

**Sonnet 68**

Most glorious Lord of lyfe that on this day<sup>8</sup>  
 Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:  
 And having harrowd hell<sup>9</sup> didst bring away  
 Captivity thence captive us to win:<sup>1</sup>  
 This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin,  
 And grant that we for whom thou diddest dye  
 Being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin,  
 May live for ever in felicity.  
 And that thy love we weighing worthily,  
 May likewise love thee for the same againe:<sup>2</sup>  
 And for thy sake that all lyke deare<sup>3</sup> didst buy,  
 With love may one another entertayne.  
 So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought,  
 Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.<sup>4</sup>

8. Easter.

9. A reference to the apocryphal account of Christ's descent into hell, after his Crucifixion, to rescue the captive souls of the just.

1. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive" (Ephesians 4.8).

2. I.e., grant also that we, weighing thy love rightly, might love thee in the same way.

3. I.e., at the same cost.

4. "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15.12).

**Sonnet 75**

One day I wrote her name upon the strand <sup>0</sup> ,	<i>shore</i>
But came the waves and washed it away:	
Agayne I wrote it with <sup>0</sup> a second hand <sup>0</sup> ,	<i>for / time</i>
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray <sup>0</sup>	<i>prey</i>
Wayne man, sayd she, that doest in vaine assay <sup>0</sup> ,	<i>attempt</i>
A mortall thing so to immortalize,	
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,	
And eek <sup>0</sup> my name bee wyped out lykewize.	<i>also</i>
Not so, (quod <sup>0</sup> I) let baser things devize <sup>0</sup>	<i>quoth / plan</i>
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:	
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,	
And in the hevens wryte your glorious name.	
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,	
Our love shall live, and later life renew.	

**31**

With how sad steps, Oh Moon, thou climb'st the skies,	
How silently, and with how wan <sup>0</sup> a face!	<i>pale</i>
What may it be, that even in heav'nly place	
That busy archer <sup>3</sup> his sharp arrows tries?	
Sure, if that long-with-love-acquainted eyes	
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;	
I read it in thy looks: thy languished grace,	
To me that feel the like, thy state descries. <sup>0</sup>	<i>reveals</i>
Then even of fellowship, Oh Moon, tell me,	
Is constant love deemed there but want of wit?	
Are beauties there as proud as here they be?	
Do they above love to be loved, and yet	
Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess?	
Do they call virtue there ungratefulness? <sup>2</sup>	

3. I.e., Cupid.

4. I.e., do they give the name of virtue to ungratefulness?

from *Certaine Sonnets* (1577–1581)

Leave me, O love which reachest but to dust;  
 And thou, my mind, aspire to higher things;  
 Grow rich in that which never taketh rust,  
 Whatever fades but fading pleasure brings.  
 Draw in thy beams, and humble all thy might  
 To that sweet yoke where lasting freedoms be;  
 Which breaks the clouds and opens forth the light,  
 That doth both shine and give us sight to see.  
 O take fast hold; let that light be thy guide  
 In this small course which birth draws out to death,  
 And think how evil becometh him to slide,  
 Who seeketh heav'n, and comes of heav'nly breath.  
 Then farewell, world; thy uttermost I see;  
 Eternal Love, maintain thy life in me.

*Splendidis longum valedico nugis.*

[I bid a long farewell to all that bright nothingness]

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616), FROM *SONNETS* (1609)

## 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
 Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
 Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
 And summer's lease<sup>0</sup> hath all too short a date;  
 Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
 And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
 And every fair<sup>0</sup> from fair sometimes declines,  
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;<sup>8</sup>  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;<sup>9</sup>  
 Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,  
 When in eternal lines to 'Time thou grow'st:<sup>1</sup>  
     So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
     So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

*allotted time*

*beauty*

8. Divested of its beauty.

9. Own, with a play on *owe*.

1. I.e., when you are grafted to 'Time in this immortal poetry.

Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action;<sup>7</sup> and till action, lust  
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
 Savage, extreme, rude,<sup>0</sup> cruel, not to trust;  
 Enjoyed no sooner but despised straight:  
 Past reason hunted; and no sooner had,  
 Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad:  
 Mad in pursuit, and in possession so;  
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
 A bliss in proof,<sup>0</sup> and proved, a very woe;  
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.  
     All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
     To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

*brutal*

*the experience*

7. I.e., lust, when put into action, is an expenditure of "spirit" (life, vigor, also semen) in a waste (desert, with a play on the crotch, or "waist," of shame).

## 130

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;<sup>0</sup>  
 If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
 I have seen roses damasked,<sup>0</sup> red and white,  
 But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
 And in some perfumes is there more delight  
 Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
 I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
 That music hath a far more pleasing sound;  
 I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
 My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.  
 And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
 As any she<sup>0</sup> belied with false compare.

*dull grayish brown*

*variegated*

*walk*

*woman*

7

At the round earth's imagined corners, blow  
Your trumpets, angels;<sup>5</sup> and arise, arise  
From death, you numberless infinities  
Of souls, and to your scattered bodies go;  
All whom the flood did, and fire shall,<sup>6</sup> o'erthrow,  
All whom war, dearth,<sup>0</sup> age, agues,<sup>0</sup> tyrannies, *famine / fevers*  
Despair, law, chance, hath slain, and you whose eyes  
Shall behold God, and never taste death's woe.<sup>7</sup>  
But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space;  
For, if above all these, my sins abound,  
Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace  
When we are there. Here on this lowly ground,  
Teach me how to repent; for that's as good  
As if thou'hadst sealed my pardon with thy blood.

(1633)

5. The first eight lines of the poem recount the events of the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ; Donne alludes specifically to Revelation 7.1: "I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth."

6. See note 3, p. 319. [At the end of the world, "the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3.10).]

7. "But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Christ's words to his disciples, Luke 9.27). According to 1 Thessalonians 4.17, believers who are alive at the time of Christ's Second Coming will not die but will be taken directly to heaven.

14

Batter my heart, three-personed God;<sup>3</sup> for You  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me,<sup>4</sup> and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurped town, to'another due,  
Labor to'admit You, but O, to no end;  
Reason, Your viceroy<sup>4</sup> in me, me should defend,  
But is captived, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly! love you,<sup>1</sup> and would be loved fain,<sup>0</sup> *gladly*  
But am betrothed unto your enemy.  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again;  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you'enthrall<sup>5</sup> me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

(1633)

3. The Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. One who acts in the name and by the authority of the supreme ruler.

5. Unless you make a prisoner of.

19

Oh, to vex me, contraries meet in one:  
Inconstancy unnaturally hath begot  
A constant habit; that when I would not  
I change in vows, and in devotion.  
As humorous<sup>0</sup> is my contrition *subject to whim*  
As my profane love, and as soon forgot:  
As riddlingly distempered, cold and hot,<sup>9</sup>  
As praying, as mute, as infinite, as none.  
I durst not view heaven yesterday; and today  
In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God:  
Tomorrow I quake with true fear of his rod.  
So my devout fits come and go away  
Like a fantastic ague:<sup>1</sup> save<sup>0</sup> that here *except*  
Those are my best days, when I shake with fear. (1615–1633?)

9. Arising from the unbalanced humors, inexplicably changeable.

1. A fever, attended with paroxysms of hot and cold and trembling fits. "Fantastic": capricious, extravagant.

**Redemption**

Having been tenant long to a rich Lord,  
 Not thriving, I resolved to be bold,  
 And make a suit unto him, to afford  
 A new small-rented lease, and cancel th' old.<sup>1</sup>  
 In heaven at his manor I him sought:  
 They told me there, that he was lately gone  
 About some land, which he had dearly bought  
 Long since on earth, to take possession.  
 I straight return'd, and knowing his great birth,  
 Sought him accordingly in great resorts;  
 In cities, theatres, gardens, parks, and courts:  
 At length I heard a ragged noise and mirth  
 Of theeves and murderers: there I him espied,  
 Who straight, *Your suit is granted*, said, & died.  
 (1633)

1. I.e., the old Covenant of Works, abrogated under the Covenant of Grace.

**Prayer (I)<sup>1</sup>**

Prayer, the church's banquet; angels' age,  
 God's breath in man returning to his birth;  
 The soul in paraphrase,<sup>2</sup> heart in pilgrimage;  
 The Christian plummet,<sup>3</sup> sounding heaven and earth;  
 Engine against th' Almighty, sinner's tower,  
 Reversed thunder, Christ-side-piercing spear,  
 The six-days' world transposing<sup>4</sup> in an hour;  
 A kind of tune which all things hear and fear:  
 Softness and peace and joy and love and bliss;  
 Exalted manna,<sup>5</sup> gladness of the best;  
 Heaven in ordinary,<sup>6</sup> man well dressed,  
 The milky way, the bird of paradise,  
 Church bells beyond the stars heard, the soul's blood,  
 The land of spices; something understood.  
 (1633)

1. This extraordinary sonnet is a series of epithets without a main verb, defining prayer by metaphor.
2. Clarifying by expansion.
3. A weight used to measure ("sound") the depth of water.
4. A musical term indicating sounds produced at another pitch from the original.
5. The food God supplied to the Israelites in the wilderness.
6. I.e., everyday heaven.

**On the Late Massacre in Piedmont<sup>1</sup>**

Avenge,<sup>2</sup> O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
 Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old  
 When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,<sup>3</sup>  
 Forget not: in thy book<sup>4</sup> record their groans  
 Who were thy sheep and in their ancient fold  
 Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled  
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans

The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
 To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
 O'er all th' Italian fields, where still doth sway  
 The triple tyrant:<sup>5</sup> that from these may grow  
 A hundredfold, who having learnt thy way  
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.<sup>6</sup>

(1655)

1. The Waldensians (or Vaudois) were a proto-Protestant sect dating to the 12th century who lived in the valleys of northern Italy (the Piedmont) and southern France; Protestants considered them a remnant retaining apostolic purity, free of Catholic superstitions and graven images ("stocks and stones," line 4). The treaty that had allowed them freedom of worship was bypassed in 1655 when the armies of the Catholic duke of Savoy conducted a massacre, razing villages, committing unspeakable atrocities, and hurling women and children from the mountain tops. Protestant Europe was outraged, and in his capacity as Cromwell's Latin secretary Milton translated and wrote several letters about the episode. The sonnet incorporates details from such letters and the contemporary newsbooks. Here Milton transforms the sonnet into a prophetic denunciation.

2. Cf. Revelation 6.9-10: "the souls of them that were slain for the word of God . . . cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood ...?'"

Methought I saw my late espoused saint<sup>1</sup>  
 Brought to me like Alcestis<sup>2</sup> from the grave,  
 Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,  
 Rescued from death by force though pale and faint.  
 Mine, as whom<sup>3</sup> washed from spot of childbed taint,  
 Purification in the old law did save,<sup>4</sup>  
 And such, as yet once more I trust to have  
 Full sight of her in heaven without restraint,  
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind,  
 Her face was veiled, yet to my fancied sight<sup>5</sup>  
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined  
 So clear, as in no face with more delight.  
 But O, as to embrace me she inclined,  
 I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.  
 (1658)

1. There is some debate as to whether this poem refers to Milton's first wife, Mary Powell, who died in May 1652, three days after giving birth to her third daughter, or his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, who died in February 1658, after giving birth (in October 1657) to a daughter. The text can support either, but the latter seems more likely. The sonnet is couched as a dream vision.

2. In Euripides' *Alcestis*, Alcestis, wife of Admetus, is rescued from the underworld by Hercules ("Jove's great son," next line) and restored, veiled, to Admetus; he is overjoyed when he lifts the veil, but she must remain silent until she is ritually cleansed.

3. As one whom.

4. The Mosaic Law (Leviticus 12.2–8) prescribed periods for the purification of women after childbirth (eighty days for a daughter).

5. She is veiled like Alcestis, and Milton's sight of her is only "fancied"; he never saw the face of his second wife, Katherine, because of his blindness.

**While summer-suns o'er the gay prospect played'**

While summer-suns o'er the gay prospect played,  
 Through Surrey's verdant scenes, where Epsom  
 spreads  
 Mid intermingling elms her flowery meads,  
 And Hascombe's hill, in towering groves arrayed,  
 Reared its romantic steep, with mind serene,  
 I journeyed blithe. Full pensive I returned;  
 For now my breast with hopeless passion burned,  
 Wet with hoar mists appeared the gaudy scene,  
 Which late in careless indolence I passed;  
 And autumn all around those hues had cast  
 Where past delight my recent grief might trace.  
 Sad change, that Nature a congenial gloom  
 Should wear, when most, my cheerless mood to chase,  
 I wished her green attire, and wanted bloom!

(1777)

WILLIAM LISLE BOWLES (1762-1850)

**To the River Wensbeck**

As slowly wanders thy sequestered stream,  
 Wensbeck! the mossy-scattered rocks among,  
 In fancy's ear still making plaintive song  
 To the dark woods above, that waving seem  
 To bend o'er some enchanted spot, removed  
 From life's vain scenes; I listen to the wind,  
 And think I hear meek sorrow's plaint, reclined  
 O'er the forsaken tomb of one she loved!—  
 Fair scenes, ye lend a pleasure, long unknown,  
 To him who passes weary on his way—  
 The farewell tear, which now he turns to pay,  
 Shall thank you,—and when'er of pleasures flown  
 His heart some long-lost image would renew,  
 Delightful haunts! he will remember you.

(1789)

***Sappho and Phaon 24***

O THOU! meek Orb! that stealing o'er the dale  
 Cheer'st with thy modest beams the noon of night!  
 On the smooth lake diffusing silv'ry light,  
 Sublimely still, and beautifully pale!  
 What can thy cool and placid eye avail,  
 Where fierce despair absorbs the mental sight,  
 While inbred glooms the vagrant thoughts invite,  
 To tempt the gulph where howling fiends assail?  
 O, Night! all nature owns thy temper'd pow'r;  
 Thy solemn pause, thy dews, thy pensive beam;  
 Thy sweet breath whisp'ring the moonlight bow'r,  
 While fainting flow'rets kiss the wand'ring stream!  
 Yet, vain is ev'ry charm! and vain the hour,  
 That brings to madd'ning love, no soothing dream!

(1796)

CHARLOTTE SMITH (1749-1806)

**Written Near a Port on a Dark Evening**

Huge vapors brood above the clifted shore,  
 Night on the ocean settles, dark and mute,  
 Save where is heard the repercussive roar  
 Of drowsy billows, on the rugged foot  
 Of rocks remote; or still more distant tone  
 Of seamen in the anchored bark that tell  
 The watch relieved; or one deep voice alone  
 Singing the hour, and bidding "Strike the bell."  
 All is black shadow, but the lucid line  
 Marked by the light surf on the level sand,  
 Or where afar the ship-lights faintly shine  
 Like wandering fairy fires, that oft on land  
 Misdlead the pilgrim—such the dubious ray  
 That wavering reason lends, in life's long darkling way.

(1800)

**To the River Otter**

Dear native brook! wild streamlet of the west!  
 How many various-fated years have past,  
 What blissful and what anguished hours, since last  
 I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,  
 Numbering its light leaps! Yet so deep impressed  
 Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes  
 I never shut amid the sunny blaze,  
 But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,  
 Thy crossing plank, thy margin's willowy maze,  
 And bedded sand that veined with various dyes  
 Gleamed through thy bright transparence to the gaze!  
 Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled  
 Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs,  
 Ah! that once more I were a careless child!

1792

(1797)

**Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September  
3, 1802**

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, theaters, 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!

1802

(1807)

**Surprised by Joy**

Surprised by Joy—impatient as the Wind  
 I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom  
 But thee,<sup>5</sup> deep buried in the silent tomb,  
 That spot which no vicissitude can find?  
 Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—  
 But how could I forget thee? Through what power,  
 Even for the least division of an hour,  
 Have I been so beguiled as to be blind  
 To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return  
 Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,  
 Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,  
 Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;  
 That neither present time, nor years unborn  
 Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

1813–14

(1815)

5. The poet's daughter Catharine, who died in 1812, at age four.

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821)

**On First Looking into Chapman's Homer<sup>1</sup>**

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty<sup>0</sup> to Apollo<sup>2</sup> hold.

*allegiance*

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;<sup>0</sup>

*domain*

Yet did I never breathe its pure serene<sup>0</sup> *atmosphere*  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez<sup>3</sup> when with eagle eyes  
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men  
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

1816

1816

1. Translations from Homer's *Odyssey*, in particular book 5, by George Chapman, a contemporary of Shakespeare.

2. Greek and Roman god of poetic inspiration.

3. Spanish conqueror of Mexico; in fact, Balboa, not Cortez, was the first European to see the Pacific, from Darien, in Panama.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822)

**Ozymandias<sup>5</sup>**

I met a traveler from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that  
fed:

And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

1817

1818

5. Greek name for the Egyptian monarch Ramses II (thirteenth century B.C.E.), who is said to have erected a huge statue of himself.

FELICIA HEMANS (1793–1835)

**Mary at the Feet of Christ**

Oh! blest beyond all daughters of the earth!  
What were the Orient's thrones to that low seat,  
Where thy hushed spirit drew celestial birth?  
Mary! meek listener at the Savior's feet!  
No feverish cares to that divine retreat  
Thy woman's heart of silent worship brought,  
But a fresh childhood, heavenly truth to meet,  
With love, and wonder, and submissive thought.  
Oh! for the holy quiet of thy breast,  
Midst the world's eager tones and footsteps flying!  
Thou, whose calm soul was like a wellspring, lying  
So deep and still in its transparent rest,  
That e'en when noontide burns upon the hills,  
Some one bright solemn star all its lone mirror  
fills.

(1834)

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI (1828–1882), *FROM*  
*THE HOUSE OF LIFE* (1870–1881)

### Silent Noon

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass, –  
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:  
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and  
glooms  
‘Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.  
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,  
Are golden kingcup fields with silver edge  
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.  
‘Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.  
Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly  
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky: –  
So this wing’d hour is dropt to us from above.  
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower, 1  
This close-companioned inarticulate hour  
When twofold silence was the song of love.

(1871)

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI (1830–1894)

### In an Artist's Studio

One face looks out from all his canvases,  
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:  
We found her hidden just behind those screens,  
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.  
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,  
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,  
A saint, an angel—every canvas means  
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.  
He feeds upon her face by day and night,  
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,  
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:  
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;  
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;  
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

(1856)

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861),  
*FROM SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE* (1845–  
1846)

### 13.

And wilt thou have me fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,  
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,  
Between our faces, to cast light on each?---  
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach  
My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
From myself---me---that I should bring thee proof  
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.  
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood  
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,---  
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,  
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,  
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

THOMAS HARDY (1840–1928)

**Hap<sup>1</sup>**

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.

(1866)

1. I.e., chance (as also "Casualty," line 11).

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS (1844–1889)

**God's Grandeur**

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;<sup>1</sup>  
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil  
Crushed.<sup>2</sup> Why do men then now not reck his rod?  
Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;  
And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with  
toil;  
And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:  
the soil  
Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for<sup>0</sup> all this, nature is never spent;  
There lives the dearest freshness deep down  
things;  
And though the last lights off the black West went  
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward,  
springs—  
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent  
World broods with warm breast and with ah!  
bright wings.

(1877)

0. Despite.

1. In a letter of 1883, Hopkins writes: "I mean foil in this sense of leaf or tinsel, and no other word whatever will give the effect I want. Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zigzag dints and crossings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too."

2. I.e., as when olives are crushed for their oil.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865–1939)

**Leda and the Swan<sup>5</sup>**

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

(1923)

5. In Greek mythology, Leda, raped by Zeus, the supreme god, in the guise of a swan, gave birth to Helen of Troy and the twins Castor and Pollux. Helen's abduction by Paris from her husband, Menelaus, caused the Trojan War. Leda was also the mother of Clytemnestra, who murdered her own husband, Agamemnon, on his return from the war. Yeats saw Leda as the recipient of an annunciation that would found Greek civilization, as the Annunciation to Mary would found Christianity.

WILFRED OWEN (1893–1918)

**Futility**

Move him into the sun—  
Gently its touch awoke him once,  
At home, whispering of fields half-sown.  
Always it woke him, even in France,  
Until this morning and this snow.  
If anything might rouse him now  
The kind old sun will know.  
Think how it wakes the seeds—  
Woke once the clays of a cold star.  
Are limbs, so dear achieved, are sides  
Full-nerved, still warm, too hard to stir?  
Was it for this the clay grew tall?  
—O what made fatuous sunbeams toil  
To break earth's sleep at all?

(May 1918)

W. H. AUDEN (1907–1973), FROM *SONNETS FROM CHINA* (1938)

**XII**

Here war is harmless like a monument:  
A telephone is talking to a man;  
Flags on a map declare that troops were sent;  
A boy brings milk in bowls. There is a plan

For living men in terror of their lives,  
Who thirst at nine who were to thirst at noon,  
Who can be lost and are, who miss their wives  
And, unlike an idea, can die too soon.

Yet ideas can be true, although men die:  
For we have seen a myriad faces  
Ecstatic from one lie,

And maps can really point to places  
Where life is evil now.  
Nanking. Dachau.

PHILIP LARKIN (1922–1985)

Love, we must part now: do not let it be  
Calamitous and bitter. In the past  
There has been too much moonlight and self-pity:  
Let us have done with it: for now at last  
Never has sun more boldly paced the sky,  
Never were hearts more eager to be free,  
To kick down worlds, lash forests; you and I  
No longer hold them; we are husks, that see  
The grain going forward to a different use.

There is regret. Always, there is regret.  
But it is better that our lives unloose,  
As two tall ships, wind-mastered, wet with light,  
Break from an estuary with their courses set,  
And waving part, and waving drop from sight.  
(1943–44)

GEOFFREY HILL (1932–)

### September Song

*Born 19.6.32—Deported 24.9.42<sup>1</sup>*

Undesirable you may have been, untouchable  
you were not. Not forgotten  
or passed over at the proper time.

As estimated, you died. Things marched,  
sufficient, to that end.  
Just so much Zyklon<sup>2</sup> and leather, patented  
terror, so many routine cries.

(I have made  
an elegy for myself it  
is true)

September fattens on vines. Roses  
flake from the wall. The smoke  
of harmless fires drifts to my eyes.

This is plenty. This is more than enough.

(1968)

1. Hill was born on June 18, 1932, one day before the birthdate given here.
2. Hydrocyanic acid, used in fumigation; also (Zyklon-B) used in the gas chambers of the Nazi concentration camps.

SEAMUS HEANEY (1939–2013)

### The Forge

All I know is a door into the dark.  
Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;  
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,  
The unpredictable fantail of sparks  
Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.  
The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,  
Horned as a unicorn, at one end square,  
Set there immovable: an altar  
Where he expends himself in shape and music.  
Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,  
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter  
Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;  
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and flick  
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.

(1969)

CAROL ANN DUFFY (1955–) **Prayer**

Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer  
utters itself. So, a woman will lift  
her head from the sieve of her hands and stare  
at the minims<sup>0</sup> sung by a tree, a sudden gift.

Some nights, although we are faithless, the truth  
enters our hearts, that small familiar pain;  
then a man will stand stock-still, hearing his youth  
in the distant Latin chanting of a train.

Pray for us now. Grade I piano scales<sup>1</sup>  
console the lodger looking out across  
a Midlands<sup>2</sup> town. Then dusk, and someone calls  
a child's name as though they named their loss.

Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer—  
Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre.<sup>3</sup>

(1993)

0. Short notes.
1. Musical exercises for beginners..
2. Central counties in England.
3. Coastal regions named in British weather forecasts.

PAUL MULDOON (1951–)

### Starlings, Broad Street, Trenton, 2003

Indiscernible, for the most part, the welts and weals<sup>1</sup>  
on their two-a-penny skins,  
weals got by tinkering with tin-  
foil from condoms or chewing gum, welts as slow to  
heal

as spot-welds on steel  
in a chop-shop where, by dint of the din,  
their calls will be no clearer than their colors till they  
spin  
(or are spun) around to reveal

this other sphere in which their hubbub's the hubbub  
of all-night revelers at reveille<sup>2</sup>,  
girls with shoes in hand, boys giving their all

to the sidewalk outside a club,  
their gloom a gloom so distinctly shot through with  
glee  
they might be dancing still under a disco-ball.

(2006)

1. Welts and weals: synonyms, meaning 'a red, swollen mark left on flesh by a blow or pressure'.
2. A signal to get up.

