

Reading More Poetry

WILLIAM BLAKE

The Tyger

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

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

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

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
20 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?

1790

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Kubla Khan

Or, a Vision in a Dream¹

- In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
 A stately pleasure-dome decree:
 Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
 Through caverns measureless to man
 5 Down to a sunless sea.
 So twice five miles of fertile ground
 With walls and towers were girdled round:
 And here were gardens bright with sinuous rills
 Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
 10 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!²
 A savage place! as holy and enchanted
 15 As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
 By woman wailing for her demon-lover!³
 And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
 As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
 A mighty fountain momentarily⁴ was forced,
 20 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
 Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
 And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
 It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
 25 Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
 And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 30 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.

1. Coleridge said he wrote this fragment immediately after waking from an opium dream and that after he was interrupted by a caller he was unable to finish the poem.

2. From side to side beneath a cover of cedar trees.

3. In a famous and often-imitated German ballad, the lady Lenore is carried off on horseback by the specter of her lover and married to him at his grave. 4. Suddenly.

- 35 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,
 40 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,
 45 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!
 50 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.

1798



EMILY DICKINSON

[*Because I could not stop for Death—*]

- Because I could not stop for Death—
 He kindly stopped for me—
 The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
 And Immortality.
- 5 We slowly drove—He knew no haste
 And I had put away
 My labor and my leisure too,
 For His Civility—
- We passed the School, where Children strove
 10 At Recess—in the Ring—
 We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
 We passed the Setting Sun—
- Or rather—He passed Us—
 The Dews drew quivering and chill—
 15 For only Gossamer,⁵ my Gown—
 My Tippet—only Tulle⁶—

5. A soft, sheer fabric. 6. A fine net fabric. *Tippet*: scarf.

We paused before a House that seemed
 A Swelling of the Ground—
 The Roof was scarcely visible—
 20 The Cornice—in the Ground—
 Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
 Feels shorter than the Day
 I first surmised the Horses' Heads
 Were toward Eternity—

ca. 1863

[I stepped from Plank to Plank]

I stepped from Plank to Plank
 A slow and cautious way
 The Stars about my Head I felt
 About my Feet the Sea.
 5 I knew not but the next
 Would be my final inch—
 This gave me that precarious Gait
 Some call Experience.

ca. 1864

[We do not play on Graves—]

We do not play on Graves—
 Because there isn't Room—
 Besides—it isn't even—it slants
 And People come—
 5 And put a Flower on it—
 And hang their faces so—
 We're fearing that their Hearts will drop—
 And crush our pretty play—
 And so we move as far
 10 As Enemies—away—
 Just looking round to see how far
 It is—Occasionally—

ca. 1862

[*The Brain—is wider than the Sky—*]

The Brain—is wider than the Sky—
 For—put them side by side—
 The one the other will contain
 With ease—and You—beside—

- 5 The Brain is deeper than the sea—
 For—hold them—Blue to Blue—
 The one the other will absorb—
 As Sponges—Buckets—do—

- The Brain is just the weight of God—
 10 For—Heft them—Pound for Pound—
 And they will differ—if they do—
 As Syllable from Sound—

ca. 1862

[*She dealt her pretty words like Blades—*]

She dealt her pretty words like Blades—
 How glittering they shone—
 And every One unbared a Nerve
 Or wantoned with a Bone—

- 5 She never deemed—she hurt—
 That—is not Steel's Affair—
 A vulgar grimace in the Flesh—
 How ill the Creatures bear—

- To Ache is human—not polite—
 10 The Film upon the eye
 Mortality's old Custom—
 Just locking up—to Die.

1862

JOHN DONNE

[*Death, be not proud*]

Death be not proud, though some have calléd 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.
 5 From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures⁷ be,
 Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
 And soonest⁸ our best men with thee do go,
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.⁹
 Thou art slave to Fate, Chance, kings, and desperate men,
 10 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'st¹ thou then?
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally
 And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

1633

The Sun Rising

- Busy old fool, unruly sun,
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?
 Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
 5 Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
 Late schoolboys, and sour prentices,²
 Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
 Call country ants³ to harvest offices;
 Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,
 10 Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.
 Thy beams, so reverend and strong
 why shouldst thou think?
 I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
 But that I would not lose her sight so long:
 15 If her eyes have not blinded thine,
 Look, and tomorrow late, tell me
 Whether both the Indias⁴ of spice and mine
 Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.
 Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
 20 And thou shalt hear, all here in one bed lay.
 She is all states, and all princes I,
 Nothing else is.
 Princes do but play us; compared to this,
 All honor's mimic,⁵ all wealth alchemy.
 25 Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
 In that the world's contracted thus;
 Thine age asks⁶ ease, and since thy duties be

7. Likenesses. 8. Most willingly. 9. Deliverance. 1. Puff with pride. 2. Apprentices.

3. Farmworkers. 4. The East and West Indies, commercial sources of spices and gold. 5. Hypocritical.

6. Requires.

To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
 Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
 30 This bed thy center⁷ is, these walls thy sphere.

1633

Song

Go, and catch a falling star,
 Get with child a mandrake root,⁸
 Tell me, where all past years are,
 Or who cleft the devil's foot,
 5 Teach me to hear mermaids singing
 Or to keep off envy's stinging,
 And find
 What wind
 Serves to advance an honest mind.
 10 If thou beest born to strange sights,⁹
 Things invisible to see,
 Ride ten thousand days and nights,
 Till age snow white hairs on thee;
 Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me
 15 All strange wonders that befell thee,
 And swear
 No where
 Lives a woman true, and fair.
 If thou find'st one, let me know:
 20 Such a pilgrimage were sweet.
 Yet do not, I would not go,
 Though at next door we might meet:
 Though she were true when you met her,
 And last till you write your letter,
 25 Yet she
 Will be
 False, ere I come, to two, or three.

1633

7. Of orbit. 8. The forked mandrake root looks vaguely like a pair of human legs.

9. That is, if you have supernatural powers.

*A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning*

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

- 5 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 the earth¹ brings harms and fears,
 10 Men reckon what it did and meant;
 But trepidation of the spheres,²
 Though greater far, is innocent.

- Dull sublunary³ lovers' love
 (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
 15 Absence, because it doth remove
 Those things which elemented⁴ it.

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

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
 Though I must go, endure not yet
 A breach, but an expansion,
 Like gold to airy thinness beat.

- 25 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 the other do;

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

Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
 Like the other foot, obliquely run;

1. Earthquakes.

2. The Renaissance hypothesis that the celestial spheres trembled and thus caused unexpected variations in their orbits. Such movements are "innocent" because earthlings do not observe or fret about them.

3. Below the moon—that is, changeable. According to the traditional cosmology that Donne invokes here, the moon was considered the dividing line between the immutable celestial world and the earthly mortal one. 4. Comprised.

- 35 Thy firmness makes my circle⁵ just,
And makes me end where I begun.

1611?

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

Sympathy

- I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
5 When the first bird sings and the first bud opens,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!
- I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
10 For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain⁶ would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!
- 15 I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
20 But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

1893

We Wear the Mask

- We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
5 And mouth with myriad subtleties.
- Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?

5. A traditional symbol of perfection. 6. Gladly.

Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.

- 10 We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
15 We wear the mask!

1895

T. S. ELIOT

*Journey of the Magi*⁷

- “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,
5 The very dead of winter.”⁸
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,
10 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
15 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
20 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,⁹
25 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.

7. The wise men who followed the star of Bethlehem. See Matthew 2.1–12.

8. An adaptation of a passage from a 1622 sermon by Lancelot Andrews.

9. Suggesting the three crosses of the Crucifixion (Luke 23.32–33). The Magi see several objects that suggest later events in Christ's life: pieces of silver (see Matthew 26.14–16), the dicing (see Matthew 27.35), the white horse (see Revelation 6.2 and 19.11–16), and the empty wine skins (see Matthew 9.17, possibly relevant also to lines 41–42).

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
 30 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
 35 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.
 40 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,¹
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
 With an alien people clutching their gods.
 I should be glad of another death.

1927



ROBERT FROST

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
 And sorry I could not travel both
 And be one traveler, long I stood
 And looked down one as far as I could
 5 To where it bent in the undergrowth;
 Then took the other, as just as fair,
 And having perhaps the better claim,
 Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
 Though as for that the passing there
 10 Had worn them really about the same,
 And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I kept the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
 15 I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
 Somewhere ages and ages hence:
 Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

1. The Bible identifies the wise men only as “from the east,” and subsequent tradition has made them kings. In Persia, magi were members of an ancient priestly caste.

I took the one less traveled by,
 20 And that has made all the difference.

1916

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.
 5 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
 10 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,
 15 And miles to go before I sleep,
 And miles to go before I sleep.

1923

THOMAS GRAY

Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
 The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me.
 5 Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,
 And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
 Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
 And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;
 Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
 10 The moping owl does to the moon complain
 Of such, as wandering near her secret bower,
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.
 Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,
 Where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap,

- 15 Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
 The rude² forefathers of the hamlet sleep.
- The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
 The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
 The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn.³
- 20 No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.
- For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
 Or busy housewife ply her evening care;
 No children run to lisp their sire's return,
 Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.
- 25 Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
 Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe⁴ has broke;
 How jocund did they drive their team afield!
 How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!
- Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
 30 Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
 Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
 The short and simple annals of the poor.
- The boast of heraldry,⁵ the pomp of power,
 And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
- 35 Awaits alike the inevitable hour.
 The paths of glory lead but to the grave.
- Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault,
 If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies⁶ raise,
 Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted⁷ vault
- 40 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise
- Can storied urn or animated⁸ bust
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
 Can Honor's voice provoke the silent dust,
 Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?
- 45 Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
 Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
 Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.
- But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page
 50 Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll;
 Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

2. Unlearned. 3. The hunter's horn. 4. Soil. 5. Noble birth.

6. An ornamental or symbolic group of figures depicting the achievements of the deceased.

7. Decorated with intersecting lines in relief.

8. Lifelike. *Storied urn*: a funeral urn with an epitaph or pictured story inscribed on it.

- Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
 The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear:
 55 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
- Some village Hampden,⁹ that with dauntless breast
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood;
 Some mute inglorious Milton¹ here may rest,
 60 Some Cromwell² guiltless of his country's blood.
- The applause of listening senates to command,
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
 And read their history in a nation's eyes,
- 65 Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;
 Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,
- The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
 70 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.
- Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,
 Their sober wishes never learned to stray;
 75 Along the cool sequestered vale of life
 They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.
- Yet even these bones from insult to protect
 Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
 With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,³
 80 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.
- Their name, their years, spelt by the unlettered Muse,
 The place of fame and elegy supply:
 And many a holy text around she strews,
 That teach the rustic moralist to die.
- 85 For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey,
 This pleasing anxious being e'er resigned,
 Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
 Nor cast one longing lingering look behind?
- On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
 90 Some pious drops the closing eye requires;

9. John Hampden (1594–1643), who, both as a private citizen and as a member of Parliament, zealously defended the rights of the people against the autocratic policies of Charles I.

1. John Milton (1608–1674), great English poet.

2. Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658), lord protector of England during the Interregnum, noted for military genius but also cruelty and intolerance.

3. Cf. the “storied urn or animated bust” (line 41) dedicated inside the church to the “proud” (line 37).

Even from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Even in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who mindful of the unhonored dead
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;

95 If chance, by lonely contemplation led,
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
"Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away

100 To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.

"There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

105 "Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love.

"One morn I missed him on the customed hill,
110 Along the heath and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

"The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the churchway path we saw him borne.
115 Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay,
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

The Epitaph

*Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science^a frowned not on his humble birth,
120 And Melancholy marked him for her own.*

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

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

1751

ROBERT HAYDEN

The Whipping

The old woman across the way
 is whipping the boy again
 and shouting to the neighborhood
 her goodness and his wrongs.

- 5 Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,
 pleads in dusty zinnias,
 while she in spite of crippling fat
 pursues and corners him.

- She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling
 10 boy till the stick breaks
 in her hand. His tears are rainy weather
 to woundlike memories:

- My head gripped in bony vise
 of knees, the writhing struggle
 15 to wrench free, the blows, the fear
 worse than blows that hateful

- Words could bring, the face that I
 no longer knew or loved. . . .
 Well, it is over now, it is over,
 20 and the boy sobs in his room,

And the woman leans muttering against
 a tree, exhausted, purged—
 avenged in part for lifelong hidings
 she has had to bear.

1962, 1966

SEAMUS HEANEY

Digging

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:
 5 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 drills⁵
Where he was digging.

- 10 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.
- 15 By God, the old man could handle a spade.
Just like his old man.
- My grandfather cut more turf⁶ in a day
Than any other man on Toner's bog.
Once I carried him milk in a bottle
- 20 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.
- 25 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
- 30 The squat pen rests.
I'll dig with it.

1966

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

God's Grandeur

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;⁷

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reckon his rod?⁸

- 5 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.

5. Small furrows in which seeds are sown.

6. Peat cut into slabs and dried to be used as fuel in stoves and furnaces.

7. "I mean foil in its sense of leaf or tinsel. . . . Shaken goldfoil gives off broad glares like sheet lightning and also, and this is true of nothing else, owing to its zig-zag dints and creasings and network of small many cornered facets, a sort of fork lightning too" (*Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges*, ed. C. C. Abbott [1955], p. 169). 8. Heed his authority.

And for all this, nature is never spent;
 10 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.
 1918

*The Windhover*⁹

To Christ our Lord

I caught this morning morning's minion,¹ king-
 dom of daylight's dauphin,² 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 wimpling³ wing
 5 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
 10 Buckle!⁴ AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion
 Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!⁵
 No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plow down sillion⁶
 Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,
 Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.
 1877

GALWAY KINNELL

Blackberry Eating

I love to go out in late September
 among the fat, overripe, icy, black blackberries
 to eat blackberries for breakfast,
 the stalks very prickly, a penalty
 5 they earn for knowing the black art

9. A small hawk, the kestrel, which habitually hovers in the air, headed into the wind. 1. Favorite, beloved.

2. Heir to regal splendor. 3. Rippling.

4. Several meanings may apply: to join closely, to prepare for battle, to grapple with, to collapse.

5. Horseman, knight.

6. The narrow strip of land between furrows in an open field divided for separate cultivation.

- of blackberry-making; and as I stand among them
 lifting the stalks to my mouth, the ripest berries
 fall almost unbidden to my tongue,
 as words sometimes do, certain peculiar words
 10 like *strengths* or *squinched*,
 many-lettered, one-syllabled lumps,
 which I squeeze, squinch open, and splurge well
 in the silent, startled, icy, black language
 of blackberry-eating in late September.

1980



ROBERT LOWELL

*Skunk Hour**for Elizabeth Bishop*

- Nautilus Island's hermit
 heiress still lives through winter in her Spartan cottage;
 her sheep still graze above the sea.
 Her son's a bishop. Her farmer
 5 is first selectman⁷ in our village,
 she's in her dotage.
- Thirsting for
 the hierarchic privacy
 of Queen Victoria's century,
 10 she buys up all
 the eyesores facing her shore,
 and lets them fall.
- The season's ill—
 we've lost our summer millionaire,
 15 who seemed to leap from an L. L. Bean⁸
 catalogue. His nine-knot yawl
 was auctioned off to lobstermen.
 A red fox stain covers Blue Hill.
- And now our fairy
 20 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.
- 25 One dark night,
 my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull,
 I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,

7. An elected New England town official. 8. Famous old Maine sporting goods firm.

- they lay together, hull to hull,
 where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .
- 30 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. . . .
- 35 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:
- 40 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—
- 45 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.

1959

ANDREW MARVELL

The Garden

- How vainly men themselves amaze¹
 To win the palm, the oak, or bays,²
 And their incessant labors see
 Crowned from some single herb, or tree,
 5 Whose short and narrow-vergèd³ shade
 Does prudently their toils upbraid;
 While all flowers and all trees do close⁴
 To weave the garlands of repose!
- Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
 10 And Innocence, thy sister dear?
 Mistaken long, I sought you then
 In busy companies of men.
 Your sacred plants,⁵ if here below,
 Only among the plants will grow;
 15 Society is all but rude⁶
 To⁷ this delicious solitude.

9. A popular folk song recorded many times, as by Frankie Laine (1959). 1. Become frenzied.

2. Awards for athletic, civic, and literary achievements. 3. Narrowly cropped. 4. Unite. 5. Cuttings.

6. Barbarous. 7. Compared to.

No white nor red was ever seen
 So am'rous as this lovely green.
 Fond lovers, cruel as their flame,
 20 Cut in these trees their mistress' name:
 Little, alas, they know, or heed
 How far these beauties hers exceed!
 Fair trees, wheresoe'er your barks I wound,
 No name shall but your own be found.

25 When we have run our passion's heat,
 Love hither makes his best retreat.
 The gods, that mortal beauty chase,
 Still in a tree did end their race:
 Apollo hunted Daphne so,
 30 Only that she might laurel grow;
 And Pan did after Syrinx speed,
 Not as a nymph, but for a reed.⁸

What wondrous life is this I lead!
 Ripe apples drop about my head;
 35 The luscious clusters of the vine
 Upon my mouth do crush their wine;
 The nectarine and curious⁹ peach
 Into my hands themselves do reach;
 Stumbling on melons, as I npass,
 40 Insnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

Meanwhile the mind, from pleasure less,
 Withdraws into its happiness;¹
 The mind, that ocean where each kind
 Does straight its own resemblance find;²
 45 Yet it creates, transcending these,
 Far other worlds and other seas,
 Annihilating³ all that's made
 To a green thought in a green shade.

Here at the fountain's sliding foot,
 50 Or at some fruit tree's mossy root,
 Casting the body's vest⁴ aside,
 My soul into the boughs does glide:
 There, like a bird, it sits and sings,
 Then whets⁵ and combs its silver wings,
 55 And, till prepared for longer flight,
 Waves in its plumes the various⁶ light.

8. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Daphne, pursued by Apollo, is turned into a laurel, and Syrinx, pursued by Pan, into a reed that Pan makes into a flute. 9. Exquisite.

1. That is, the mind withdraws from lesser-sense pleasure into contemplation.

2. All land creatures supposedly had corresponding sea creatures. 3. Reducing to nothing by comparison.

4. Vestment, clothing; the flesh is being considered as simply clothing for the soul. 5. Preens.

6. Many-colored.

- Such was that happy garden-state,
 While man there walked without a mate:
 After a place so pure, and sweet,
 60 What other help could yet be meet!⁷
 But 'twas beyond a mortal's share
 To wander solitary there:
 Two paradises 'twere in one
 To live in paradise alone.
- 65 How well the skillful gardener drew
 Of flowers and herbs this dial⁸ new,
 Where, from above, the milder sun
 Does through a fragrant zodiac run;
 And as it works, th' industrious bee
 70 Computes its time as well as we!
 How could such sweet and wholesome hours
 Be reckoned but with herbs and flowers?

1681

HOWARD NEMEROV

A Way of Life

- It's been going on a long time.
 For instance, these two guys, not saying much, who slog
 Through sun and sand, fleeing the scene of their crime,
 Till one turns, without a word, and smacks
 5 His buddy flat with the flat of an axe,
 Which cuts down on the dialogue
 Some, but is viewed rather as normal than sad
 By me, as I wait for the next ad.
- It seems to me it's been quite a while
 10 Since the last vision of blonde loveliness
 Vanished, her shampoo and shower and general style
 Replaced by this lean young lunk-
 head parading along with a gun in his back to confess
 How yestereve, being drunk
 15 And in a state of existential despair,
 He beat up his grandma and pawned her invalid chair.
- But here at last is a pale beauty
 Smoking a filter beside a mountain stream,
 Brief interlude, before the conflict of love and duty
 20 Gets moving again, as sheriff and posse expound,
 Between jail and saloon, the American Dream

7. Appropriate. 8. A garden planted in the shape of a sundial, complete with zodiac.

Where Justice, after considerable horsing around,
Turns out to be Mercy; when the villain is knocked off,
A kindly uncle offers syrup for my cough.

- 25 And now these clean-cut athletic types
In global hats are having a nervous debate
As they stand between their individual rocket ships
Which have landed, appropriately, on some rocks
Somewhere in Space, in an atmosphere of hate
30 Where one tells the other to pull up his socks
And get going, he doesn't say where; they fade,
And an angel food cake flutters in the void.

- I used to leave now and again;
No more. A lot of violence in American life
35 These days, mobsters and cops all over the scene.
But there's a lot of love, too, mixed with the strife,
And kitchen-kindness, like a bedtime story
With rich food and a more kissable depilatory.
Still, I keep my weapons handy, sitting here
40 Smoking and shaving and drinking the dry beer.

1967

SYLVIA PLATH

Barren Woman

Empty, I echo to the least footfall,
Museum without statues, grand with pillars, porticoes, rotundas.
In my courtyard a fountain leaps and sinks back into itself,
Nun-hearted and blind to the world. Marble lilies

- 5 Exhale their pallor like scent.

I imagine myself with a great public,
Mother of a white Nike and several bald-eyed Apollos.⁹
Instead, the dead injure me with attentions, and nothing can happen.
The moon lays a hand on my forehead,

- 10 Blank-faced and mum as a nurse.

February 21, 1963

9. That is, gods of poetic inspiration. *Nike*: goddess of victory.