Chinese on Amtrak is no one sits next to you. The bad thing is you sit alone all the way to Irvine.

**COMPARE**

“Riding into California” with “A Supermarket in California” by Allen Ginsberg (page 454).
Robert Lowell  (1917–1977)

Skunk Hour  1959

For Elizabeth Bishop

Nautilus Island’s hermit
heirress still lives through winter in her Spartan cottage;
her sheep still graze above the sea.
Her son’s a bishop. Her farmer
is first selectman in our village;
she’s in her dotage.

Thirsting for
the hierarchic privacy
of Queen Victoria’s century,
she buys up all
the eyesores facing her shore,
and lets them fall.

The season’s ill—
we’ve lost our summer millionaire,
who seemed to leap from an L. L. Bean
catalogue. His nine-knot yawl
was auctioned off to lobstermen.
A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.

And now our fairy
decorator brightens his shop for fall;
his fishnet’s filled with orange cork,
orange, his cobbler’s bench and awl;
there is no money in his work,
he’d rather marry.

One dark night,
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill’s skull;
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .

My mind’s not right.
A car radio bleats,
“Love, O careless Love. . . .” I hear
my ill-spirit sob in each blood cell,
as if my hand were at its throat. . . .
I myself am hell;
nobody’s here—
only skunks, that search
in the moonlight for a bite to eat.
They march on their soles up Main Street:
white stripes, moonstruck eyes’ red fire
under the chalk-dry and spar spire
of the Trinitarian Church.
I stand on top
of our back steps and breathe the rich air—
a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail.
She jabs her wedge-head in a cup
of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
and will not scare.

COMPARÉ
“Skunk Hour” with “Desert Places” by Robert Frost (page 166).

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)

To His Coy Mistress 1681

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
Should'st 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
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
Time's wingèd 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 honor 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 gloe
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant\(^e\) 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-chapped\(^n\) power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough\(^t\) the iron gates of life.
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

To His Coy Mistress. 7 Humber: a river that flows by Marvell’s town of Hull (on the side of the world opposite from the Ganges). 10 conversion of the Jews: an event that, according to St. John the Divine, is to take place just before the end of the world. 35 transpires: exudes, as a membrane lets fluid or vapor pass through it.

COMPARE

“To His Coy Mistress” with “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick (page 466).

Recuerdo

We were very tired, we were very merry—
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable—
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.
We were very tired, we were very merry—
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

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

**RECUERDO.** The Spanish title means “a recollection” or “a memory.”

**COMPARE**
“Recuerdo” with “A Blessing” by James Wright (page 530).

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**John Milton** (1608–1674)*

**How soon hath time**

How soon hath time, the subtle thief of youth,
   Stol’n on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,
   But my late spring no bud or blossom show’th.
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
   That I to manhood am arriv’d so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
   That some more timely-happy spirits endu’th.*
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
   It shall be still in strictest measure ev’n
To that same lot, however mean or high,
   Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav’n;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
   As ever in my great task-Master’s eye.

**COMPARE**
“How soon hath time” with “When I have fears that I may cease to be” by John Keats (page 473).
John Milton (1608–1674)*

When I consider how my light is spent
(1655?)

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

When I consider how my light is spent. 1. my light is spent: Milton had become blind. 3. one talent: For Jesus’ parable of the talents (measures of money), see Matthew 25:14–30.

Compare

“When I consider how my light is spent” with “Batter my heart” by John Donne (page 53).

Marianne Moore (1887–1972)*

Poetry

1921

I too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers
that there is in
it after all, a place for the genuine.
Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise
if it must, these things are important not because a
high sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are useful; when they become so derivative as to become unintelligible, the same thing may be said for all of us—that we do not admire what we cannot understand. The bat, holding on upside down or in quest of something to eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under a tree, the immovable critic twinkling his skin like a horse that feels a flea, the baseball fan, the statistician—case after case could be cited did one wish it; nor is it valid to discriminate against “business documents and school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the result is not poetry, nor till the autocrats among us can be “literalists of the imagination”—above insolence and triviality and can present for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them, shall we have it. In the meantime, if you demand on one hand, in defiance of their opinion—the raw material of poetry in all its rawness and that which is, on the other hand, genuine then you are interested in poetry.

COMPARE

Compare “Poetry” with “Ars Poetica” by Archibald MacLeish (page 353).

Frederick Morgan (1922–2004)

The Master 1982

When Han Kan was summoned to the imperial capital it was suggested he sit at the feet of the illustrious senior court painter to learn from him the refinements of the art.

“No, thank you,” he replied, “I shall apprentice myself to the stables.”
And he installed himself and his brushes amid the dung and the flies, and studied the horses—their bodies’ keen alertness—eye-sparkle of one, another’s sensitive stance, the way a third moved graceful in his bulk—and painted at last the emperor’s favorite, the charger named “Nightshining White,” whose likeness after centuries still dazzles.

**COMPARE**

“The Master” with “Advice to a Friend Who Paints” by Kelly Cherry (page 58).

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**Marilyn Nelson** (b. 1946)*

**A Strange Beautiful Woman** 1985

A strange beautiful woman met me in the mirror the other night. Hey, I said, What you doing here? She asked me the same thing.

**COMPARE**

Compare “A Strange Beautiful Woman” with “Embrace” by Billy Collins (page 100).
Howard Nemerov (1920–1991)

The War in the Air

For a saving grace, we didn’t see our dead,
Who rarely bothered coming home to die
But simply stayed away out there
In the clean war, the war in the air.

Seldom the ghosts came back bearing their tales
Of hitting the earth, the incompressible sea,
But stayed up there in the relative wind,
Shades fading in the mind,

Who had no graves but only epitaphs
Where never so many spoke for never so few:
*Per ardua*, said the partisans of Mars,
*Per aspera*, to the stars.

That was the good war, the war we won
As if there were no death, for goodness’ sake,
With the help of the losers we left out there
In the air, in the empty air.

*THE WAR IN THE AIR*, 11–12 *Per ardua . . . Per aspera*: allusion to the English Royal Air Force’s motto “*Per ardua ad astra,*** Latin for “through difficult things to the stars.”

**COMPARE**

“The War in the Air” with “The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner” by Randall Jarrell (page 469) and “The Fury of Aerial Bombardment” by Richard Eberhart (page 64).

Lorine Niedecker (1903–1970)*

Poet’s Work (about 1962)

Grandfather
advised me:
Learn a trade
I learned
to sit at desk
and condense

No layoff
from this
condensery

**COMPARE**

“Poet’s Work” with “Silence” by Marianne Moore (page 52).

**Yone Noguchi** (1875–1947)

**A Selection of Hokku** 1920

Leaves blown,
Birds flown away.

I wander in and out the Hall of Autumn.

*Are the fallen stars
Returning up the sky?—
The dews on the grass.*

*Like a cobweb hung upon the tree,
A prey to wind and sunlight!
Who will say that we are safe and strong?*

*Oh, How cool—
The sound of the bell
That leaves the bell itself.*

Hokku. *hokku* is an alternate form of the word *haiku*.

**COMPARE**

Compare Yone Noguchi’s four hokku with any of the haiku by the “Three Masters,” Basho, Buson, and Issa (pages 94–96).
Sharon Olds (b. 1942)*

The One Girl at the Boys’ Party 1983

When I take my girl to the swimming party
I set her down among the boys. They tower and
bristle, she stands there smooth and sleek,
her math scores unfolding in the air around her.
They will strip to their suits, her body hard and
indivisible as a prime number,
they'll plunge in the deep end, she'll subtract
her height from ten feet, divide it into
hundreds of gallons of water, the numbers
bouncing in her mind like molecules of chlorine
in the bright blue pool. When they climb out,
her ponytail will hang its pencil lead
down her back, her narrow silk suit
with hamburgers and french fries printed on it
will glisten in the brilliant air, and they will
see her sweet face, solemn and
sealed, a factor of one, and she will
see their eyes, two each,
their legs, two each, and the curves of their sexes,
one each, and in her head she'll be doing her
wild multiplying, as the drops
sparkle and fall to the power of a thousand from her body.

COMPARE

“The One Girl at the Boys’ Party” with “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke (page 18).
**Wilfred Owen** (1893–1918)*

**Anthem for Doomed Youth**

(1917)

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' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

**COMPARE**

“Anthem for Doomed Youth” with “Facing It” by Yusef Komunyakaa (page 286).

**Linda Pastan** (b. 1932)

**Ethics**

1981

In ethics class so many years ago
our teacher asked this question every fall:
if there were a fire in a museum
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting
or an old woman who hadn’t many
years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs
caring little for pictures or old age
we’d opt one year for life, the next for art
and always half-heartedly. Sometimes
the woman borrowed my grandmother’s face
leaving her usual kitchen to wander
some drafty, half imagined museum.
One year, feeling clever, I replied
why not let the woman decide herself?
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews
the burdens of responsibility.
This fall in a real museum I stand
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,
or nearly so, myself. The colors
within this frame are darker than autumn,
darker even than winter—the browns of earth,
though earth’s most radiant elements burn
through the canvas. I know now that woman
and painting and season are almost one
and all beyond saving by children.

COMPARE
“Ethics” with “Welcome to Hiroshima” by Mary Jo Salter (page 504).

Robert Phillips (b. 1938)

Running on Empty

As a teenager I would drive Father’s
Chevrolet cross-county, given me
reluctantly: “Always keep the tank
half full, boy, half full, ya hear?”

The fuel gauge dipping, dipping
toward Empty, hitting Empty, then
—thrilling!—way below Empty,
myself driving cross-county

mile after mile, faster and faster,
all night long, this crazy kid driving

the earth’s rolling surface,
against all laws, defying chemistry,

rules, and time, riding on nothing
but fumes, pushing luck harder
Sylvia Plath (1932–1963)*

**Daddy** (1962) 1965

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time—
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one grey toe
Big as a Frisco seal

than anyone pushed before, the wind
screaming past like the Furies . . .

I stranded myself only once, a white
night with no gas station open, ninety miles

from nowhere. Panicked for a while,
at standstill, myself stalled.

At dawn the car and I both refilled. But,
Father, I am running on empty still.

**COMPARE**

“Running on Empty” with “Those Winter Sundays” by Robert Hayden (page 461) and “My Papa’s Waltz” by Theodore Roethke (page 18).
And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend
Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene
An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat moustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You—

Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who
Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two—
The vampire who said he was you
And drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.
Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

DADDY. Introducing this poem in a reading, Sylvia Plath remarked:

The poem is spoken by a girl with an Electra complex. Her father died while she thought he
was God. Her case is complicated by the fact that her father was also a Nazi and her mother
very possibly part Jewish. In the daughter the two strains marry and paralyze each other—she
has to act out the awful little allegory before she is free of it.

(Quoted by A. Alvarez, Beyond All This Fiddle [New York: Random, 1968].)

In some details “Daddy” is autobiography: the poet's father, Otto Plath, a German, had come to the
United States from Grabow, Poland. He had died following the amputation of a gangrened foot and
leg when Sylvia was eight years old. Politically, Otto Plath was a Republican, not a Nazi, but was ap-
parently a somewhat domineering head of the household. (See the recollections of the poet's
1975].)

15 Ach, du: Oh, you. 27 Ich, ich, ich: I, I, I. 51 blackboard: Otto Plath had been a professor of bi-
ology at Boston University. 65 Meinkampf: Adolf Hitler entitled his autobiography Mein Kampf (“My
Struggle”).

COMPARE

“Daddy” with “American Primitive” by William Jay Smith (page 511).
Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)*

**A Dream within a Dream**

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if Hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

**COMPARE**

“A Dream within a Dream” with “Dover Beach” by Matthew Arnold (page 422).

Alexander Pope (1688–1744)*

**A little Learning is a dang’rous Thing** (from *An Essay on Criticism*)

A little Learning is a dang’rous Thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pieran Spring:
There shallow Draughts intoxicate the Brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.
Fir’d 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 advanc’d, behold with strange Surprize
New, distant Scenes of endless Science rise!
So pleas’d at first, the towring Alps we try,  
Mount o’er the Vales, and seem to tread the Sky;  
Th’ Eternal Snows appear already past,  
And the first Clouds and Mountains seem the last:  
But those attain’d, we tremble to survey  
The growing Labours of the lengthen’d Way,  
Th’ increasing Prospect tires our wandring Eyes,  
Hills peep o’er Hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

A little Learning is a dangerous Thing.  
Pierian Spring: the spring of the Muses.

**Compare**

“A little Learning is a dangerous Thing” with “The Writer” by Richard Wilbur (page 525).

**Ezra Pound (1885–1972)**

**The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter**  
1915

While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead  
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.  
You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse,  
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.  
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:  
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.  
At fourteen I married My Lord you.  
I never laughed, being bashful.  
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.  
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.  
At fifteen I stopped scowling,  
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours  
Forever and forever and forever.  
Why should I climb the lookout?  
At sixteen you departed,  
You went into far Ku-to-yen, by the river of swirling eddies,  
And you have been gone five months.  
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.  
You dragged your feet when you went out.  
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,  
Too deep to clear them away!  
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.  
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August  
Over the grass in the West garden;  
They hurt me. I grow older.  
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,  
Please let me know beforehand,  
And I will come out to meet you  
As far as Cho-fu-sa.

**The River-Merchant’s Wife: A Letter.** A free translation from the Chinese poet Li Po (eighth century).
COMPARE


**Dudley Randall** (1914–2000)*

**A Different Image**

1968

The age
requires this task:
create
a different image;
re-animate
the mask.

Shatter the icons of slavery and fear.
Replace
the leer
of the minstrel’s burnt-cork face
with a proud, serene
and classic bronze of Benin.

COMPARE

John Crowe Ransom (1888–1974)

**Piazza Piece**

—I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying
To make you hear. Your ears are soft and small
And listen to an old man not at all,
They want the young men's whispering and sighing.
But see the roses on your trellis dying
And hear the spectral singing of the moon;
For I must have my lovely lady soon,
I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying.

—I am a lady young in beauty waiting
Until my true love comes, and then we kiss.
But what grey man among the vines is this
Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream?
Back from my trellis, Sir, before I scream!
I am a lady young in beauty waiting.

**COMPARE**

Compare “Piazza Piece” with “To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell (page 483).

Henry Reed (1914–1986)

**Naming of Parts**

Today we have naming of parts. Yesterday,
We had daily cleaning. And tomorrow morning,
We shall have what to do after firing. But today,
Today we have naming of parts. Japonica
Glistens like coral in all of the neighboring gardens,
And today we have naming of parts.

This is the lower sling swivel. And this
Is the upper sling swivel, whose use you will see,
When you are given your slings. And this is the piling swivel,
Which in your case you have not got. The branches
Hold in the gardens their silent, eloquent gestures,
Which in our case we have not got.

This is the safety-catch, which is always released
With an easy flick of the thumb. And please do not let me
See anyone using his finger. You can do it quite easy
If you have any strength in your thumb. The blossoms
Are fragile and motionless, never letting anyone see
Any of them using their finger.
And this you can see is the bolt. The purpose of this
Is to open the breech, as you see. We can slide it
Rapidly backwards and forwards: we call this
Easing the spring. And rapidly backwards and forwards
The early bees are assaulting and fumbling the flowers:
   They call it easing the Spring.

They call it easing the Spring: it is perfectly easy
If you have any strength in your thumb: like the bolt,
And the breech, and the cocking-piece, and the point of balance,
Which in our case we have not got; and the almond-blossom
Silent in all of the gardens and the bees going backwards and forwards,
   For today we have naming of parts.

**COMPARE**

“Naming of Parts” with “The Fury of Aerial Bombardment” by Richard Eberhart (page 6464).

**Adrienne Rich** (b. 1929)*

**Living in Sin**

1955

She had thought the studio would keep itself;
no dust upon the furniture of love.
Half heresy, to wish the taps less vocal,
the panes relieved of grime. A plate of pears,
a piano with a Persian shawl, a cat
stalking the picturesque amusing mouse
had risen at his urging.
Not that at five each separate stair would writhe
under the milkman’s tramp; that morning light
so coldly would delineate the scraps
of last night’s cheese and three sepulchral bottles;
that on the kitchen shelf among the saucers
a pair of beetle-eyes would fix her own—
envoy from some village in the moldings . . .
Meanwhile, he, with a yawn,
sounded a dozen notes upon the keyboard,
declared it out of tune, shrugged at the mirror,
rubbed at his beard, went out for cigarettes;
while she, jeered by the minor demons,
pulled back the sheets and made the bed and found
a towel to dust the table-top,
and let the coffee-pot boil over on the stove.
By evening she was back in love again,
though not so wholly but throughout the night
she woke sometimes to feel the daylight coming
like a relentless milkman up the stairs.
COMPARE

Compare and contrast “Living in Sin” with “Let me not to the marriage of true minds” by William Shakespeare (page 201).

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869–1935)*

Miniver Cheevy 1910

Miniver Cheevy, child of scorn,
   Grew lean while he assailed the seasons;
He wept that he was ever born,
   And he had reasons.
Miniver loved the days of old
   When swords were bright and steeds were prancing;
The vision of a warrior bold
   Would set him dancing.
Miniver sighed for what was not,
   And dreamed, and rested from his labors;
He dreamed of Thebes and Camelot,
   And Priam’s neighbors.
Miniver mourned the ripe renown
   That made so many a name so fragrant;
He mourned Romance, now on the town,
   And Art, a vagrant.
Miniver loved the Medici,
   Albeit he had never seen one;
He would have sinned incessantly
   Could he have been one.
Miniver cursed the commonplace
   And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;
He missed the medieval grace
   Of iron clothing.
Miniver scorned the gold he sought,
   But sore annoyed was he without it;
Miniver thought, and thought, and thought,
   And thought about it.
Miniver Cheevy, born too late,
   Scratched his head and kept on thinking;
Miniver coughed, and called it fate,
   And kept on drinking.

MINIVER CHEEVEY. 11 Thebes: a city in ancient Greece and the setting of many famous Greek myths; Camelot: the legendary site of King Arthur’s Court. 12 Priam: the last king of Troy; his “neighbors” would have included Helen of Troy, Aeneas, and other famous figures. 17 the Medici: the ruling family of Florence during the high Renaissance, the Medici were renowned patrons of the arts.

COMPARE

“Miniver Cheevy” with “Ulysses” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (page 518).
Theodore Roethke (1908–1963)*

Elegy for Jane 1953

My Student, Thrown by a Horse

I remember the neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils;
And her quick look, a sidelong pickerel smile;
And how, once startled into talk, the light syllables leaped for her,
And she balanced in the delight of her thought,
A wren, happy, tail into the wind,
Her song trembling the twigs and small branches.
The shade sang with her;
The leaves, their whispers turned to kissing;
And the mold sang in the bleached valleys under the rose.

Oh, when she was sad, she cast herself down into such a pure depth,
5 Even a father could not find her:
Scraping her cheek against straw;
Stirring the clearest water.

My sparrow, you are not here,
Waiting like a fern, making a spiny shadow.
The sides of wet stones cannot console me,
10 Nor the moss, wound with the last light.

If only I could nudge you from this sleep,
My maimed darling, my skittery pigeon.
Over this damp grave I speak the words of my love:
15 I, with no rights in this matter,
Neither father nor lover.

COMPARE

“Elegy for Jane” with “Annabel Lee” by Edgar Allan Poe (page 350).
Welcome to Hiroshima

Mary Jo Salter  (b. 1954)

is what you first see, stepping off the train:
a billboard brought to you in living English
by Toshiba Electric. While a channel
silent in the TV of the brain
projects those flickering re-runs of a cloud
that brims its risen columnful like beer
and, spilling over, hangs its foamy head,
you feel a thirst for history: what year
it started to be safe to breathe the air,
and when to drink the blood and scum afloat
on the Ohta River. But no, the water’s clear,
they pour it for your morning cup of tea
in one of the countless sunny coffee shops
whose plastic dioramas advertise
mutations of cuisine behind the glass:
a pancake sandwich; a pizza someone tops
with a maraschino cherry. Passing by
the Peace Park’s floral hypocenter (where
how bravely, or with what mistaken cheer,
humanity erased its own erasure),
you enter the memorial museum
and through more glass are served, as on a dish
of blistered grass, three mannequins. Like gloves
a mother clips to coatsleeves, strings of flesh
hang from their fingertips; or as if tied
to recall a duty for us, Reverence
the dead whose mourners too shall soon be dead,
but all commemoration’s swallowed up
in questions of bad taste, how re-created
horror mocks the grim original,
and thinking at last They should have left it all
you stop. This is the wristwatch of a child.
Jammed on the moment’s impact, resolute
to communicate some message, although mute,
it gestures with its hands at eight-fifteen
and eight-fifteen and eight-fifteen again
while tables of statistics on the wall
update the news by calling on a roll
of tape, death gummed on death, and in the case
adjacent, an exhibit under glass
is glass itself: a shard the bomb slammed in
a woman’s arm at eight-fifteen, but some
three decades on—as if to make it plain
hope’s only as renewable as pain,
and as if all the unsung
debasements of the past may one day come
rising to the surface once again—
worked its filthy way out like a tongue.

COMPARE
“Welcome to Hiroshima” with “Ethics” by Linda Pastan (page 492) and “Ballad of Birmingham” by Dudley Randall (page 140).
When, in disgrace with Fortune
and men’s eyes

When, in disgrace with Fortune and men’s eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless° cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man’s art, and that man’s scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least,
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply° I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven’s gate;
For thy sweet love rememb’red such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

**COMPARE**

“When, in disgrace with Fortune and men’s eyes” with “When I have fears that I may cease to be” by John Keats (page 473).
William Shakespeare (1564–1616)*

Not marble nor the gilded monuments 1609
Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war’s quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
‘Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers’ eyes.

COMPARE
“Not marble nor the gilded monuments” with “To the Stone-Cutters” by Robinson Jeffers (page 470).

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)*

That time of year thou mayst in me behold 1609
That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see’st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by-and-by black night doth take away,
Death’s second self that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see’st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

COMPARE
“That time of year thou mayst in me behold” with “anyone lived in a pretty how town” by E. E. Cummings (page 66).
William Shakespeare  (1564–1616)*

**My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun**  1609

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damasked red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hatch a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go:
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she,° belied with false compare.

**COMPARE**

“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” with “Homage to my hips” by Lucille Clifton (page 439) and “Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop” by William Butler Yeats (page 533).

Louis Simpson  (b. 1923)

**American Poetry**  1963

Whatever it is, it must have
A stomach that can digest
Rubber, coal, uranium, moons, poems.

Like the shark, it contains a shoe.
It must swim for miles through the desert
Uttering cries that are almost human.

**COMPARE**

“American Poetry” with “Ars Poetica” by Archibald MacLeish (page 353).

David R. Slavitt  (b. 1935)

**Titanic**  1983

Who does not love the Titanic?
If they sold passage tomorrow for that same crossing,
who would not buy?
To go down . . . We all go down, mostly alone. But with crowds of people, friends, servants, well fed, with music, with lights! Ah!

And the world, shocked, mourns, as it ought to do and almost never does. There will be the books and movies to remind our grandchildren who we were and how we died, and give them a good cry.

Not so bad, after all. The cold water is anaesthetic and very quick. The cries on all sides must be a comfort.

We all go: only a few, first-class.

**COMPARE**

“Titanic” with “The Convergence of the Twain” by Thomas Hardy (page 457).

**Christopher Smart** (1722–1771)

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry.
For he is the servant of the Living God, duly and daily serving him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For is this done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For then he leaps up to catch the musk,° which is the blessing of God on his prayer.
For he rolls upon prank to work it in.
For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.
For this he performs in ten degrees.
For first he looks upon his fore-paws to see if they are clean.
For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
For thirdly he works it upon stretch° with the fore-paws he works his muscles, stretching extended.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws by wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.°
For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For ninhtly he looks up for his instructions.
For tenthly he goes in quest of food.
For having considered God and himself he will consider his neighbor.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it a chance.
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.
For when his day's work is done his business more properly begins.  
For he keeps the Lord's watch in the night against the Adversary.  
For he counteracts the powers of darkness by his electrical skin and glaring eyes.  
For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life.  
For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the sun loves him.  
For he is of the tribe of Tiger.  
For the Cherub Cat is a term of the Angel Tiger.  
For he has the subtlety and hissing of a serpent, which in goodness he suppresses.  
For he will not do destruction if he is well-fed, neither will he spit without provocation.  
For he purrs in thankfulness when God tells him he's a good Cat.  
For he is an instrument for the children to learn benevolence upon.  
For every house is incomplete without him, and a blessing is lacking in the spirit.  
For the Lord commanded Moses concerning the cats at the departure of the Children of Israel from Egypt.  
For every family had one cat at least in the bag.  
For the English cats are the best in Europe.  
For he is the cleanest in the use of his fore-paws of any quadruped.  
For the dexterity of his defense is an instance of the love of God to him exceedingly.  
For he is the quickest to his mark of any creature.  
For he is tenacious of his point.  
For he is a mixture of gravity and waggery.  
For he knows that God is his Savior.  
For there is nothing sweeter than his peace when at rest.  
For there is nothing brisker than his life when in motion.  
For he is of the Lord's poor, and so indeed is he called by benevolence perpetually—Poor Jeoffry! poor Jeoffry! the rat has bit thy throat.  
For I bless the name of the Lord Jesus that Jeoffry is better.  
For the divine spirit comes about his body to sustain it in complete cat.  
For his tongue is exceeding pure so that it has in purity what it wants in music.  
For he is docile and can learn certain things.  
For he can sit up with gravity which is patience upon approbation.  
For he can fetch and carry, which is patience in employment.  
For he can jump over a stick which is patience upon proof positive.  
For he can spraggle upon waggle at the word of command.  
For he can jump from an eminence into his master's bosom.  
For he can catch the cork and toss it again.  
For he is hated by the hypocrite and miser.  
For the former is afraid of detection.  
For the latter refuses the charge.  
For he camels his back to bear the first notion of business.  
For he is good to think on, if a man would express himself neatly.  
For he made a great figure in Egypt for his signal services.
Poems for Further Reading

For he killed the Icneumon-rat, very pernicious by land.
For his ears are so acute that they sting again.
For from this proceeds the passing quickness of his attention.
For by stroking of him I have found out electricity.
For I perceived God's light about him both wax and fire.
For the electrical fire is the spiritual substance which God sends from
heaven to sustain the bodies both of man and beast.
For God has blessed him in the variety of his movements.
For, though he cannot fly, he is an excellent clamberer.
For his motions upon the face of the earth are more than any other
quadruped.
For he can tread to all the measures upon the music.
For he can swim for life.
For he can creep.

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry. This is a self-contained extract from Smart's long poem Jubilante Agno (Rejoice in the Lamb). 35 For the Lord commanded Moses concerning the cats: No such command is mentioned in Scripture. 54 spraggle upon waggle: W. F. Stead, in his edition of Smart's poem, suggests that this means Jeoffry will sprawl when his master waggles a finger or a stick. 59 the charge: perhaps the cost of feeding a cat.

**COMPARE**

“For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry” with “The Tyger” by William Blake (page 430).

**William Jay Smith** (b. 1918)

**American Primitive** 1957

Look at him there in his stovepipe hat,
His high-top shoes, and his handsome collar;
Only my Daddy could look like that,
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

The screen door bangs, and it sounds so funny—
There he is in a shower of gold;
His pockets are stuffed with folding money,
His lips are blue, and his hands feel cold.

He hangs in the hall by his black cravat,
The ladies faint, and the children holler:
Only my Daddy could look like that,
And I love my Daddy like he loves his Dollar.

**COMPARE**

“American Primitive” with “Daddy” by Sylvia Plath (page 494).
Cathy Song (b. 1955)

**Stamp Collecting**

The poorest countries
have the prettiest stamps
as if impracticality were a major export
shipped with the bananas, T-shirts, and coconuts.
Take Tonga, where the tourists,
expecting a dramatic waterfall replete with birdcalls,
are taken to see the island’s peculiar mystery:
hanging bats with collapsible wings
like black umbrellas swing upside down from fruit trees.
The Tongan stamp is a fruit.
The banana stamp is scalloped like a butter-varnished seashell.
The pineapple resembles a volcano, a spout of green on top,
and the papaya, a tarnished goat skull.

They look impressive,
these stamps of countries without a thing to sell
except for what is scraped, uprooted and hulled
from their mule-scratched hills.
They believe in postcards,
in portraits of progress: the new dam;
a team of young native doctors
wearing stethoscopes like exotic ornaments;
the recently constructed “Facultad de Medicina,”
a building as lack-lustre as an American motel.
The stamps of others are predictable.
Lucky is the country that possesses indigenous beauty.
Say a tiger or a queen.
The Japanese can display to the world
their blossoms: a spray of pink on green.
Like pollen, they drift, airborne.
But pity the country that is bleak and stark.
Beauty and whimsy are discouraged as indiscreet.
Unbreakable as their climate, a monument of ice,
they issue serious statements, commemorating
factories, tramways and aeroplanes;
athletes marbled into statues.
They turn their noses upon the world, these countries,
and offer this: an unrelenting procession
of a grim, historic profile.

**COMPARE**

“Stamp Collecting” with “The Virgins” by Derek Walcott (page 522).

**William Stafford** (1914–1993)*

**The Farm on the Great Plains** 1960

A telephone line goes cold;
birds tread it wherever it goes.
A farm back of a great plain
tugs an end of the line.

I call that farm every year,
ringing it, listening, still;
no one is home at the farm,
the line gives only a hum.

Some year I will ring the line
on a night at last the right one,
and with an eye tapered for braille
from the phone on the wall

I will see the tenant who waits—
the last one left at the place;
through the dark my braille eye
will lovingly touch his face.

“Hello, is Mother at home?”
*No one is home today.*
“But Father—he should be there.”
*No one—no one is here.*

“But you—are you the one . . . ?”
Then the line will be gone
because both ends will be home:
no space, no birds, no farm.
My self will be the plain,
wise as winter is gray,
pure as cold posts go
pacing toward what I know.

**COMPARE**

“The Farm on the Great Plains” with “Piano” by D. H. Lawrence (page 8) and “Dark house, by which once more I stand” by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (page 517).

Wallace Stevens (1879–1955)*

**The Emperor of Ice-Cream** 1923

Call the roller of big cigars,
The muscular one, and bid him whip
In kitchen cups concupiscent curds.
Let the wenches dawdle in such dress
As they are used to wear, and let the boys
Bring flowers in last month’s newspapers.
Let be be finale of seem.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

Take from the dresser of deal,
Lacking the three glass knobs, that sheet
On which she embroidered fantails once
And spread it so as to cover her face.
If her horny feet protrude, they come
To show how cold she is, and dumb.
Let the lamp affix its beam.
The only emperor is the emperor of ice-cream.

The Emperor of Ice-Cream. 9 deal: fir or pine wood used to make cheap furniture.
COMPARE

“The Emperor of Ice-Cream” with “This living hand, now warm and capable” by John Keats (page 195) and “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” by William Wordsworth (page 156).

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)

A Description of the Morning 1711

Now hardly here and there an hackney-coach,°
Appearing, showed the ruddy morn's approach.
Now Betty from her master's bed had flown
And softly stole to discompose her own.
The slipshod 'prentice from his master's door
Had pared the dirt, and sprinkled round the floor.
Now Moll had whirled her mop with dextrous airs,
Prepared to scrub the entry and the stairs.
The youth with broomy stumps began to trace
The kennel°-edge, where wheels had worn the place.
The small-coal man was heard with cadence deep
Till drowned in shriller notes of chimneysweep,
Duns° at his lordship's gate began to meet,
And Brickdust Moll had screamed through half a street.
The turnkey° now his flock returning sees,
Duly let out a-nights to steal for fees;
The watchful bailiffs° take their silent stands;
And schoolboys lag with satchels in their hands.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE MORNING. 9 youth with broomy stumps: a young man sweeping the gutter's edge with worn-out brooms, looking for old nails fallen from wagonwheels, which were valuable. 14 Brickdust Moll: woman selling brickdust to be used for scouring.

COMPARE

“A Description of the Morning” with “London” by William Blake (page 77).
Sing now.
Sing from on high, high roof
you're afraid of
losing. Sing yourself into
a tiny blue worm,
maybe no eyes,
squeezing its mite
through a tinier
passage, maybe no
outlet, maybe
no light, maybe you'll never
ever find light,
and the stars that you think
in a world of height
there should be
aren't even stars, only actors
that swing in the dark
like paper lanterns
and don't serve as guides
as you peer from the edge
at the people below
without nets;
they don't know who you are,
but they're waiting
in droves
for your butterfly nerves
to tuck in their tails
and fold.

**COMPARE**

“Vertigo” with “Not Waving but Drowning” by Stevie Smith (page 101).
Sara Teasdale (1884–1933)

The Flight 1926

We are two eagles
Flying together,
Under the heavens,
Over the mountains,
Stretched on the wind.
Sunlight heartens us,
Blind snow baffles us,
Clouds wheel after us,
Raveled and thinned.

We are like eagles;
But when Death harries us,
Human and humbled
When one of us goes,
Let the other follow—
Let the flight be ended,
Let the fire blacken,
Let the book close.

COMPARE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)*

Dark house, by which once more I stand 1850

Dark house, by which once more I stand
Here in the long unlovely street,
Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more—
Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
The noise of life begins again,
And ghastly through the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.

DARK HOUSE. This poem is one part of the sequence In Memoriam, an elegy for Tennyson’s friend Arthur Henry Hallam.

COMPARE
“Dark house, by which once more I stand” with “The piercing chill I feel” by Taniguchi Buson (page 87) and “Home is so Sad” by Philip Larkin (page 476).
Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809–1892)*

Ulysses (1833)

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Matched with 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 lees. 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 honored of them all—
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough
Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades
Forever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an 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 grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the scepter and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfill
This labor, 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, centered 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 honor and his toil.

Death closes all; but something ere 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.

ULYSSES. 10 Hysades: daughters of Atlas, who were transformed into a group of stars. Their rising with the
sun was thought to be a sign of rain. 63 Happy Isles: Elysium, a paradise believed to be attainable by sail-
ing west.

COMPARE

"Ulysses" with "Sir Patrick Spence" (page 9).
Dylan Thomas  (1914–1953)*

Fern Hill

1946

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs
About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,
    The night above the dingle° starry,
    Time let me hail and climb
    Golden in the heydays of his eyes,
And honored among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves
    Trail with daisies and barley
    Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
    In the sun that is young once only,
    Time let me play and be
    Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
    And the sabbath rang slowly
    In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
    And playing, lovely and watery
    And fire green as grass.
    And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
    Flying with the ricks, and the horses
    Flashing into the dark.
And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
  Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
    The sky gathered again
    And the sun grew round that very day.
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
  Out of the whinnying green stable
    On to the fields of praise.
And honored among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
  In the sun born over and over,
    I ran my heedless ways,
    My wishes raced through the house high hay
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
  Before the children green and golden
    Follow him out of grace,
Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
  In the moon that is always rising,
    Nor that riding to sleep
    I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
  Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

COMPARE
“Fern Hill” with “in Just-” by E. E. Cummings (page 233) and “The World Is Too Much with Us” by William Wordsworth (page 256).

John Updike (b. 1932)*

Ex-Basketball Player 1958

Pearl Avenue runs past the high-school lot,
Bends with the trolley tracks, and stops, cut off
Before it has a chance to go two blocks,
At Colonel McComsky Plaza. Berth’s Garage
Is on the corner facing west, and there,
Most days, you’ll find Flick Webb, who helps Berth out.

Flick stands tall among the idiot pumps—
Five on a side, the old bubble-head style,
Their rubber elbows hanging loose and low.
One’s nostrils are two S’s, and his eyes
An E and O. And one is squat, without
A head at all—more of a football type.
Once Flick played for the high-school team, the Wizards.
He was good: in fact, the best. In ’46
He bucketed three hundred ninety points,
A county record still. The ball loved Flick.
I saw him rack up thirty-eight or forty
In one home game. His hands were like wild birds.

He never learned a trade, he just sells gas,
Checks oil, and changes flats. Once in a while,
As a gag, he dribbles an inner tube,
But most of us remember anyway.
His hands are fine and nervous on the lug wrench.
It makes no difference to the lug wrench, though.

Off work, he hangs around Mae’s luncheonette.
Grease-gray and kind of coiled, he plays pinball,
Smokes those thin cigars, nurses lemon phosphates.
Flick seldom says a word to Mae, just nods
Beyond her face toward bright applauding tiers
Of Necco Wafers, Nibs, and Juju Beads.

**COMPARE**

“Ex-Basketball Player” with “To an Athlete Dying Young” by A. E. Housman (page 468).

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**Derek Walcott**  (b. 1930)

**The Virgins**  (1976)

Down the dead streets of sun-stoned Frederiksted,
the first free port to die for tourism,
strolling at funeral pace, I am reminded
of life not lost to the American dream;
but my small-islander’s simplicities
can't better our new empire's civilized exchange of cameras, watches, perfumes, brandies for the good life, so cheaply underpriced that only the crime rate is on the rise in streets blighted with sun, stone arches and plazas blown dry by the hysteria of rumour. A condominium drowns in vacancy; its bargains are dusted, but only a jewelled housefly drones over the bargains. The roulettes spin rustily to the wind—the vigorous trade that every morning would begin afresh by revving up green water round the pierhead heading for where the banks of silver thresh.

The Virgins. The title of this poem refers to the Virgin Islands, a group of 100 small islands in the Caribbean. 1 Frederiksted: the biggest seaport in St. Croix, the largest of the American Virgin Islands. 2 free port: a port city where goods can be bought and sold without paying customs taxes. 5 small-islander's: Walcott was born on St. Lucia, another island in the West Indies. 16 trade: trade winds.

**Compare**


**Edmund Waller** (1606–1687)

**Go, Lovely Rose**

Go, lovely rose,
Tell her that wastes her time and me
That now she knows,
When I resemble° her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be.

Tell her that’s young
And shuns to have her graces spied,
That hadst thou sprung
In deserts where no men abide,
Thou must have uncommended died.

Small is the worth
Of beauty from the light retired:
Bid her come forth,
Suffer herself to be desired,
And not blush so to be admired.

Then die, that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee,
How small a part of time they share
That are so wondrous sweet and fair.
COMPARE

“Go, Lovely Rose” with “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick (page 466) and “To His Coy Mistress” by Andrew Marvell (page 483).

WALT WHITMAN

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)*

from Song of the Open Road 1856, 1881

Allons! the road is before us!
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not detain’d!

Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen’d!
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain earn’d!
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!
I give you my love more precious than money,
I give you myself before preaching or law;
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD. This is part 15 of Whitman’s long poem. 1 Allons!: French for “Come on!” or “Let’s go!”

COMPARE

Poems for Further Reading

Walt Whitman (1819–1892)*

I Hear America Singing 1860

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

COMPARE

"I Hear America Singing" with "I, Too" by Langston Hughes (page 376).

Richard Wilbur (b. 1921)*

The Writer 1976

In her room at the prow of the house
Where light breaks, and the windows are tossed with linden,
My daughter is writing a story.

I pause in the stairwell, hearing
From her shut door a commotion of typewriter-keys
Like a chain hauled over a gunwale.

Young as she is, the stuff
Of her life is a great cargo, and some of it heavy:
I wish her a lucky passage.

But now it is she who pauses,
As if to reject my thought and its easy figure.
A stillness greatens, in which

The whole house seems to be thinking,
And then she is at it again with a bunched clamor
Of strokes, and again is silent.

I remember the dazed starling
Which was trapped in that very room, two years ago;
How we stole in, lifted a sash
And retreated, not to affright it;
And how for a helpless hour, through the crack of the door,
We watched the sleek, wild, dark

And iridescent creature
Batter against the brilliance, drop like a glove
To the hard floor, or the desk-top,

And wait then, humped and bloody,
For the wits to try it again; and how our spirits
Rose when, suddenly sure,

It lifted off from a chair-back,
Beating a smooth course for the right window
And clearing the sill of the world.

It is always a matter, my darling,
Of life or death, as I had forgotten. I wish
What I wished you before, but harder.

COMPARÉ

C. K. Williams  (b. 1936)

Elms  1987

All morning the tree men have been taking down the stricken elms skirting
the broad sidewalks.
The pitiless electric chain saws whine tirelessly up and down their piercing,
operatic scales
and the diesel choppers in the street shredding the debris chug feverishly,
incessantly,
packing truckload after truckload with the feathery, homogenized, inert
remains of heartwood,
twig and leaf and soon the block is stripped, it is as though illusions of
reality were stripped:
the rows of naked facing buildings stare and think, their divagations more
urgent than they were.
“The winds of time,” they think, the mystery charged with fearful clarity:
“The winds of time . . .”
All afternoon, on to the unhealing evening, minds racing, “Insolent,
unconscionable, the winds of time . . .”

COMPARÉ
“Elms” with “Final Love Note” by Clare Rossini (page 81).
William Carlos Williams (1883–1963)*

Spring and All 1923

By the road to the contagious hospital
under the surge of the blue
mottled clouds driven from the
northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the
waste of broad, muddy fields
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy
stuff of bushes and small trees
with dead, brown leaves under them
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,
cold, uncertain of all
save that they enter. All about them
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf

One by one objects are defined—
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of
entrance—Still, the profound change
has come upon them: rooted, they
rip down and begin to awaken

COMPAR E

“Spring and All” with “in Just-” by E. E. Cummings (page 233) and “Root Cellar” by Theodore Roethke (page 89).
William Carlos Williams (1883–1963)*

To Waken an Old Lady

1921

Old age is
a flight of small
cheeping birds
skimming
bare trees
above a snow glaze.
Gaining and failing
they are buffeted
by a dark wind—
But what?
On harsh weedstalks
the flock has rested,
the snow
is covered with broken
seedhusks
and the wind tempered
by a shrill
piping of plenty.

COMPARE

“To Waken an Old Lady” with “Eleanor Rigby” by John Lennon and Paul McCartney (page 145).
William Wordsworth (1770–1850)*

Composed upon Westminster Bridge 1807

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

COMPARE

“Composed upon Westminster Bridge” with “London” by William Blake (page 77).
James Wright (1927–1980)*

A Blessing 1963

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,
Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.
And the eyes of those two Indian ponies
Darken with kindness.
They have come gladly out of the willows
To welcome my friend and me.
We step over the barbed wire into the pasture
Where they have been grazing all day, alone.
They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness
That we have come.
They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.
There is no loneliness like theirs.
At home once more,
They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.
I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,
For she has walked over to me
And nuzzled my left hand.
She is black and white,
Her mane falls wild on her forehead,
And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear
That is delicate as the skin over a girl's wrist.
Suddenly I realize
That if I stepped out of my body I would break
Into blossom.

COMPARE

James Wright (1927–1980)*

Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio 1963

In the Shreve High football stadium,
I think of Polacks nursing long beers in Tiltonsville,
And gray faces of Negroes in the blast furnace at Benwood,
And the ruptured night watchman of Wheeling Steel,
Dreaming of heroes.

All the proud fathers are ashamed to go home.
Their women cluck like starved pullets,
Dying for love.
Therefore,
Their sons grow suicidally beautiful
At the beginning of October,
And gallop terribly against each other's bodies.
COMPARE

“In Autumn Begins in Martins Ferry, Ohio” with “Ex-Basketball Player” by John Updike (page 521).

Mary Sidney Wroth (1587?–1623?)

In this strange labyrinth

In this strange labyrinth how shall I turn?
Ways are on all sides while the way I miss:
If to the right hand, there in love I burn;
Let me go forward, therein danger is;
If to the left, suspicion hinders bliss,
Let me turn back, shame cries I ought return
Nor faint though crosses with my fortunes kiss.
Stand still is harder, although sure to mourn;
Thus let me take the right, or left hand way;
Go forward, or stand still, or back retire;
I must these doubts endure without allay
Or help, but travail find for my best hire;
Yet that which most my troubled sense doth move
Is to leave all, and take the thread of love.

IN THIS STRANGE LABYRINTH. This sonnet comes from Wroth’s Urania (1621), the first significant sonnet sequence by a woman. Wroth was the niece of Sir Philip Sidney and of the Countess of Pembroke as well as a distant relation of Sir Walter Raleigh. The Labyrinth of the title was the maze built by Minos to trap the young men and women sacrificed to the Minotaur. King Minos’s daughter Ariadne saved her beloved Theseus by giving him a skein of thread to guide his way through the Labyrinth. (See the final line of the sonnet.)

COMPARE

“In this strange labyrinth” with “Let me not to the marriage of true minds” by William Shakespeare (page 201).
Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503?–1542)*

They flee from me that sometime did me sekë

They flee from me that sometime did me sekë
With naked fotë° stalking in my chamber.

I have seen them gentle, tame and mekë
That now are wild, and do not remember
That sometime they put themself in danger
To take bread at my hand; and now they range
Busily seeking with a continual change.

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

It was no dremë: I lay broadë waking.
But all is turned thorough° my gentleness
Into a strangë fashion of forsaking;
And I have leave to go of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangleness.°
But since that I so kindëly am served
I would fain knowë what she hath deserved.

They flee from me that sometime did me sekë. Some latter-day critics have called Sir Thomas Wyatt a careless poet because some of his lines appear faltering and metrically inconsistent; others have thought he knew what he was doing. It is uncertain whether the final e’s in English spelling were still pronounced in Wyatt’s day as they were in Chaucer’s, but if they were, perhaps Wyatt has been unjustly blamed. In this text, spellings have been modernized except in words where the final e would make a difference in rhythm. To sense how it matters, try reading the poem aloud leaving out the e’s and then putting them in wherever indicated. Sound them like the a in sofa. 20 kindëly: according to my kind (or hers); that is, as befits the nature of man (or woman). Perhaps there is also irony here, and the word means “unkindly.”

COMPARE

“They flee from me that sometime did me sekë” with “When, in disgrace with Fortune and men’s eyes” by William Shakespeare (page 506).
William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)*

Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop

I met the Bishop on the road
And much said he and I.
"Those breasts are flat and fallen now,
Those veins must soon be dry;
Live in a heavenly mansion,
Not in some foul sty."

"Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul," I cried.
"My friends are gone, but that's a truth
Nor grave nor bed denied,
Learned in bodily lowliness
And in the heart's pride.

"A woman can be proud and stiff
When on love intent;
But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent."

COMPARE

“Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop” with “The Flea” by John Donne (page 446) or “Down, Wanton, Down!” by Robert Graves (page 53).
William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)*

The Magi 1914

Now as at all times I can see in the mind’s eye,
In their stiff, painted clothes, the pale unsatisfied ones
Appear and disappear in the blue depth of the sky
With all their ancient faces like rain-beaten stones,
And all their helms of silver hovering side by side,
And all their eyes still fixed, hoping to find once more,
Being by Calvary’s turbulence unsatisfied,
The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

COMPARE

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)*

When You Are Old 1893

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;
How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;
And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

COMPARE
“When You Are Old” with “Not marble nor the gilded monuments” by William Shakespeare (page 507).
Bernice Zamora  (b. 1938)

Penitents  1976

Once each year penitentes in mailshirts
journey through arroyos Seco, Huerfano,
to join “edmanos” at the morada.

Brothers Carrasco, Ortiz, Abeyta
prepare the Cristo for an unnamed task.
Nails, planks and type O blood are set
upon wooden tables facing, it is decreed,
the sacred mountain range to the Southwest.

Within the dark morada average
chains rattle and clacking prayer wheels jolt
the hissing spine to uncoil wailing tongues
of Nahuatl converts who slowly wreath
rosary whips to flog one another.

From the mountains alabados are heard:
“En una columna atado se
hallo el Rey de los Cielos,
erido y ensangrentado,
y arrastrado por los suelos.”

The irresistible ceremony
beckoned me many times like crater lakes
and desecrated groves. I wished to swim
arroyos and know their estuaries
where, for one week, all is sacred in the valley.

Penitents. The poem is set in southern Colorado and deals with a ritual of sacrifice performed by secret
groups of penitentes. 2 arroyos Seco, Huerfano: Arroyos are washes or gullies in the West, and these are
named Seco (Dry) and Huerfano (Orphan). 3 edmanos: possibly a mispronunciation of hermanos, or
“brothers.” morada: a dwelling or abode where the ceremony will be performed—usually flagellation, but
sometimes a form of crucifixion. 12 Nahuatl: descendants of Aztecs in Mexico. 14 alabados: songs of praise.
15–18 “En una columna . . . por los suelos”: Translated as “In a bundled formation is met / the King of the
Sky, / wounded and bloodstained, / and poverty-stricken for the low ones.”

Compare

“Penitents” with “Bilingual/Bilingüe” by Rhina Espaillat (page 281).