“Song”
Lady Mary Wroth

Love a child is ever crying;
Please him, and he straight is flying;
Give him, he the more is craving,
Never satisfied with having.

His desires have no measure;
Endless folly is his treasure;
What he promiseth he breaketh,
Trust not one word that he speaketh.

He vows nothing but false matter,
And to cozen you he’ll flatter.
Let him gain the hand, he’ll leave you,
And still glory to deceive you.

He will triumph in your wailing,
And yet cause be of your failing,
These his virtues are, and slighter
Are his gifts, his favours lighter.

Feathers are as firm in staying,
Wolves no fiercer in their preying,
As a child then leave him crying,
Nor seek him so given to flying.

“The Wedding”
Monzia Alvi

I expected a quiet wedding
high above a lost city
a marriage to balance on my head

like a forest of sticks, a pot of water.
The ceremony tasted of nothing
had little colour – guests arrived

stealthy as sandalwood smugglers.
When they opened their suitcases
England spilled out.

They scratched at my veil
like beggars on a car window.
I insisted my dowry was simple –

a smile, a shadow, a whisper,
my house an incredible structure
of stiffened rags and bamboo.

We travelled along roads with English
names, my bridegroom and I.
Our eyes changed colour

like traffic-lights, so they said.
The time was not ripe
for us to view each other.

We stared straight ahead as if
we could see through mountains
breathe life into new cities.

I wanted to marry a country
take up a river for a veil
sing in the Jinnah Gardens

hold up my dream, tricky
as a snake-charmer’s snake.
Our thoughts half-submerged

like buffaloes under dark water
we turned and faced each other
with turbulence

and imprints like maps on our hands.

“If Thou must Love Me”
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love’s sake only. Do not say
“I love her for her smile… her look… her way
Of speaking gently…; for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day:”
For these things in themselves, beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee, … and love so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity wiping my cheeks dry! –
For one might well forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby –
But love me for love’s sake, that evermore
Thou may’st love on through love’s eternity –
But before we could marry, he became a lion –
thick pelted, and rich with the musk of beast.

The switch to all fours was not easy – all his weight
slung from the blades of his shoulders.
His deltoids knotted like teak burls,
and I burnished them as he slept.

Burrs matted his mane, and for days
he wouldn’t let me groom him –
slapped me away with a suede paw,
snarled against my throat.

He would not eat fruit, or drink milk,
but tore meat from the bones I provided.

His claws caught in the carpet,
so I stripped the rugs from the floor
and polished the boards until they gleamed
and rang with the chime of his nails.

I stroke his saffron hide
and tangle my fingers deep in his ruff,
draw him up around me, ardent
as the gleam of his topaz eyes
– the hypnotic lash of his tail,
the rasp of his tongue on my thighs.

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

Huge vapors brood above the lifted 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  
Mislead the Pilgrim – Such the dubious ray  
That wavering Reason lends, in life’s long darkling way.

The Mountain  
Elizabeth Bishop

At evening, something behind me.  
I start for a second, I blench,  
or staggeringly halt and burn.  
I do not know my age.

In the morning it is different.  
An open book confronts me,  
too close to read in comfort.  
Tell me how old I am.

And then the valleys stuff  
impenetrable mists  
like cotton in my ears.  
I do not know my age.

I do not mean to complain.  
They say it is my fault.  
Nobody tells me anything.  
Tell me how old I am.

The deepest demarcations  
can slowly spread and sink  
like any blue tattoo.  
I do not know my age.

Shadows fall down, lights climb.  
Clambering lights, oh children!  
you never stay long enough.  
Tell me how old I am.

Stone wings have sifted here  
with feather hardening feather.  
The claws are lost somewhere.  
I do not know my age.

The Cry of the Children  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning

‘Pheu pheu, ti prosderkesthe m ommasin, tekna.’ – Medea*

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, –  
And that cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;  
The young birds are chirping in the nest;  
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;  
The young flowers are blowing toward the west –  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
They are weeping bitterly! –  
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,  
In the country of the free.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,  
Why their tears are falling so? –  
The old man may weep for his to-morrow  
Which is lost in Long Ago –  
The old tree is leafless in the forest –  
The old year is ending in the frost –  
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest –  
The old hope is hardest to be lost:  
But the young, young children, O my brothers,  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,  
In our happy Fatherland?

They look up with their pale and sunken faces,  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man’s grief abhorrent, draws and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy –  
‘Your old earth,’ they say, ‘is very dreary;’  
‘Our young feet,’ they say, ‘are very weak!  
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary –  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
Ask the old why they weep, and not the children,  
For the outside earth is cold, –  
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.’

* ‘Alas, why do you gaze at me with your eyes, my children?’  
from the Greek tragedy Medea (c. 430 BCE) by Euripides
The back, the yoke, the yardage. Lapped seams,  
The nearly invisible stitches along the collar  
Turned in a sweatshop by Koreans or Malaysians

Gossiping over tea and noodles on their break  
Or talking money or politics while one fitted  
This armpiece with its overseam to the band

Of cuff I button at my wrist. The presser, the cutter,  
The wringer, the mangle. The needle, the union,  
The treadle, the bobbin. The code. The infamous blaze

At the Triangle Factory in nineteen-eleven.  
One hundred and forty-six died in the flames  
On the ninth floor, no hydrants, no fire escapes –

The witness in a building across the street  
Who watched how a young man helped a girl to step  
up to the windowsill, then held her out

Away from the masonry wall and let her drop.  
And then another. As if he were helping them up  
To enter a streetcar, and not eternity.

A third before he dropped her put her arms  
Around his neck and kissed him. Then he held  
Her into space, and dropped her. Almost at once

He stepped to the sill himself, his jacket flared  
And fluttered up from his shirt as he came down,  
Air filling up the legs of his gray trousers –
The Song of the Shirt
Thomas Hood

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
    Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
    And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the “Song of the Shirt!”

“Work – work – work
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work – work – work
Till the eyes are heavy and dim.
Seam, and gusset, and band,
    Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
    And sew them on in a dream!

“Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you ’re wearing out,
    But human creatures’ lives!
    Stitch – stitch – stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once, with a double threat,
    A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

“But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
    It seems so like my own –
    It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, Gods! that bread should be so dear,
    And flesh and blood so cheap!

“Work – work – work,
     My labor never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straws,
    A crust of bread – and rags.
That shatter’d roof – and this naked floor –
    A table – a broken chair –
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
     For sometimes falling there.

Work – work – work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work – work – work,
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb’d,
As well as the weary hand.

“Work – work – work,
In the dull December light,
And work – work – work,
When the weather is warm and bright,
While underneath the eaves
    The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
    And twit me with the spring.

“Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet,
    With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet,
For only one short hour
    To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
    And the walk that costs a meal,

“Oh, but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
    But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
    Hinders needle and thread!”

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread –
    Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
    And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this “Song of the Shirt!”
First March
Ivor Gurney

It was first marching, hardly we had settled yet
To think of England, or escaped body pain –
Flat country going leaves but small chance for
The mind to escape to any resort but its vain
Own circling greyness and stain.
First halt, second halt, and then to spoiled country again.
There were unknown kilometres to march, one must settle
To play chess or talk home-talk or think as might happen.
After three weeks of February frost few were in fettle,
Barely frostbite the most of us had escapen.
To move, then to go onward, at least to be moved.
Myself had revived and then dulled down, it was I
Who stared for body-ease at the grey sky
And watched in grind of pain the monotony
Of grit, road metal, slide underneath by.
To get there being the one way not to die.
Suddenly a road’s turn brought the sweet unexpected
Balm. Snowdrops bloomed in a ruined garden neglected:
Roman the road as of Birdlip we were on the verge,
And this west country thing so from chaos to emerge.
One gracious touch the whole wilderness corrected.

A Complaint
William Wordsworth

There is a change – and I am poor;
Your love hath been, nor long ago,
A fountain at my fond heart’s door,
Whose only business was to flow;
And flow it did; not taking heed
Of its own bounty, or my need.

What happy moments did I count!
Blest was I then all bliss above!
Now, for that consecrated fount
Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,
What have I? shall I dare to tell?
A comfortless and hidden well.

A well of love – it may be deep –
I trust it is, – and never dry:
What matter? if the waters sleep
In silence and obscurity.
– Such change, and at the very door
Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.

On the Day of Judgement
Jonathan Swift

With a whirl of thought oppressed,
I sink from reverie to rest.
An horrid vision seized my head.
I saw the graves give up their dead.
Jove, armed with terrors, burst the skies,
And thunder roars, and light’ning flies!
amazed, confused, its fate unknown,
The world stands trembling at his throne.
While each pale sinner hangs his head.
Jove, nodding, shook the heav’ns, and said,
‘Offending race of human kind,
By nature, reason, learning, blind;
You who through frailty stepped aside,
And you who never fell – through pride;
You who in different sects have shammed,
And come to see each other damned;
(So some folks told you, but they knew
No more of Jove’s designs than you);
The world’s mad business now is o’er,
And I resent these pranks no more.
I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools! – Go, go, you’re bit.’
I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish’d, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came, and went – and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill’d into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires – and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings – the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consumed,
And men were gathered round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other’s face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain’d;
Forests were set on fire – but hour by hour
They fell and faded – and the crackling trunks
Extinguished with a crash – and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smiled;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and looked up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash’d their teeth and howl’d: the wild birds shriek’d,
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Come tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl’d
And twined themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless – they were slain for food:
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again; – a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought – and that was death,
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails – men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devoured,
Even dogs assail’d their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish’d men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lured their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,

But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answered not with a caress – he died.
The crowd was famish’d by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies; they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place,
Where had been heap’d a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they raked up,
And shivering scraped with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other’s aspects – saw, and shriek’d, and died –
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful – was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless –
A lump of death – a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes, and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirred within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal; as they dropp’d
They slept on the abyss without a surge –
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon their mistress had expired before;
The winds were withered in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish’d; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them – She was the universe.
A Song of Faith Forsworn
John Warren, Lord de Tabley

Take back your suit.
It came when I was weary and distraught
With hunger. Could I guess the fruit you brought?
I ate in mere desire of any food,
Nibbled its edge and nowhere found it good.
Take back your suit.

Take back your love,
It is a bird poached from my neighbour’s wood:
Its wings are wet with tears, its beak with blood.
‘Tis a strange fowl with feathers like a crow:
Death’s raven, it may be, for all we know.
Take back your love.

Take back your gifts.
False is the hand that gave them; and the mind
That planned them, as a hawk spread in the wind
To poise and snatch the trembling mouse below.
To ruin where it dares – and then to go.
Take back your gifts.

Take back your vows.
Elsewhere you trimmed and taught these lamps to burn;
You bring them stale and dim to serve my turn.
You lit those candles in another shrine,
Guttered and cold you offer them on mine.
Take back your vows.

Take back your words.
What is your love? Leaves on a woodland plain,
Where some are running and where some remain:
What is your faith? Straws on a mountain height,
Dancing like demons on Walpurgis night.
Take back your words.

Take back your lies.
Have them again: they wore a rainbow face,
Hollow with sin and leprous with disgrace;
Their tongue was like a mellow turret bell
To toll hearts burning into wide-lipped hell.
Take back your lies.

Take back your kiss.
Shall I be meek, and lend my lips again
To let this adder daub them with his stain?
Shall I turn cheek to answer, when I hate?
You kiss like Judas in the garden gate!
Take back your kiss.

Take back delight,
A paper boat launched on a heaving pool
To please a child, and folded by a fool;
The wild elms roared: it sailed – a yard or more.
Out went our ship but never came to shore.
Take back delight.

Take back your wreath.
Has it done service on a fairer brow?
Fresh, was it folded round her bosom snow?
Her cast-off weed my breast will never wear:
Your word is ‘love me.’ My reply ‘despair!’
Take back your wreath.

Farewell, Ungrateful Traitor
John Dryden

Farewell, ungrateful traitor,
Farewell, my perjured swain,
Let never injured creature
Believe a man again.
The pleasure of possessing
Surpasses all expressing,
But ’tis too short a blessing,
And love too long a pain.

‘Tis easy to deceive us
In pity of your pain,
But when we love you leave us
To rail at you in vain.
Before we have descried it
There is no bliss beside it,
But she that once has tried it
Will never love again.

The passion you pretended
Was only to obtain,
But when the charm is ended
The charmer you disdain.
Your love by ours we measure
Till we have lost our treasure,
But dying is a pleasure,
When living is a pain.
When We Two Parted
George Gordon, Lord Byron

When we two parted
In silence and tears,
Half broken-hearted
To sever for years,
Pale grew thy cheek and cold,
Colder thy kiss;
Truly that hour foretold
Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning
Sunk chill on my brow
–
It felt like the warning
Of what I feel now.
Thy vows are all broken,
And light is thy fame:
I hear thy name spoken,
And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,
A knell to mine ear;
A shudder comes o’er me –
Why wert thou so dear?
They know not I knew thee,
Who knew thee too well:
Long, long shall I rue thee,
Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met –
In silence I grieve,
That thy heart could forget,
Thy spirit deceive.
If I should meet thee
After long years,
How should I greet thee?
With silence and tears.

Homecoming
Lenrie Peters

The present reigned supreme
Like the shallow floods over the gutters
Over the raw paths where we had been,
The house with the shutters.

Too strange the sudden change
Of the times we buried when we left
The time before we had properly arranged
The memories that we kept.

Our sapless roots have fed
The wind-swept seedlings of another age.
Luxuriant weeds have grown where we led
The Virgins to the water’s edge.

There at the edge of the town
Just by the burial ground
Stands the house without a shadow
Lived in by new skeletons.

That is all that is left
To greet us on the home-coming
After we have paced the world
And longed for returning.

Sleep
Kenneth Slessor

Do you give yourself to me utterly,
Body and no-body, flesh and no-flesh
Not as a fugitive, blindly or bitterly,
But as a child might, with no other wish?
Yes, utterly.

Then I shall bear you down my estuary,
Carry you and ferry you to burial mysteriously,
Take you and receive you,
Consume you, engulf you,
In the huge cave, my belly, love you
With huge waves continually.

And you shall cling and clamber there
And slumber there, in that dumb chamber,
Beat with my blood’s beat, hear my heart move
Blindly in bones that ride above you,
Delve in my flesh, dissolved and bedded,

Through viewless valves embodied so –
Till daylight, the expulsion and awakening,
The riving and the driving forth,
Life with remorseless forceps beckoning –
Pangs and betrayal of harsh birth.
I Years Had Been from Home
Emily Dickinson

I Years had been from Home
And now before the Door
I dared not enter, lest a Face
I never saw before

Stare stolid into mine
And ask my Business there –
“My Business but a Life I left
Was such remaining there?”

I leaned upon the Awe –
I lingered with Before –
The Second like an Ocean rolled
And broke against my ear –

I laughed a crumbling Laugh
That I could fear a Door
Who Consternation compassed
And never winced before.

I fitted to the Latch
My Hand, with trembling care
Lest back the awful Door should spring
And leave me in the Floor –

Then moved my Fingers off
As cautiously as Glass
And held my ears, and like a Thief
Fled gasping from the House –

When You Are Old
William Butler Yeats

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 faces;

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.

Waterfall
Lauris Edmond

I do not ask for youth, nor for delay
in the rising of time’s irreversible river
that takes the jewelled arc of the waterfall
in which I glimpse, minute by glinting minute,
all that I have and all I am always losing
as sunlight lights each drop fast, fast falling.

I do not dream that you, young again,
might come to me darkly in love’s green darkness
where the dust of the bracken spices the air
moss, crushed, gives out an astringent sweetness
and water holds our reflections
motionless, as if for ever.

It is enough now to come into a room
and find the kindness we have for each other
– calling it love – in eyes that are shrewd
but trustful still, face chastened by years
of careful judgement; to sit in the afternoons
in mild conversation, without nostalgia.

But when you leave me, with your jauntiness
sinewed by resolution more than strength
– suddenly then I love you with a quick
intensity, remembering that water,
however luminous and grand, falls fast
and only once to the dark pool below.

Distant Fields / ANZAC Parade
Rhian Gallagher

Medalled, ribboned chest, an effort
carried through them, the war
still going on inside their heads,
gathered up for roll call.

Where all the flowers had gone
came a quiet of ash,
line after line after line.

As if the grainy footage played above the leafy street
my father lifted me on to his shoulders to see.

My uncles looked to the back of the one in front,
marching to the heart-beat drum.

At end of Mass the bugle rose,
life unto life, a single breath
took flight into the bird-light zone.
On This day I Complete My Thirty-Sixth Year
George Gordon, Lord Byron

‘Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move:
Yet though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love!

My days are in the yellow leaf;
The flowers and fruits of Love are gone;
The worm – the canker, and the grief
Are mind alone!

The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some Volcanic Isle;
No torch is kindled at its blaze
A funeral pile!

The hope, the fear, the jealous care,
The exalted portion of the pain
And power of Love I cannot share,
But wear the chain.

But ’tis not thus – and ’tis not here
Such thoughts should shake my Soul, nor now
Where Glory decks the hero’s bier
Or binds his brow.

The Sword, the Banner, and the Field,
Glory and Greece around us see!
The Spartan borne upon his shield
Was not more free!

Awake (not Greece – she is awake!)
Awake, my Spirit! think through whom
Thy life-blood tracks its parent lake
And then strike home!

Tread those reviving passions down
Unworthy Manhood – unto thee
Indifferent should the smile or frown
Of Beauty be.

If thou regret’st thy Youth, why live?
The land of honourable Death
Is here: – up to the Field, and give
Away thy Breath!

Seek out – less often sought than found –
A Soldier’s Grave, for thee the best;
Then look around, and choose thy Ground,
And take thy Rest!

The Death-Bed
Siegfried Sassoon

He drowsed and was aware of silence heaped
Round him, unshaken as the steadfast walls;
Aqueous like floating rays of amber light,
Soaring and quivering in the wings of sleep.
Silence and safety; and his mortal shore
Lipped by the inward, moonless waves of death.

Someone was holding water to his mouth.
He swallowed, unresisting; moaned and dropped
Through crimson gloom to darkness; and forgot
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.
Water – calm, sliding green above the weir.
Water – a sky-lit alley for his boat,
Bird-voiced, and bordered with reflective flowers
And shaken hues of summer; drifting down,
He dipped contented oars, and sighed, and slept.

Night, with a gust of wind, was in the ward,
Blowing the curtain to a glimmering curve.
Night. He was blind; he could not see the stars
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud;
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green,
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.

Rain – he could hear it rustling through the dark;
Fragrance and passionless music woven as one;
Warm rain on drooping roses; pattering showers
That soak the woods; not the harsh rain that sweeps
Behind the thunder, but a trickling peace,
Gently and slowly washing life away.

He stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
Leapt like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs.
But someone was beside him; soon he lay
Shuddering because that evil thing has passed.
And death, who’d stepped toward him, paused and stared.

Light many lamps and gather round his bed.
Lend him your eyes, warm blood, and will to live.
Speak to him; rouse him; you may save him yet.
He’s young; he hated War; how should he die
When cruel old campaigners win safe through?

But death replied: ‘I choose him.’ So he went,
And there was silence in the summer night;
Silence and safety; and the veils of sleep.
Then, far away, the thudding of the guns.
A Wife in London (December, 1899)
Thomas Hardy

I—The Tragedy
She sits in the tawny vapour
That the Thames-side lanes have uprolled,
Behind whose webby fold
Like a waning taper
The street-lamp glimmers cold.

A messenger’s knock cracks smartly,
Flashed news in her hand
Of meaning it dazes to understand
Though shaped so shortly:
He—he has fallen—in the far South Land…

II—The Irony
’Tis the morrow; the fog hangs thicker,
The postman nears and goes:
A letter is brought whose lines disclose
By the firelight flicker
His hand, whom the worm now knows:

Fresh—firm—penned in highest feather—
Page-full of his hoped return,
And of home-planned jaunts of brake and burn
In the summer weather,
And of new love that they would learn.

Futility
Wilfred Owen

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?

The Pains of Sleep
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
It hath not been my use to pray
With moving lips or bended knees;
But silently, by slow degrees,
My spirit I to Love compose,
In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
With reverential resignation
No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
Only a sense of supplication:
A sense o’er all my soul imprest
That I am weak, yet not unblest,
Since in me, round me, every where
Eternal strength and Wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
In anguish and in agony,
Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
A lurid light, a trampling throng,
Sense of intolerable wrong,
And whom I scorned, those only strong!
Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
Still baffled, and yet burning still!
 Desire with loathing strangely mixed
On wild or hateful objects fixed.
Fantastic passions! maddening brawl!
And shame and terror over all!
Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
Which all confused I could not know
Whether I suffered, or I did:
For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe,
My own or others still the same
Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed: the night’s dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
Distemper’s worst calamity.
The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin,—
For aye entempesting anew
The unfathomable hell within,
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be loved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.