

Andrew Marvell (1621–1678)
To His Coy Mistress

Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day;
5 Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the Flood;
And you should, if you please, refuse
10 Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires, and more slow.
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
15 Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
20 Nor would I love at lower rate.
But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
25 Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long preserv'd virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
30 And into ashes all my lust.
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
35 And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may;
And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour,
40 Than languish in his slow-chapp'd power.
Let us roll all our strength, and all
Our sweetness, up into one ball;
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Thorough the iron gates of life.
45 Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

"To His Coy Mistress," ed. N.J. Endicott, in *Representative Poetry Online* (Toronto: University of Toronto Libraries). Consult this [digital text](#) for annotations. Marvell's poetry was published posthumously in *Miscellaneous Poems* (London: Robert Boulter, 1681), 19–20; a facsimile can be viewed in [Early English Books Online](#).

Jonathan Swift (1667–1745)
A Description of a City Shower

Careful Observers may foretel the Hour
(By sure Prognostics) when to dread a Show'r:
While Rain depends, the pensive Cat gives o'er
Her Frolics, and pursues her Tail no more.
5 Returning home at Night you find the Sink
Strike your offended Sense with double Stink.
If you be wise, then go not far to dine,
You spend in Coach-hire more than save in Wine.
A coming show'r your shooting Corns presage;
10 Old Aches throb, your hollow Tooth will rage:
Saunt'ring in Coffee-House is *Dulman* seen;
He damns the Climate, and complains of *Spleen*.
Meanwhile the South, rising with dabbled Wings,
A sable Cloud athwart the Welkin flings;
15 That swill'd more Liquor than it could contain,
And like a Drunkard gives it up again.
Brisk *Susan* whips her Linnen from the Rope,
While the first drizzling Show'r is born aslope:
Such is that sprinkling which some careless Quean
20 Flirts on you from her Mop; but not so clean:
You fly, invoke the Gods; then turning, stop
To rail; she singing, still whirls on her Mop.
Not yet the Dust had shun'd th' unequal Strife,
But aided by the Wind, fought still for Life;
25 And wafted with its Foe by violent Gust,
¹ 'Twas doubtful which was Rain, and which was Dust.
Ah! where must needy Poet seek for Aid,
When Dust and Rain at once his Coat invade?
Sole Coat, where Dust cemented by the Rain
30 Erects the Nap, and leaves a cloudy Stain.

Now, in contiguous Drops the Flood comes down,
Threat'ning with Deluge this *devoted* Town.
To Shops in Crouds the daggled Females fly,

1. 'Twas doubtful which was Sea, and which was Sky. *Garth Disp.*

35 Pretend to cheapen Goods; but nothing buy.
 The Templer spruce, while ev'ry Spout's abroad,
 Stays till 'tis fair, yet *seems* to call a Coach.
 The tucke'-up Sempstress walks with hasty Strides,
 While Streams run down her oil'd Umbrella's Sides.
 Here various Kinds, by various Fortunes led,
 40 Commence Acquaintance underneath a Shed.
² Triumphant Tories, and desponding Whigs,
 Forget their Feuds, and join to save their Wigs.
 Box'd in a Chair the Beau impatient sits,
 While Spouts run clatt'ring o'er the Roof by Fits,
 45 And ever and anon with frightful Din
 The Leather sounds; he trembles from within.
 So when *Troy* Chair-men bore the wooden Steed,
 Pregnant with *Greeks*, impatient to be freed;
 (Those bully *Greeks*, who, as the Moderns do,
 50 Instead of paying Chair-Men, run them thro')
Laocoön struck the Out-side with his Spear,
 And each imprison'd Hero quak'd for Fear.

Now from all Parts the swelling Kennels flow,
 And bear their Trophies with them as they go:
 55 Filths of all Hues and Odours, seem to tell
 What Street they sail'd from, by the Sight and Smell.
 They, as each Torrent drives with rapid Force,
 From *Smithfield*, or *St. Pulchre's* shape their Course,
 And in huge Confluent join at *Snowhill* Ridge,
 60 Fall from the *Conduit* prone to *Holbourn-Bridge*.
³ Sweepings from Butchers Stalls, Dung, Guts, and Blood,
 Drown'd puppies, stinking Sprats, all drench'd in Mud,
 Dead Cats, and Turnip-Tops come tumbling down the Flood.

2. *N.B.* This was the first Year of the Earl of *Oxford's* Ministry.

3. These three last lines were intended against that licentious Manner of modern Poets, in making three Rhimes together, which they called *Triplets*; and the last of the three, was two or sometimes more Syllables longer, called an *Alexandrian*. These *Triplets* and *Alexandrians* were brought in by Dryden, and other Poets in the Reign of Charles II. They were the mere Effect of Haste, Idleness, and want of Money; and have been wholly avoided by the best Poets, since these Verses were written.

Previous page: Jonathan Swift, *The Works of J.S., D.D., D.S.P.D.*, vol. 2, *Poetical Works* (Dublin: George Faulkner, 1735), 39–42. [Eighteenth-Century Collections Online](#). For detailed line-by-line annotations (very helpful for this kind of poetry), see Alok Yadav, ed., “[A Description of a City Shower](#).” The poem first appeared in 1710.

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939)
Adam's Curse

We sat together at one summer's end,
That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,
And you and I, and talked of poetry.

5 I said, 'A line will take us hours maybe;
Yet if it does not seem a moment's thought,
Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.
Better go down upon your marrow-bones
And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones
Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;
10 For to articulate sweet sounds together
Is to work harder than all these, and yet
Be thought an idler by the noisy set
Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen
The martyrs call the world.'

And thereupon
15 That beautiful mild woman for whose sake
There's many a one shall find out all heartache
On finding that her voice is sweet and low
Replied, 'To be born woman is to know—
Although they do not talk of it at school—
20 That we must labour to be beautiful.'
I said, 'It's certain there is no fine thing
Since Adam's fall but needs much labouring.
There have been lovers who thought love should be
So much compounded of high courtesy
25 That they would sigh and quote with learned looks
Precedents out of beautiful old books;
Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.'

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;
We saw the last embers of daylight die,
30 And in the trembling blue-green of the sky
A moon, worn as if it had been a shell

Washed by time's waters as they rose and fell
About the stars and broke in days and years.

35

I had a thought for no one's but your ears:
That you were beautiful, and that I strove
To love you in the old high way of love;
That it had all seemed happy, and yet we'd grown
As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

W.B. Yeats, *The Poems*, 2nd ed., ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 1997), 78–79. The poem was first published in *In the Seven Woods* (Dundrum: Dun Emer Press, 1903), 18–19.

Wilfred Owen (1918–1893)
Strange Meeting

It seemed that out of battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

5 Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.
And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—
10 By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

With a thousand pains that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
'Strange friend,' I said, 'here is no cause to mourn.'
15 'None,' said that other, 'save the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
20 But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something had been left,
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
25 The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
30 Courage was mine, and I had mystery,
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.

35 Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

40 ‘I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now....’

The Complete Poems and Fragments of Wilfred Owen, ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983), 148–49. Digital text from the [First World War Poetry Digital Archive](#), which also holds facsimiles of Owen’s manuscripts. Owen was killed in action in France, and his poems were first published after his death in 1920.

Agha Shahid Ali (1949–2001)
Tonight

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar
—LAURENCE HOPE

Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell tonight
before you agonize him in farewell tonight?

Pale hands that once loved me beside the Shalimar:
Whom else from rapture's road will you expel tonight?

5 Those "Fabrics of Cashmere—" "to make Me beautiful—" "Trinket"—to gem—"Me to adorn—How—tell"—tonight?

I beg for haven: Prisons, let open your gates—
A refugee from Belief seeks a cell tonight.

10 Executioners near the woman at the window.
Damn you, Elijah, I'll bless Jezebel tonight.

Lord, cried out the idols, *Don't let us be broken;*
Only we can convert the infidel tonight.

Has God's vintage loneliness turned to vinegar?
He's poured rust into the Sacred Well tonight.

15 In the heart's veined temple all statues have been smashed.
No priest in saffron's left to toll its knell tonight.

He's freed some fire from ice, in pity for Heaven;
he's left open—for God—the doors of Hell tonight.

And I, Shahid, only am escaped to tell thee—
God sobs in my arms. Call me Ishmael tonight.

"Ghazal," Agha Shahid Ali, *The Country without a Post Office* (New York: Norton, 1997), 40. [ProQuest](#). The title "Tonight" appears with the poem's republication in *Call Me Ishmael Tonight: A Book of Ghazals* (New York: Norton, 2003). The poem is annotated on the [Poetry Foundation](#) site.

Evie Shockley (1965–)
where you are planted

he's as high as a georgia pine, my father'd say, half laughing. southern trees
as measure, metaphor. highways lined with kudzu-covered southern trees.

fuchsia, lavender, white, light pink, purple : crape myrtle bouquets burst
open on sturdy branches of skin-smooth bark : my favorite southern trees.

5 *one hundred degrees in the shade*: we settle into still pools of humidity, moss-
dark, beneath live oaks. southern heat makes us grateful for southern trees.

the maples in our front yard flew in spring on helicopter wings. in fall, we
splashed in colored leaves, but never sought sap from these southern trees.

10 *frankly, my dear, that's a magnolia*, i tell her, fingering the deep green, nearly
plastic leaves, amazed how little a northern girl knows about southern trees.

i've never forgotten the charred bitter fruit of holiday's poplars, nor will i :
it's part of what makes me evie : i grew up in the shadow of southern trees.

the new black (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011), 28. Text from [The Poetry Foundation](#). Billie Holiday's 1939 song "[Strange Fruit](#)," with lyrics by Abel Meeropol, describes the victims of lynching as "strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees" and "a strange and bitter crop."